

## Book Reviews

*Spilsbury's Coast: Pioneer Years in the Wet West*, by Howard White and Jim Spilsbury. Madeira Park, B.C.: Harbour Publishing Co. Ltd., 1987. Pp. 272, cloth \$24.95.

*Spilsbury's Coast* is the first instalment of the autobiography of Jim Spilsbury, the radio repairman from Savary Island who formed a highly successful Vancouver-based radio-telephone manufacturing company during the Second World War. This book deals with Spilsbury's family, his youth, and his early career; a later volume will deal with his post-war career as president of Queen Charlotte Airlines and radio manufacturers Spilsbury and Tindall.

Like a curiously large amount of B.C. history, this book begins in an English country house in the late nineteenth century. Spilsbury's grandfather, known only as "the Governor," was a Church of England clergyman who presided over an eleven-member family at The Langlands, Findern, Derbyshire. The family owed its wealth to an ancestor named James Ward who made a fortune constructing canals in the early phase of the industrial revolution. By the 1880s, however, "they were what you call landed gentry, meaning they just lay about doing nothing, living off a community of tenant farmers." "None of them could do anything except sit around showing off their breeding and eating up the family fortune."

Three of the Governor's five sons came to British Columbia. "Uncle Frank" arrived in 1878 and built a split-cedar shack on the Fraser at Whonnock. After a few years he got bored, returned to England, and transferred the land to his brother Benjamin, a Cambridge graduate. "Uncle Ben," however, also got bored and moved to the new city of Vancouver where he teamed up with businessman R. V. Winch. In about 1890 he transferred his property to his younger brother, Ashton Wilmot Spilsbury or "Dad," a graduate of Repton, the English private school, and Clare College, Cambridge. Ashton cleared part of the 360-acre farm and

in 1898, aged twenty-six, married twenty-seven-year-old Alice Blizard of Fort Langley, a recent immigrant from London, England.

Ashton was generous, sedentary, and somewhat ineffectual; Alice was practical, assertive, and independent. In 1905 they returned to Findern for the birth of their son, named Ashton James Ward Spilsbury after their canal-digging ancestor. "Name him after the only member of this family who ever made any money," said the Governor, leaning on his cane, "it's high time somebody else made some money!" The Spilsburys, however, considered Alice "a caste below them and they treated her accordingly," a fact which "changed her whole life — and Dad's life too." She became fiercely unpatriotic and nonconformist. Her son recalls that "she cut her hair short like a man's and took to wearing men's trousers. To show her absolute disdain of everything proper and British, she became an ardent suffragette, she adopted the cause of the anti-British terrorists in Ireland, and generally became a very difficult person to live with. She led my poor dad a hell of a life, really."

In 1906 or 1907 the Spilsburys returned to the farm at Whonnock where they attempted, unsuccessfully, to manufacture Devonshire Cream for the New Westminster market. Just before the First World War they sold their farm and invested in a thirty-six-foot boat, a project which fizzled in the pre-war depression. Broke, the Spilsburys moved into a tent on Savary Island some hundred miles north of Vancouver. Laid out in 1910-11 by an investors' syndicate, the island became a summer resort for Vancouver's well-to-do, one of whom took pity on the homeless family and invited them to stay in his summer cottage over the winter of 1914-15. The next year the Spilsburys moved back to their tent, where they remained until 1924. During these ten years Ashton and his son Jim built fences, dug wells, built and repaired summer cabins, worked on the island's roads, and cut firewood for the summer residents. Fortunately for the family, Ashton had been at Repton with the man who became governor of the Hudson's Bay Company. "Dad was overdrawn and overdrawn again," Spilsbury writes, "and the Hudson's Bay would carry him. If they hadn't, we never would have made it." Tent life ended in 1924 when Ashton inherited \$20,000 from his mother's estate, and he was able to build "a very comfortable home" on two choice waterfront lots bought for the family by Alice Spilsbury's friend Miss Ethel Burpee.

