Book Reviews

Lord of Point Grey: Larry MacKenzie of UBC, by P. B. Waite. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987. Pp. xi, 256; 33 b/w photographs. $21.95.

The goddess of good fortune who smiled on N. A. M. (Larry) MacKenzie's long life and distinguished career stayed with him to the end. She obviously blessed the choice of his biographer, whose work appeared just one year after his death in 1986. Peter B. Waite, a leading historian of the old school, and a prolific contributor to Canadian history — including several standard accounts of Canada in the immediate post-Confederation decades and biographies of Sir John A. Macdonald and Sir John Thompson — was the ideal choice. He brought a judicious empathy to the portrayal of Larry MacKenzie and the many worlds he inhabited from his Nova Scotian birth in 1894 to his last Vancouver years in the 1980s.

MacKenzie was a doer, little interested in ideas for their own sake, in spite of post-graduate work at Harvard and Cambridge, England, following his Dalhousie LL.B. in 1923. His charm and social skills, along with his prodigious capacity for work, were servants of an ambition that relentlessly drove him to the end. His career ranged from work as a legal adviser at the International Labour Office in Geneva, to the teaching of law at the University of Toronto, to the presidency of the University of New Brunswick (1940-44) and of the University of British Columbia (1944-62), to a brief stint as Senator. Along the way he was involved, usually in some leading role, in an unending succession of provincial, Canadian, North American and international organizations. From the forties onward he collected honorary degrees and other awards with a gusto that was stimulated rather than diminished by the frequency with which they were offered.

Like MacKenzie, Peter Waite is gregarious, fascinated by character, and, also like his subject, disinclined to see the world in terms of classes or social forces. His *Lord of Point Grey* is an attempt to get behind the

strong, rough-hewn features and the extraordinary charm that MacKenzie lavished on waitresses and queens, on gardeners and Prime Ministers, to find MacKenzie the man. He succeeds in the sense that by the end of the book the reader has been drawn into MacKenzie's world — a world of individuals, events, goals and the hurdles that stood in their way, a flesh and blood world that contained "few abstractions" (p. 159), in which groups and collectivities could be reduced to their individual members, and in which "drinks and talk" (p. 168) could resolve most issues. MacKenzie's personality, his mannerisms, his way of speaking, writing, thinking, talking, eating, drinking, walking, and working are all given life in these pages.

Since MacKenzie was a man of action, for whom Hamlet's indecisions would have inspired a mixture of contempt and impatience, the portrayal of his busyness, of his immersion in good works at the many meeting points of university and nation, effectively capture much of a man who lived in public. With his deft ability to sketch scenes and contexts, his occasionally baroque language, his taste for physical description — MacKenzie "was rather a bear of a man; he was not graceful; he had a lumbering way of walking as if for too long he had had an axe on one shoulder and a log on the other" (p. 158) — and his measured assessment of MacKenzie's character, Peter Waite goes a long way to making sense of *le chef* who paved the way for the modern University of British Columbia.

At the end, the reader, like the author, knows MacKenzie the public man, but is left with a question mark about the private man. What drove him remains elusive. There was a core of privacy at the centre of his existence that his wife Margaret did not penetrate and that the biographer's probes skirt around. The part of himself that MacKenzie hid from others, he also suppressed from his own consciousness. In a typically masculine manner, MacKenzie reacted to a love affair in Geneva that did not end in the marriage he passionately wanted, by "batten[ing] the hatches down," and forging ahead, finding solace in mastery of the world of men and events (p. 63).

Polly, the woman he loved in Geneva, and who corresponded with him for over fifty years, told him a year and a half after their first meeting: "I really know less about your mind than any man's I know. I honestly couldn't give you a judgement on it" (p. 61). To Margaret, his wife, the inner sanctuary of his being was inaccessible, a private preserve (p. 67). In the last paragraph of this subtle exploration of a complex personality that only seemed simple, Peter Waite reports his inability to find what the ideas were that drove his subject. MacKenzie answered "none" when

asked what books had influenced him. He was puzzled by the related question of the philosophical influences on his life, "not really believing the proposition that ideas could have much to do with shaping a man's career. He looked at me with those bright, magnetic eyes, and his slow, worldly smile. 'Life made me,' said he finally" (p. 225).

Peter Waite's biography confirms that a great university president may have a deficient capacity for introspection, and may even share in a certain distaste for purely scholarly concerns that is typical of men of affairs. For the *Lord of Point Grey*, an interest in the past was an avoidable irrelevance. Poetry, music, and philosophy were also marginal to his intellectual and aesthetic existence.