Jim Spilsbury's only schooling took place between 1914 and 1919 at the Savary Island school; he hated the experience and graduated when he was fourteen years old. His mother — who loved disciplined organizations like the army, the navy, and the cricket team — got him enrolled in the

merchant marine, and he went to China as an apprentice officer on the lumber carrier SS *Melville Dollar*. His interest fired by the ship's wireless radios, he quit the merchant marine in 1920 and returned, aged fifteen, determined to become a ship's wireless operator. Over the next few years he worked as a hooktender's helper, learned to operate a donkey engine, spent a summer cutting shingle bolts, and in 1922, aged seventeen, got his L.D.E. or Logging Donkey Engineer's steam ticket. After two years in the woods, and with a thousand dollars saved, he quit logging and began his career in the communications industry.

He was already a radio expert. In 1922 he jolted the residents of Savary by picking up a San Francisco station that was one of the first to broadcast not Morse Code but music and the human voice. "This was the *human voice* coming out of space. . . . For sheer shock to your system the Sputnik wasn't in the same league." In 1923 he began building his own radios, helped by a correspondence course in electrical engineering and encouraged by his mentor Frank Osborne, who designed and produced his own marine engines at his machine shop in Lund. By 1924 Spilsbury was building advanced radios for summer cottagers, and in 1926 he established a radio repair business. "Just overnight," Spilsbury recalls, "radio boomed. And it carried me with it."

Over the next fifteen years Spilsbury ignored repeated suggestions that he move to Vancouver. Jilted by his summer cottage girlfriend — the niece of a wealthy Vancouver yachtsman and businessman — he bought a boat with which he tapped the radio needs of the camps, canneries, and settlements between Sayward and the Sechelt Peninsula. On a typical trip he travelled forty miles inland by railway from Rock Bay to the Hastings Mill logging camps to fix a dozen temperamental radio sets. During these trips around "Spilsbury's Coast" he provided radios to everyone from the Greek scholar S. K. Marshall of Evans Bay to the writer Francis Dickie of Read Island, who "spent a lot of his time strolling around his garden with no clothes on like William Blake"; to the "old renegade Englishman" Captain J. Forbes Sutherland of Surge Narrows, who could not pay for his new radio and threatened Spilsbury with a double-barrelled shotgun; to the numerous remittance men who could be found "living like savages in little hovels made of bark but still arrogant as kings."

In 1937, when he was thirty-two, he married his childhood sweetheart Glenys Glynes, one of Savary's "summer kids" from Vancouver. His family had no objections because "she was English." With their son Ronald and their new boat they continued their coastal tours. Spilsbury started to build sophisticated radio telephone transmitters and in 1941 — taking ad-

vantage of the wartime economic boom — he teamed up with Jim Hepburn, a radio enthusiast from Victoria, to form Spilsbury and Hepburn Ltd. From their Vancouver base they manufactured or installed radio telephones for the government, the armed forces, and for the mining, fishing, logging, and tugboat companies engaged in war-related work. The book ends in 1943, when Spilsbury bought a float plane to serve distant customers and formed Queen Charlotte Airlines, which was merged with Pacific Western Airlines in 1955. As pilot he hired Uncle Ben's son Rupert Spilsbury; appropriately and symbolically on their first flight they flew over the "old family homestead" at Whonnock, and Jim was astonished at the change in scale. "I knew I would never be able to look at that coastal world in quite the same way. It had become less mysterious, less forbidding, less grand. It really *had* become smaller."

Several important themes are reflected in *Spilsbury's Coast*. One is the general tendency of early settlers to abandon farming in favour of the logging, service, and transportation industries. A second is the end of isolation caused by the radio communications revolution. A third is the transition from waterborne to airborne transportation; Spilsbury shows the coast as it was in the last thirty years before the seaplane, and in this respect *Spilsbury's Coast* belongs with such epics as Muriel Blanchet's *The Curve of Time* and Gilean Douglas's *The Protected Place*. It is an informative and enjoyable book.

Slightly incongruous is the generic "wet west" subtitle and a tendency to lump the well-heeled Spilsburys in with the less privileged residents of the coast. Howard White's claim that Spilsbury was "just a guy from around here" is literally true, but it is equally clear that Spilsbury's world was not that of the builder Frank Gagne or the cook Red Mahone. A photo shows the English community on Savary — dressed in tennis whites and boater hats — waiting nonchalantly at the dock for the weekly steamer from Vancouver. The Spilsburys were members of Savary Island's Anglo-oriented professional élite. Island friends included Colonel and Laurencia Herchmer, Captain Ashworth of the Royal Savary Hotel, Dr. Lea of Vancouver, Burnet the surveyor, the Anglican clergymen John Antle and Alan Greene, and the wealthy Miss Ethel Burpee, whose brother-in-law introduced Spilsbury to Emily Carr (he considered her "a revolting old crank"). The Spilsburys — mother, father, and son — had connections in the larger world which they did not lose by going to Savary and which they did not hesitate to use. Their isolation may even have increased the importance of their social and business connections.

Howard White is right, however, in taking encouragement from the

example of Spilsbury's early career. His radio telephones, like Osborne's marine engines, the Empire Machine Works' donkey engines, and Easthope motors, were home-made and not imported from Kalamazoo or Hamilton. Spilsbury rejected the temptation to go to Vancouver until he was nearly forty years old, choosing instead to cultivate his own potential and the economic potential of the inside coast. His story has contemporary relevance: while nurses, teachers, graduate students and others leave British Columbia in droves, *Spilsbury's Coast* suggests that there are ways of staying.

*Pender Island*

RICHARD MACKIE

*An Error in Judgement: The Politics of Medical Care in an Indian/White Community*, by Dara Culhane Speck. Talonbooks: Vancouver, 1987. Pp. 281.

For more than a century in British Columbia, white church-sponsored hospitals and residential schools have dominated the landscapes of native reserve communities. Their presence and authority have rarely been questioned. To the outside world these were necessary institutions created to improve the quality of health and education. In recent months, however, newspaper reports of church leaders, school officials, and dormitory supervisors sexually abusing children under their care have shattered this image of well-being.

Twenty years ago, another kind of abuse in native communities — deriving from the sometimes poor quality of medical child care — would have been conveniently and easily silenced. But today is a time of speaking out.

In 1979, in the small town of Alert Bay on Cormorant Island, British Columbia, a native child died from a ruptured appendix in a well-equipped hospital while under her doctor's care. In times past, the roots of such a tragedy might have been known but not aired. In 1979, this was not to be the case. A few in the community had been reared in the spirit of the political activism of the 1960s, and, upon witnessing this death, they did not let it pass.

One of these was Dara Culhane Speck. Culhane Speck had moved to Alert Bay in the early 1970s from Montreal. She describes herself as having been very much a part of the political and cultural movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Her fourteen-year-long association with the community, as a band member through marriage, and her participation in native political

organizations, band administration and band education, placed her in the unique situation of being both an insider and an outsider in Alert Bay. She was ideal to participate in the campaign to expose this case of possible medical malpractice. She believed that the situation in Alert Bay was not unique.

Culhane Speck has produced a book which she explains is “a critique of a system of relationships which has ramifications beyond the boundaries of Cormorant Island . . . not only in the sphere of medical care, but in education, economic development, land rights, social welfare, law enforcement and local government” (p. 20). In her first three chapters, she instantly captivates her readers with a synopsis of the events leading up to the child’s death. Here first-hand accounts are nicely interwoven with her own narrative. Following this she breaks away from the events of 1979 to present a comprehensive historical/ethnographic/sociological portrait of Alert Bay. Here we see the problems in the community not only in terms of native suicides, welfare, and alcoholism. On the contrary, Culhane Speck shows how a nineteenth-century social Darwinian worldview took root and permeated the social fabric of one small Canadian town. For anyone wishing to understand better the source of discontent in native-white communities, Culhane Speck’s account is worthwhile reading. She sees all too well the “big fish in the little pond” syndrome: the much sought-after positions held by doctors, coroners, chairpersons of hospital and school boards, the élite descendants of the first settler families, and, in general, “the relative prosperity and social prestige enjoyed by this sector of the White Community [which] depended on the corresponding want and dependency of the Indian community” (p. 97).