Peter Waite brought humane sympathy, literary skills, and rigorous scholarship to this lucid biography. He makes it difficult for the reader not to share his respect and affection for Larry MacKenzie.

University of British Columbia ALAN C. CAIRNS

Distant Neighbours: A Comparative History of Seattle and Vancouver, by Norbert MacDonald. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987. Pp. xxii, 259; illustrations, notes, bibliography, and index.

This is an admirable piece of work, succinct, well organized and illustrated, and very readable. It is also valuable; as a scholarly, substantive account of the two large North Pacific coastal cities, but especially as a joint historical analysis of Seattle and Vancouver: major cities close in location and environmental conditions, yet "distant neighbours" nevertheless in many aspects of their community development. The fact as well that Professor MacDonald skilfully interweaves their distinct records of experience, balancing the two and examining their similarities or differences with care and consistency, makes his volume a considerable success in the sometimes unsatisfying field of comparative urban history.

This success, to my mind, also stems from the author's decision to do a comprehensive though solidly grounded survey of his subject cities, and not to zero in on some special themes such as social mobility or patterns of élites — which can involve imposing work in theory and quantification and yet deliver little on the city as entity, leaving intricate results that may be more tautological than instructive. Mobility, élites, class and ethnic patterns are certainly treated in the book at hand often with good substantiation in detail, such as its study of civic business leaders, notably

documented from a large mass of probated wills. In the main, however, MacDonald traces a general set of themes relating to both cities, from land and transportation development to industrialization, suburbanization and political culture in the two growing urban communities that already had reached metropolitan stature by the First World War. No doubt my own approval here reflects some personal bias. Yet one still could claim that presenting a rounded story, over all, and not just abstracted slices, helps give this work its essentially convincing reality as a comparative analysis of Seattle and Vancouver through the past century and more of their history.

I need not go over its treatment further, which begins with frontier villages and winds up with the metropolises of the 1980s, having turned along the way on railroads, the Klondike rush and land booms, the impacts of war and depression, and then of consolidating urbanism in both the United States and Canada. But let me note as another merit of the general rather than "slice" approach adopted that Seattle and Vancouver are indeed seen throughout in clear terms of their larger human settings (politico-economic or socio-cultural); namely, in the American and Canadian nation-states as well as in the North Pacific physical region. We seldom lose sight of the play of wider factors upon the two particular urban places. And that points Professor MacDonald on to well-evaluated if broad conclusions about the shared and divergent traits of his two cities, duly sumarized in his final chapter.

He starts these assessments with "the obvious but nevertheless basic fact" that Seattle and Vancouver existed "in separate independent nations" (though we are working on this), with consequences ranging from the role of public transport in the two city communities to their perceptions of the police. The "immensely bigger" American nation, however, not only produced earlier, more advanced development in its own Pacific Northwest, but brought Seattle facilities, markets, population, and capital beyond the scale of a young Vancouver. And though the C.P.R. decidedly built up the latter's position, the American-based city was enabled by its very base in the great republic to keep the lead in scale, on down to the present. Nonetheless, Vancouver today in popular view appears the bigger city — for being in Canada where it is third in metropolitan ranking, it has a distinction not vouchsafed to Seattle as but one more regional capital in a country of many giant urban accretions. This might be deemed a case of the well-known frog-to-puddle ratio, here at work to Vancouver's benefit. Still, MacDonald does indicate that "the sense of 'big city' Vancouver"

also arose from its geographically confined and concentrated central business district — a nice relating of human perception to physical fact.

There is no call to list all his major appraisals. But to cite a few more, he draws out the contrast (rooted in "national separation") between Seattle's heavy emphasis on a military-linked economy and its near lack in Vancouver. He marks the strong historic role of British immigrants in the Canadian city, as opposed to the greater European ethnic variety long found in the American community — where, more lately, a large black minority has much affected its urban society and relationships, while the British Columbian centre has instead acquired another sort of ambience deriving from its own Chinese minority. Then there are the differing influences of two differing federal systems upon the two cities, varying the inputs of political centralization or regionalism into their local existence; or the "greater awareness of public needs and public rights" in the Vancouver community, or, in conjunction, its weaker individualism and commitment to private enterprise than has been historically and characteristically manifested in Seattle. Some of these judgements may seem fairly evident already; others may inevitably sweep out to notional vagueness. Yet put together, and effectively demonstrated throughout the text, they provide plenty of stimulating concepts and insightful comparisons. In sum, Professor MacDonald's volume shows in lucid, most engaging fashion why his selected, often very similar urban communities grew and stayed as "distant neighbours" on through their joint experience.