After her presentation of the historical roots underlying the social problems in Alert Bay, the author outlines the sequence of events leading to the inquest into the death, the responses to the crisis by the provincial and federal governments and medical profession, and the local community’s reaction to the latter. A bizarre twist is introduced in Chapter 10, when a new doctor arrives on the scene, is embraced by the native people for his humanitarian approach and good results, and then turns out to be a medical imposter who commits suicide the day after he is found out.

Chapter 11 follows the federal inquiry into the death and the attempt by all involved to reach a resolution. The final chapter and the Epilogue — the former, an account of a legal misunderstanding in Alert Bay in 1895, and the latter, a reflection on the events of 1979-1980, at the annual Sports Day in June 1983 — are short and add a quasi-poetic closing to this long and painful affair.

For those for whom sociological writing is often cryptic, dry, and overly "quantitative," Culhane Speck's account presents a lively change. Her main objective, she explains, has been to present the story as it was understood by the people in the native community, a point of view which is rarely taken seriously. Culhane Speck states clearly that this is a story which demanded that sides be chosen and that she took a side and had no regrets about her choice. She herself was a key actor in the account and hence could not stand aloof and present the story as a detached outsider.

This is a piece of real social scientific merit, one which acknowledges and incorporates the perspective of the "observer" as well as the "observed." It is beautifully written, highly readable, and educational for both an academic and a general audience.

*Vancouver*

WENDY C. WICKWIRE

*The People of the Snow: The Story of Kitimat*, by John Kendrick. Toronto: N.C. Press Limited, 1987.

John Kendrick has written an important human interest story about the people who constructed and were affected by Alcan's huge Kitimat project, completed in the early 1950s. As one of the major actors, he provides a valuable personal perspective on this exciting time in the development of the province.

Before assessing Kendrick's book, one should recall that Kitimat was one of the largest single private construction projects ever undertaken in Canada. As resident engineer for Alcan, Kendrick modestly omits clear reference to its colossal scale. The project required the construction of a major dam, 80 km from the nearest road, to reverse the flow of the Nechako River; a 16 km tunnel, 120 km from the nearest road, to feed the water to an underground powerhouse which was also at an inaccessible location; a transmission line over rugged mountain tops and through avalanche-prone valleys; a world-class aluminum smelter at the head of Douglas Channel, then only accessible by boat; and lastly, a new town to house over 10,000 people. In spite of the size and complexity of the project, a mere forty-two months elapsed from the start of construction to the time the first aluminum ingot was poured.

Kendrick's long association with Kitimat commenced in 1937 when, as an engineering student, he was hired by the B.C. government to work on remote field surveys of the hydroelectric potential of the area, which could

be realized by reversing the eastward flow of the drainage system that rises in the coast range close to tide water. This work was resumed ten years later when as a government employee Kendrick was again involved in a reconnaissance of the hydroelectric potential stimulated by Alcan's interest in the project. Shortly thereafter, in 1949, he was employed by Alcan to conduct three years of engineering feasibility studies, which culminated in a decision to proceed.

Kendrick's story commences with accounts of the pioneers in the area. He deals first with the aborted settlement at the current townsite and then recounts the saga of the settlers at Ootsa Lake who trudged 240 km on foot from Hazelton. With this background in place, he describes his own experience and somewhat anecdotally presents the cast of characters he encountered from 1937 onwards. Such a personalized account provides useful insight and primary data for those who wish to understand the times and at least some of the values of the people who were in government, in Alcan, and in the firms which constructed the project. Although not identified as such by Kendrick, what emerges is a picture of purposeful individuals, with well-defined objectives, who made uncomplicated decisions of momentous proportions, based on limited information, only taking account of clearly apparent consequences.

Kendrick is at his best in conveying the human drama associated with this massive project. He then proceeds quite fairly but somewhat less successfully to address some of the project's deficiencies that would have been corrected if it had proceeded under current circumstances. What stands out are the poor cost estimates and the wasteful practices of the cost-plus contract awarded to Morrison Knudsen for the construction of the hydroelectric components of the project; the limited consideration of environmental impacts; the somewhat doubtful treatment of the displaced settlers on Ootsa Lake; and the hurried and unfortunate treatment of the Indians at Cheslatta. Kendrick could, in my opinion, have added to this list the inadequate consideration of the project's impacts on the Haisla Indians who live near the site of the smelter and new town.

Had Kendrick concluded at this level of analysis I would have no criticism of the work. Unfortunately, he also attempts a shallow macro level social, economic, and environmental assessment of this complex undertaking and the water resource licence granted to Alcan that has not yet been completely utilized. Such an analysis is well beyond the scope of what Kendrick should have undertaken in this slim volume.

In summary, Kendrick has made a valuable contribution to B.C. studies which joins the list of memoirs that add richness to our understanding of

the development of the province. Unfortunately, the account tells us little about his own role as resident engineer for Alcan. Considering the project's accomplishments I believe he has been excessively modest, and this also tells us something about the engineers who have built this province.

University of British Columbia

BRAHM WIESMAN

*Hastings and Main: Stories from an Inner City Neighbourhood*, edited by Jo-Ann Canning-Dew with interviews by Laurel Kimbly. A project of the Carnegie Community Centre Association. Vancouver: New Star Books, 1987. Pp. 158, paper \$9.95.

*Hastings and Main* comprises twenty oral histories of life in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. The area, nestled between the city's business district and Chinatown or Strathcona and overlapping with the western half of what is known as the East End, has historically been distinguished by the diversity, transiency, and poverty of its residents. This volume explores the way in which these demographic abstractions have played themselves out in the lives of individual men and women.

The project on which the book was based originated, not surprisingly, in the Carnegie Community Centre located at the junction of Hastings and Main Streets and, since its opening in the old Carnegie Library building in 1980, the physical and emotional centre of the Downtown Eastside. Fifty-four residents contributed their life stories to an Oral History Project, from which twenty were selected to "reflect the profile of the neighbourhood" (p. 15). While it is left unclear what role the interviewer played in suggesting topic areas (apparently a favourite question was "What gives you the incentive to get up and keep going?" [p. 18]) or whether any editing of individual stories occurred prior to publication, the explicit point is made that "opinions are stated as such" and social activities "are mentioned within the context of their importance for each speaker" (p. 15). As to precise methodology, the interviewer notes that "first I spoke to a person, got his or her story, and then went back and did the interview on tape" (p. 17), as an end in itself without any knowledge at the time that a book might result.

On the assumption that the twenty recollections do represent individuals' own perspectives on their experiences, they take on some importance as social documents, comparable to the oral histories making up the earlier *Opening Doors: Vancouver's East End* (edited Daphne Marlatt and

Carole Itter; vol. 8, nos. 1-2, of *Sound Heritage* [Victoria, 1979]). Common themes resonate in *Hastings and Main* and *Opening Doors*. Most important, perhaps, is survival, very often on the economic margin. The transition from school to work occurs young, for a twelve-year-old of the early century "passing rivets" in a shipyard (pp. 29-30), in the case of an interwar counterpart "riding the rails" to work the prairie "harvest circuit" (pp. 37-38), for a thirteen-year-old in the depression "at the George Hotel as a bus girl" (p. 52). Adulthood represents an ongoing struggle to maintain employment and, via that employment, dignity and respect: thus, the pride with which one man states, "I never got a welfare cheque" (p. 33). Within this context, the depression of the 1930s takes on special significance. Despite strenuous efforts not to accept handouts, many individuals were forced on relief or on the road. Some of the most compelling recollections relate not so much to poverty itself as to the extent to which helplessness was compounded by the demeaning attitude taken by police and other authorities with power over the destitute (for example, pp. 47, 51 and 57-58).

The men and women who tell their stories in *Hastings and Main* do not ask to be liked and, indeed, some of them are not, on first acquaintance, very likeable. One of the principal reasons may be the absence of touchstones which we like to associate with the life course. Marriage and the family take on their own forms: thus comments, almost by the way, such as "I was married then," "my wife, I'm not married to her no more" and "the sixties was a married life" (pp. 115, 130 and 140). The inevitability of seasonal transiency in order to secure employment is one factor, alcoholism clearly another. In the case of a mother of ten, I "stayed married for twenty-three years, but it was off and on. . . . I raised my kids myself . . . by weeding farms in Cloverdale" (p. 54). The reverse situation also occurred: my wife "just left me and the kids and that was it." While this father "looked after the three oldest ones," already in school, "till they were living on their own," the three-year-old ended up in a foster home. "The last time I saw her she was about eight years old" (p. 77). Young children could become the protectors of their parent: "my mother was my mother and when she would go out I would go with her. Or when she would go in the bar, I would sit down outside and wait for her" (p. 137).