University of Toronto, Emeritus J. M. S. CARELESS

Part of the Land, Part of the Water: A History of the Yukon Indians, by Catherine McClellan with Lucie Birckel, Robert Bringhurst, James Fall, Carol McCarthy and Janice Sheppard. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1987. Pp. 328.

What a remarkable publishing achievement! *Part of the Land, Part of the Water* is at once informative, accessible, scholarly, beautifully illustrated, innovative, and finely crafted. Catherine McClellan, highly regarded Yukon anthropologist and main writer/co-ordinator for this volume, is deserving of the highest praise for her work on bringing this project to completion. Similarly, the Council of Yukon Indians and the Yukon Department of Education, co-sponsors of this book, to be used as a

school text, deserve great commendation for supporting this unique undertaking.

It is hard — and perhaps unnecessary — to categorize this book. Despite the subtitle, it is far more (though in some ways less) than a history of the Yukon Indians. *Part of the Land* begins with fictionalized accounts of native life at different time periods, and then proceeds to a fine description of the geography of the upper Yukon River basin, profusely illustrated with well-chosen colour photographs. This introductory section leaves the reader with an excellent sense of the homeland of the Yukon Indians. Following two short historical chapters, the book offers a thorough analysis of aboriginal customs, lifestyle, and traditions. For the final segment of the book, native elders from around the territory were asked to share their stories, legends, and ideas. Here, in their words, is offered a powerful set of commentaries on native life in the North.

There is much to applaud in this book. McClellan has allowed the native elders to tell large segments of the story themselves; their words add authenticity and spiritual power to the volume. As well, the photographs about — and often by — the Indian people are particularly effective. There are few of the usual posed photos by professional non-native photographers, and an abundance of personal photographs, a number taken by McClellan during her years of field study, that take one deep inside native culture in the territory. The anthropological sections of the book are especially effective, avoiding the jargon that sometimes infects scholarly works in this field, and should be readily accessible to the students for whom this book is intended. This book has been warmly received by native people in the Yukon; the reasons for that enthusiasm are obvious.

Inevitably, there are a few quibbles. It is odd that *Part of the Land* is subtitled *A History of the Yukon Indians*. The book is many things — a profile, an introduction, an anthropology, a cultural analysis, a window on unique and threatened cultures; but it is not a history in the conventional sense. The historical sections are short and, in a book that is remarkably free of errors, not always reliable. More worrisome, there are major historical questions that are completely ignored. There is, for example, virtually no discussion of the impact of alcohol on aboriginal peoples, and the material on contemporary natives in the Yukon gives scant indication of the social and cultural crisis that currently pervades native life in the region. The avoidance of these crucial — and very painful — issues leaves the book unfortunately incomplete. There are a few additional problems. The book is weighted toward the southern Yukon — the area of Catherine McClellan's field work — and does not give equal weight to

other areas of the territory, the bibliography is unnecessarily brief, particularly for a book designed for school use, and the index is far from comprehensive.

Part of the Land, Part of the Water is a wonderful celebration of native life in the Yukon Territory. It explores and illuminates the richness of their culture and the beauty and bounty of their homeland. It documents the natives' efforts to maintain their relationship with the land and, through its laudable inclusion of the words of native elders, offers convincing evidence of the persistence of an aboriginal world view in Canada's North. Dr. McClellan and her assistants have provided a truly spectacular textbook that is deserving of a wide audience outside the Yukon Territory.

University of Victoria KEN COATES

The Chilliwacks and Their Neighbors, by Oliver N. Wells; edited by Ralph Maud, Brent Galloway, and Marie Weeden. Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1987. Pp. 226; index, illustrations, maps, notes, and epilogues.

Oliver Wells' untimely death in 1970 left unfinished what was to be a major anthology of research on the Chilliwack Indians of the Fraser Valley. According to his daughter, Marie Weeden, Wells intended to include relevant material from the works of Boas, Hill-Tout, Reverend Thomas Crosby and others, but "modesty would have prevented him from including much of his own researches" (p. 13, n. 1). Had Wells lived to publish his completed ethnology, much of the vitality and freshness of his approach might have been lost had he subsumed his own research under the work of more widely known ethnographers and writers.