"Women, booze or whatnot" (p. 38) are accepted elements of everyday life. A child of the early century recalls previewing the "chairs each lady would occupy" in a "parlour house" being opened nearby (pp. 22 and 25-26). To quote a patron of the interwar years: "You could trip through the third floor of the Windsor and select any woman you wanted for a two-

dollar bill. Now the price is at least thirty-five dollars and it's going up. . . . A lay is still a lay, isn't it? It can't be *that* much better now than it was in my day" (pp. 39-40). A logger depicts Vancouver winters as "the beer parlour, or a wild woman once in a while" (p. 114). To a teenager of the 1960s escaping a fundamentalist childhood in the Fraser Valley, the Downtown Eastside represented buying and later dealing heroin, the opportunity to "turn a lot of gay tricks" and interacting with "a lot of working women, a *lot* of women" (pp. 152-58). The realization that human beings are susceptible but at the same time resilient underlies several of these accounts, as with the latter individual, who is now a social worker "with kids on the street."

The stories in *Hastings and Main* reveal the world of little people, so to speak, from the inside out. The importance of maintaining dignity and pride under difficult conditions is emphasized time and again. The recollections demonstrate in graphic form the interplay which exists in all of our lives between what we hope to accomplish and larger forces, such as depression and war, which may in the final analysis be dominant. We are reminded of the limited control individuals may in fact possess, what a victim of the depression terms "the denial of the right of young people to the development of their lives" (p. 71). As another has summed up, "the peculiar thing about poor people is they live helplessly" (p. 102).

*Hastings and Main* has justifiably become a popular best seller, as well as being shortlisted by the BC Book Prizes. It should also be mandatory reading for all British Columbia scholars and academics who pretend to understand the province in which they live and work.

University of British Columbia

JEAN BARMAN

*Never Say Die! The Life and Times of A Pioneer Labour Lawyer*, by John Stanton. Ottawa: Steel Rail Publishing, 1987.

This book is based on the author's experiences as a labour lawyer in British Columbia from the late 1930s to the early 1970s. During his career John Stanton represented miners, longshoremen, fishermen and forestry-workers, acting on their behalf in a number of key legal disputes. As he argues in the Introduction, the province's system of industrial relations changed profoundly in the years he was active as a lawyer. Few people are better placed to provide an insider's account of that transformation and its impact on organized labour.

Despite the book's title, Stanton does not give a full account of his "Life and Times." In fact, the book is not intended to be an autobiography but to serve an educational purpose, "to inspire the defenders and builders of unions today" (p. x). To accomplish this task Stanton provides his readers with a series of case studies drawn from his experience as a labour lawyer. Without exception, the cases that he describes are important ones and the fact that the author was himself a participant enhances the text. For this reason alone, *Never Say Die!* is an important contribution to the province's labour history.

Stanton was not an impartial observer during the often turbulent times which he describes, nor is he one today. Such neutrality would have been difficult to maintain, given some of the events described in the book: provincial police beating strikers while the latter were in custody (Blubber Bay, 1938); the eviction of strikers from their homes in the middle of a cold northern winter (Bridge River Valley, 1940); the compensation board that repeatedly and wilfully ignored independent medical evidence, thereby denying pensions to widows when they so obviously were entitled to them (Vancouver, 1955-62). These and other incidents suggest an inherent bias in the province's legal system. But one may still wish that Stanton had gone to greater lengths to explain the system and provided more detail of its operations, rather than simply to hold it up for disapproval.