The introductory thirty pages of the book contain Marie Weeden's Preface, two published eulogies for Wells, a brief memoir by his wife, his own introduction and background notes to the planned anthology, a note by Maud on presentation of interviews, and a discussion, by Galloway, of Wells' Halkomelem language material. The major section of the book is devoted to virtually verbatim transcriptions of portions of selected interviews by Wells with seven Chilliwack Indian elders and five members of neighbouring tribes, an interview with P. R. Jeffcott, who had written on the Nooksak, and excerpts from Wells' work published elsewhere. The transcriptions are divided into three phases of Wells' interviews: 1962, 1964, and 1965 to 1967. The final component is a loose assortment of

items under the heading, Epilogues. Each of these sections deserves comment.

The tributes to Wells, including newspaper articles and reminiscences by his wife and daughter, provide interesting glimpses into the character of this farmer, stock breeder, and scholar. His determination to record "a true picture of the native in his native land" (p. 13) stemmed, in part, from his interest in his pioneer family and in local history. By 1962, Wells was enhancing his research of native Indian culture history by tape-recording interviews with "older friends among the Native people" (p. 13). Aside from these tributes, this section of the book is perhaps most valuable for Galloway's excellent discussion of Halkomelem. The equivalency key for the three writing systems used to record native languages is helpful for native Indian readers and professional linguists and anthropologists. Accompanied by Galloway's clear explanation of pronunciation, the key should be useful for the diligent novice, as well. Offering examples from familiar English utterances, Galloway describes, more coherently than is usually the case in pronunciation guides, how to form sounds not common in English.

Weeden's Preface and Maud's Note on the Text provide a rationale for the manner in which the interview transcriptions are presented by the editors. Weeden justifies the inclusion of almost verbatim interviews when she remarks,

> we wanted to present the transcriptions in such a way that they would capture the essence of not only the historical information but also the experience of those moments of communication that took place between Oliver and his Native friends. (p. 7)

Maud confronts the problem of transcribing non-standard English with further justification for a verbatim approach:

> Fidelity to the actual words and dialects used seemed to be the best policy, on the assumption that speakers would rather be recognizably themselves than given a false 'standard' English. (p. 21)

Although this sensitivity to the native Indian dialect of English must be applauded and encouraged, the transcriptions make for somewhat disjointed reading, except when myths and historical events are narrated in full. The alternation between Wells' questions and comments and the informant's response does yield insights into Wells' relationship with informants and his interviewing techniques but eventually becomes rather tedious.

A more important problem with the organization of this major section

of the book is that adherence to a literal rendering of the interviews combined with an emphasis on the chronological progress of Wells' fieldwork does not produce an integrated picture of Chilliwack native cultural history. Wells' interviews tend to be informative but sometimes rambling conversations rather than structured ethnographic inquiries. The editors suggest a developmental theme in terms of Wells' interview sessions, and the transcriptions may indeed retain the desired "moments of communication" (p. 7), but the division of transcriptions into three time periods does not lend much coherence to the ethnographic material. Some compromise between transcription and ethnographic continuity, between the spontaneity of Wells' dialogue with his native friends and a more formal, patterned approach to culture history data would have made the book more useful to scholars and, quite likely, more readable and comprehensible to the non-professional.

Themes do emerge, of course. Wells had a long-time resident's interest in Chilliwack Indian place names and family names, and many of the interviews include detailed information on these topics. Whether this information will be as interesting to the non-resident reader is difficult to determine. Themes of wider appeal deal with Coast Salish spirit dancing, origins and display of the *skwikway* (*sxwayxwey*) mask, the double-headed serpent, Salish blanket weaving, conversion to Christianity, canoe carving, and a variety of myths. There is no question that the information on many of these topics is valuable, but they are scattered throughout the interviews. Moreover, the Index contains only Halkomelem terms and Indian and non-Indian personal and place names. Some attempt to index major cultural and historical topics would have enhanced considerably the book's usefulness for further comparative work. Maud does invite interested scholars to contact the editors for access to the complete transcriptions, but the invitation is not a substitute for adequate indexing of the published selections. Furthermore, photographs, maps, and some unique illustrations by Wells are not listed.

The Epilogues consist of an article by Wells on Salish weaving, a letter from Wells written shortly before his death, and a list of Halkomelem terms from his 1966 map, *Indian Territory 1858*. Unfortunately, the resulting pastiche does not provide an effective conclusion, an analytic and integrating overview, to either the nature of Wells' fieldwork or the potentially valuable ethnographic detail on the Chilliwack.

In conclusion, it should be noted that the editors of *The Chilliwacks and Their Neighbors* were faced with a difficult task. Undoubtedly, there were time and other practical constraints to contend with, as well as the

inherent problems in transcribing and ordering an unfinished, posthumous work. Should the material be extensively reshaped in the editing process to create a finished product? Or, should editing be kept to a minimum so that the author's work stands relatively untouched? Wells himself clearly had other ideas for the material. There was, moreover, an understandable desire on the part of Wells' family to honour the spirit of this remarkable man (Weeden, p. 7). The editors have attempted to resolve these concerns by letting the transcriptions speak for themselves with little commentary or analysis. As a result, the final product may be less satisfying to researchers and to those unfamiliar with the Chilliwack area than to native Indian people and other local residents with considerable background knowledge.

Camosun College MARJORIE MITCHELL

Uncommon Property: The Fishing and Fish-Processing Industries in British Columbia, edited by Patricia Marchak, Neil Guppy and John McMullan. Toronto: Methuen, 1987. Pp. 402.

Let's get one thing straight — this collection contains a great deal of valuable, original information about the Pacific fisheries. That said, however, the book is a hybrid between a collection of articles and a research project report. There are some excellent articles within the collection but overall it does not hold together *as a book*. It speaks with several voices, contains different directions and has no binding theme, aside from the broad subject of the B.C. fisheries.

Each of the three editors (Patricia Marchak, Neil Guppy and John McMullan) contributed two of the thirteen articles while Marchak also wrote the Introduction and Conclusion. Evelyn Pinkerton wrote three chapters, Alicja Muszynski two, and Stephen Garrod and Keith Warriner one each. None of the writing is done collectively, and this is evident in the final product.

Fisheries is an exciting site of investigation, especially on the west coast, since it includes factors of capital and labour, the state, race and ethnicity, gender relations, co-operative and union struggles, all bound within an ecologically sensitive setting. The papers in the present collection each contribute in significant ways to our understanding of these practices.

Following Marchak's theoretical discussion of common property and the state which outlines the complex "labour status" of fishers, the collection divides into three parts. Part 1, called Capital and State, has the

task of providing the most elementary background information. McMullan gives basic historical information on the development of B.C. fisheries and gear types. Muszynski documents a detailed investigation of early processors and their labour forces. Pinkerton provides a stark but reasonably thorough report on competitive conditions in the B.C. salmon, herring, and halibut markets. Garrod presents an informative description of the world salmon market. McMullan delivers a thoroughly researched, densely packed, lengthy analysis of the history and contemporary relations between the state and capital, outlining the process of steady capital concentration and state contradiction. Marchak concludes the section with a piece cutely called "Because Fish Swim" on international conflicts within the fishery. It is informative but based upon secondary literature, especially building on work by Barbara Johnson on the law of the sea.

Part 2 on Labour and Organization is the most important section of the collection. Most notable are the scholarly contributions on shoreworkers by Guppy and Muszynski and on natives by Pinkerton. Guppy has two key chapters: Labouring at Sea and Labouring on Shore. The piece on working at sea is valuable, building on original data and insightful analysis which is carefully documented and argued. It is a somewhat eclectic but exceptionally rich paper dealing with divisions in the fisheries within and between fleet sectors. Guppy makes the insightful observation that fishers "are indeed independent commodity *producers* but not independent commodity *sellers*." Especially interesting is his original analysis of crew members and the issues of health and safety. Working on shore proves to be volatile work (seasonal with fluctuating demand) built on reserve labour, with only about a quarter of the labour force employed year-round and women as 70 percent of the total labour force. The labour process described is a disassembly-line with a clearly documented technical division of labour for salmon and herring processing. Guppy finds that women's jobs "are routine and monotonous, stationary and seasonal." He also outlines an ethnic division of labour whereby Asian and native men tend to cluster in the worst jobs with all women against advantaged men of European background.

Marchak addresses the complicated problem of disentangling organizations within the fishery. She does convey the complexity, but I would partially disagree with various points of analysis, such as her opening statement on co-ops: "The problem of categorizing fisheries disappears when we consider those fishers who own processing firms. For them, the market subservience is overcome. Moreover, they are employers of labour, and in that respect, unambiguously capital." Briefly, I think this statement is

naïve on the meaning of "ownership" by co-op members, including their highly mediated relationship with shoreworkers, and is silent on the important category of crew members, not to mention significant differences between co-op trollers, gillnetters, and seiners in capital-labour relations.