The author is not an uncritical supporter of unions. For example, he is an unequivocal opponent of American unions in Canada. He also rejects the usefulness of unions engaging in partisan political activity, and makes scathing references to "power-hungry Eastern union politicians. . . . Ardent followers of the CCF, all these men viewed unions as a reliable source of 'bodies' who would provide funds and canvassers in elections. . . ." (pp. 198-99). On the other hand, the Canadian Confederation of Unions, a group outside the Canadian Labour Congress, is described in approving terms, and Stanton acknowledges its help in the preparation of the book.

The book's episodic structure, essentially a collection of case studies, makes it easy to pick up and read short sections of the volume but also contributes to an overall sense of disjointedness. This is increased by the book's division into three sections, on union recognition, state intervention and "Lessons from within the House of Labour." The reasons for this subdivision are unclear, and the last of the three sections follows neither chronologically nor thematically from the previous ones.

While the book has its weaknesses, it was not written for the benefit of pedants or historians. Nonetheless, its success in its avowed purpose —

providing today's unionists with inspiration — is uncertain. In the opinion of this reviewer, White's *A Hard Man to Beat* (Vancouver, 1983) remains a much more compelling account of the same era. Despite their considerable stylistic differences, both books cover much the same territory, providing partisan accounts of labour's battles during the years around the Second World War. In addition, both authors share a similar analysis; Stanton's experiences with the province's judicial system, for example, corroborate Bill White's frank assessment that "the courts have been one of the establishment's most effective tools in fighting unionism." Stanton's memoirs, like White's, shed much light on a crucial period in B.C.'s history, and those people who wish to understand the sources and genesis of this province's polarized climate should read his book with care.

*Athabasca University*

JEREMY MOUAT

*The Life of Emily Carr*, by Paula Blanchard. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1987. Pp. vi, 331.

Emily Carr is well known to most westerners as an artist with a powerful vision of the B.C. forests and as a writer of the award-winning *Klee Wyck*, her memoir of experiences among the coastal Indians. Born in 1871, she grew up in Victoria, and after studying art in San Francisco and later in England and Paris, returned to her native city to teach, paint, raise dogs, run a boarding house, and lead for her times the unconventional life of a single woman whose passion was art.

Last fall an Emily Carr painting sold at auction in Toronto for the unexpectedly high price of \$290,000. This is a barometer of the growing interest in and reputation of this artist, who is at last being recognized as one of Canada's best painters. Feminists have also discovered her, and found in Carr's eccentricities and creative struggles material for plays, television documentaries, and academic theses.

It is a pity that Paula Blanchard chose to cast her study of Carr in the form of biography, for she adds no new material to the detailed and penetrating study by Maria Tippett which first appeared in 1979. Blanchard is a good writer, a specialist in English and American literature who has previously written a biography of the American transcendentalist Margaret Fuller. Her avowed interest in Carr was to investigate the "inner conflicts of a woman painter." She notes that in Emily Carr "we see a clear example of anger contributing substantially to a creative career." This perspective,

feminist and psychologizing, yields perceptive insights when applied to specific paintings or writings, but there is surprisingly little discussion of Carr's art or her prose. Although Blanchard had access to some biographical material unavailable to Tippet (the collection of J. A. Parnall), little use is made of it. Instead, Blanchard prefers to tell the story of Carr's life with a structure obviously indebted to Tippet.

What Blanchard does well, however, is to re-create, almost like a novelist, incidents, places, and states of mind. While this makes for a good read, what the reader should not forget is how speculative such an approach can be. One central issue, treated vividly by Blanchard, is the nature of the breakdown Carr experienced in England in 1903. Tippet convincingly argued a case for the original diagnosis of hysteria (now called conversion reaction), where repressed anxieties are converted to physical symptoms. However, Blanchard rejects the evidence of Emily's probable mistreatment by her dominating father, and conjectures the root cause of Carr's symptoms — headache, partial paralysis, depression — to be a combination of emotional exhaustion and pressure to succeed as an artist. This fits well into Blanchard's desire to see in Carr's life the pattern of the struggle of the female artist, but it chooses to overlook the violence of the symptoms so carefully documented by Tippet.