Pinkerton's chapter on native people is well written, telling in a succinct way the history of native participation in the west coast fishery. It is especially strong on segmentation within the native community between licence holders and those excluded from licences and, of course, shoreworkers. Native shoreworkers (mostly women), Pinkerton notes, support the United Fishermen and Allied Workers' Union even at times over the protests of the Native Brotherhood. The piece is excellent at locating the natives in the fishery, within their communities, and vis-à-vis the state.

The final chapter in this part by Muszynski on shoreworkers is based upon a careful search of the *Fisherman* newspaper, documenting the union's struggle to overcome discrimination based on gender and ethnicity, focusing upon intra-union divisions between shoreworkers and fishers. She documents the shoreworkers' central place within the union's bargaining strength.

Part 3 on Community and Region is less substantial than the other sections. Pinkerton's chapter on communities is a case study of Tofino, a fishing centre, and Ahousaht, a native village, concerning changes in the impact of fishing on social life over time. Warriner's chapter on regionalism documents broad changes in the number and size of coastal communities, demonstrating a strong connection between vulnerable development in coastal locations and urban-based actions. The collection ends with a brief concluding statement by Marchak focusing on current events.

Overall, I would say *Uncommon Property* is a welcome and valuable resource book essential for anyone interested in the west coast fisheries. More than that, however, the key chapters by Guppy, Pinkerton, and Muszynski in Part 2 and one on the state by McMullan in Part 1 are classic articles in the field and deserve to be widely cited as insightful, original contributions to Canadian political economy.

Carleton University WALLACE CLEMENT

Three Dollar Dreams, by Lynne Bowen. Lantzville: Oolichan, 1987.

Lynne Bowen's second book on the Vancouver Island coalfield is, like the first, a halfway house between scholarly interpretation and "popular" local history. As a compendium of (much-needed) facts, stories, anecdotes,

and biography it will be invaluable to specialists and satisfying to the general reader. As an exercise in systematic social history, or as a contribution to the critique of political economy (although Marx would certainly approve of the title, which speaks to the cash nexus of the community) it falls, however, short of the mark. As such, it will inevitably draw the fire of some specialists, who may be particularly irked by the method of documentation. The author and/or the publisher decided to dispense with traditional footnotes in favour of a three-page summary of sources consulted, by chapter, linked with a twelve-page bibliography. The method works well enough for the secondary sources, but provides few clues to the actual use of the extensive primary documents and newspapers cited. The "local" prism can also distort as well as illuminate. The Laurierite miner-politician Ralph Smith is described as "the first socialist M.P. in Ottawa." Doubtless local Tories and many miners saw him in that light, but the issue is not clarified by the qualifying statement that "Smith's allegiance fluctuated between the Socialists and Liberals during his tenure." (Having published an article in 1985 designed to clear up long-standing and understandable confusion about the relationship between socialists and workers in the coalfields, I have of course a personal axe to grind.) Similarly, there is a grain of local truth behind Bowen's assertion that governmental hostility toward the Western Federation of Miners "led to its being outlawed in 1903." The coal owners and Mackenzie King wanted the miners to believe that their union was outlawed, and apparently the perception stuck in folkloric traditions Bowen draws so richly upon. But we are not aware of any relevant statute or court decisions on this point.

Typically these errors come on the heels of an evocatively detailed account of the long struggle for collective bargaining in the nineteenth-century coalfield that is the focus of the book. "Three dollar dreams" were, precisely, a $3.00-a-day union wage. Attention to the larger regional context would have put this figure into perspective. Coal mining was more dangerous in the 1880s than at any time before or after, but it was also more lucrative. Three dollars would be a basic demand in Lethbridge or Crow's Nest Pass a generation later, which shows that the miners, like King Coal himself, were moving backwards after the heyday of the Knights of Labor and its cousin on Vancouver Island, the Miners and Mine Labourers' Protective Association. In brief, academic labour history is at once positively challenged by, and has a few pithead grievances with, Ms. Bowen. Neo-Marxist sociologists of race and class could also learn a great deal from her empirical observations on the complexities of conflict

and accommodation between white and Chinese workers, while crying out for an organizing theory.

In the final analysis, Bowen is a traditional if non-conventional (in the best sense of the term, most of the time) historian concerned with the interplay of character and circumstance in interpreting the coalfield's greater or lesser personalities, from the "reigning capitalist of the province" in the 1880s, Robert Dunsmuir, to obscure proletarian figures like Tully Boyce, the Irish-American who led the union and labour party on the Island in the 1890s, paving the way for Ralph Smith, who ended *his* career as provincial Minister of Finance. This topic is obviously broad enough to encompass Bowen's special project of unearthing the human landscape beneath the rubble of de-industrialization and official neglect that has cursed the coalfield.

Though she does not spare the rod in dealing critically with the coal owners, Bowen does not spoil the subject with shrill, moralistic condemnation of the sort that has marred much of the leftish literature that touches on this vitally important class in nineteenth-century British Columbia. If there is a hero of the piece, it is Samuel Robins of the English-owned Nanaimo (Vancouver) Coal Company, who maintained a return-on-investment from his properties (which outproduced the scab-herding Dunsmuir family as late as 1891) without "crucifying" the working class. How this trick was actually turned remains a mystery, but Bowen's references to Robins' Christian charity are corroborated by recent research into more-or-less systematically generated data from the manuscript census and local directories in the 1890s. The coal company's oft-cited but unstudied policy of settling the "better class" of colliers on small agricultural plots may have been the key. At that level of industrialization, mining and petty production on the land were complementary, not conflicting, modes for *both* labour and capital. The English operators could enforce a sliding scale of wages without undue misery and strife, while *some* workers enjoyed a large measure of economic autonomy. This, it seems, was the notion that the Dunsmuir family could never countenance. Ironically, it was the Dunsmuirs who controlled all but a fraction of the actual land base of industrial Vancouver Island, and Bowen pays proper attention to the infamous E & N Land Grant of 1884, which, next to the love of money, was the root of all evil in the coalfield.

The coal owners deserve more attention, and Bowen appears to be moving in that direction. One hopes that she will not be drawn into merely elaborating that which we already know — the Scots-Canadians versus the English — and embellishing the thesis of generational nuances among the

Dunsmuirs (Robert, the elder, "went out of his way to treat his men fairly" on occasion, she believes, while James was a tidier but more tyrannical employer). All things considered, the nineteenth-century coal industry *looks* like a rare, working model of something like the staples theory of economic growth; why and how was this so? Members of the enlightened bourgeoisie who may pick up *Three Dollar Dreams* for a quick read will go away with a knowledge of their sophistication in matters of "industrial relations," but the coal owners of the nineteenth century yield to no one in such matters as successful turning to account of Canadian federalism: Bowen includes marvellous vignettes of the tryst between Dunsmuir and John A. Macdonald which signalled the rosy dawn of regional accumulation in the 1880s. The coal owners also possessed a finer sense of the value of commodities; Dunsmuir robbed the miners of their dust and slack and manufactured it into coke. Their maritime activities — industrial Vancouver Island had what Cape Breton nearly always lacked: a reliable fleet of ships — make us bow *our* heads in shame, and we clearly need to know more about mining-related arts and crafts of industry such as Dunsmuir's Albion Iron Works in Victoria. But why did neither the English nor the Dunsmuirs survive long past the *fin de siècle*? What was the fatal flaw that ensured that the miners' fight for "a three dollar dream" would some day bring lasting benefits to the whole of the working classes, with one exception — the coal miners themselves?

Simon Fraser University ALLEN SEAGER

Workers, Capital, and the State in British Columbia: Selected Papers, edited by Rennie Warburton and David Coburn. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988. Pp. 288. $28.95.

Conventional wisdom has it that if class is an operative process anywhere in Canada it is in British Columbia. Not all conventional wisdoms are wrong, but few escape revisionist assault. In a 1980 article in *BC Studies*, Peter Ward decided to take on conventionality and argue that race, not class, was the fundamental cleavage in the social structure of the west coast. His article was a conceptual chaos, noteworthy for its capacity to misstate fundamental theoretical positions — such as that of Edward Thompson — and reconstruct and appropriate them for his own purposes. Useful as something of a straw man, the essay did serve notice that it was important for those aligned with the primacy of class to restate with rigour

their reasons for according utmost importance to the social relations of productive life, and the attendant domestic, cultural, and political forms that both emerged out of such class relations and could shape the contours that class took in its historical development.

This eclectic collection of essays is haunted by the ghost of Ward. To be sure, not every author addresses the argument that race is of more significance in understanding the social structure of British Columbia than class, but many do. In the absence of much in the way of shared concerns, methodologies, or interpretations, these essays are loosely gathered around some rather broad themes, encompassed in the collection's title: workers, capital, and the state. There is room here for historians and sociologists, political scientists and economists, as well as for those embracing a modified Innisian staples approach and those gravitating toward a more orthodox Marxist stress on capitalist development.