There are times, however, when Blanchard's feminist viewpoint is surely on the mark. Writing of Carr's first meeting with the Group of Seven, which affected her profoundly, Blanchard notes:

The outdoor aesthetic of the Seven, the communal experience from which their painting grew, was perforce a male experience. . . . And with the best will in the world on both their side and Emily's, she was right to perceive that to them she was an outsider, not only as a westerner, but also as a woman. (p. 177)

It was Lawren Harris who assured Emily that "you are one of us," and Blanchard successfully re-creates the excitement of those first meetings with Harris in 1927.

This book will not supplant Tippet's as the definitive biography of Emily Carr, but its readability may further popularize her story.

*Succession: The Political Reshaping of British Columbia*, by David J. Mitchell. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1987. Pp. 201.

In his first book, David Mitchell parlayed privileged access to W. A. C. Bennett into a comprehensive and insightful biography of British Columbia's most successful Premier and a detailed, often critical look at his impact on provincial politics. In his second, *Succession: The Political Reshaping of British Columbia*, the benefits of access are still evident, but the result is shallower and often one-sided.

Mitchell takes us from the defeat of Social Credit in 1972, past the resurrection of Social Credit under the leadership of William R. Bennett, through the younger Bennett's career as Premier, to his resignation and replacement by William Vander Zalm. The primary focus is on the beliefs and actions of the province's political and business élites, a focus defended on the grounds that "the only continuity [in British Columbia] is provided by the politics of personality that gives populist leaders inordinate power in shaping the province's future" (p. 9).

Mitchell is clearly an admirer of Bill Bennett. There is little doubt that the former Premier was largely responsible for reviving and modernizing a political party that most observers believed would disappear after the 1972 defeat. However, Mitchell also feels it necessary to defend his record as Premier against critics of the restraint program and other controversial actions. Unfortunately, while he acknowledges the existence of critics, he devotes little space to their arguments, while accepting those of Bennett and his defenders at face value. He even argues that "although his administration had a reputation for being too tough on the poor and disadvantaged, each year it spent an increasing percentage of the provincial budget on social services, health and education" (p. 88). In fact the budget share devoted to these programs peaked in the 1982/83 fiscal year and declined thereafter. Finally, he explains Bennett's decision to resign simply on the grounds that he had accomplished all he set out to do as leader, ignoring the views of some Socreds and the evidence of public opinion polls that Bennett had become an electoral liability.

Mitchell's account of the 1986 succession is the best part of the book. It covers the peculiarities of the party's delegate selection process, the leadership campaigns, and the manoeuvring at the Whistler Convention. The explanation for Vander Zalm's victory, a reaction of the grassroots against the professionals and insiders associated with modernization of the party organization and with Bill Bennett himself, is convincing. Curiously,

the repudiation of Bill Bennett implied by the outcome does not lead Mitchell to reconsider his assessment of Bennett's leadership qualities.

Like many others, Mitchell finds Bill Vander Zalm difficult to fathom. In the same paragraph (pp. 131-32) he is described as someone "who respected the advice of his civil servants and developed strong and enduring relationships with those who worked with him closely" and as the source of complaints by civil servants "that they were never certain of ministry policy until they had read the morning newspaper." If Mitchell is correct, Vander Zalm's political style makes him inherently unpredictable. In contrast to Bill Bennett, "a master at interpreting polls, making a science of the art of politics," Vander Zalm is portrayed as "a master of political intuition, relying almost exclusively on his gut feelings" (p. 189).

*Succession* was obviously written with a popular rather than an academic audience in mind. Nevertheless, one is tempted to ask for a little more detachment from someone whose credentials as a trained historian are advertised on the dustjacket. A focus on personalities makes for entertaining reading, but does not always succeed as analysis. Surely the historical legacy of labour management conflict, instability associated with a resource-based economy, and the stimulus to right-wing cohesion provided by the presence of a strong left party are themselves powerful sources of continuity. Indeed, they have contributed to the polarization which successful politicians are able to manipulate.

Mitchell is undoubtedly aware of these factors. In fact, in the last chapter he suggests that Social Credit rather than the NDP "has been a consistent agent of radical change" in British Columbia and that the province's politics have been "widely misinterpreted" (p. 121). Unfortunately, his analysis is too narrowly conceived and executed to provide convincing support for that conclusion.

*University of British Columbia*

DONALD E. BLAKE