What provides the book with its direction, however, is rejection of the Ward hypothesis. In their Introduction Warburton and Coburn take direct aim at Ward, declaring that they "strongly disagree with those who maintain that class struggle is not as important as, for example, race, or that it no longer occupies the central position it once held in earlier phases of the province's history" (p. 3). The editors sidestep quietly a parallel feminist argument — that gender divisions are more fundamental than those of class — while paying due homage to the significance of gender relations. They then proceed, however, virtually to ignore, except at the most abstract level, the concrete relationships of class and gender.

At least one author, Gillian Creese, who writes on Chinese and Japanese immigrants in the 1880-1923 years, gestures toward the importance of gender relations, but her point is made rather mechanically: "The radical nature of trade union and political organization documented by Phillips and others is the history of white male workers, and much of it was explicitly racist and sexist in content contextualized in terms of the struggle between capital and labour in the province" (p. 72). Aside from the problem of just what exactly this sentence means, there is an identifiable contradiction between Creese's critique of the historiography and her implicit call for a history attentive to gender. In the absence of any research into family relations among an ethnically segmented work force, the views of women workers themselves, the ways in which working-class fathers and mothers, in conjunction with the state educational system and other institutions of the hegemonic order, raised their children to think in racist/sexist or emancipatory notions of the world, or the social character of working-class neighbourhoods and communities and how they came into being,

Creese's statement is a rather easy ideological condemnation. It is an interesting indication of how specific feminist sensibilities can actually silence women as historical actors and impose upon them a subordination that is as mythological and presentist in its construction as it is grounded in anything approximating historical reality. For surely it is absolutely wrong to claim that the radical nature of labour politics and organization was simply the history of male workers. It is as if the miners' wives did not exist and were not walking picket lines and discussing alternatives, as if women and children played no role in the class struggle. It is as if families were somehow abstracted from political economies, as if commodities and services were not mediated by relations cut to the very bone by a social life ordered and articulated, not only by the harsh subordinations imposed by capital, but also by the reciprocities and ambivalences of same-class male-female experience. Surely feminists should be capable of grasping the totality of class formation to understand that virtually nothing is an entirely male preserve, even if that is the way it has been presented by historians blind to the role of women, families, and the reproductive realm.

Both Allen Seager and Jeannie Meyers attempt reconstructions of such many-sided processes of class formation in their studies of New Westminster class conflicts (1900-1930) and the important Fraser Mills strike of 1931. Each author demonstrates the possibilities of class solidarity as opposed to the fragmentations of race, and both are attentive to the importance of community-based class struggles that drew men, women, and non-white/ethnic sections of the working class together. Seager, along with Michael Kew ("Making Indians"), raises the critical issue of the state's role in constructing race and class, offering a suggestive sentence: "There are also excellent reasons to believe that the census category of 'labourer' in British Columbia was in part a racial category into which low-status Asian immigrants were habitually structured, literally as well as figuratively" (p. 119). His conclusion that in New Westminster the "Oriental Question" was nothing more than a managerial nightmare of labour indiscipline is more than a little one-sided in its refusal to confront the extent to which workers internalized and incorporated the ideological content of capital's racism, structured into the rigid segmentations of a labour market orchestrated according to skin colour. But it is nevertheless a useful corrective to much discussion of working-class anti-Orientalism and ethnocentrism, in which the material moorings of racial differentiation are lost in a maze of voluntaristic explanation.

There are other diverse essays included in this volume. They range in their focus across a broad spectrum of topics and chronological periods,

encompassing discussion of early state formation, collective action among salmon fishery workers in the opening years of the twentieth century, public policy in the forestry industry, and workers' control at B.C. Tel in the 1980s. A closing essay addresses the long history of class relations among the province's schoolteachers. Little seems, at times, to hold these discrete analytic forays into the province's history together. Warburton's conclusion on capitalist social relations in British Columbia goes some distance toward resolving this problem, but a much-needed interpretive coherence is still lacking.

The book ends with a statement of purpose: "The dissemination of knowledge about the episodes examined in this volume is intended to be a small contribution to the education of those involved" (p. 285). Warburton wants the workers to learn from their history. It is an admirable aim, easier, however, to proclaim than to put into practice. University of British Columbia Press seems to have read this last line, taken it seriously, and tried to create a form that, in their vision of the process whereby class consciousness is instilled subversively in the working class, corresponds to the content and purpose of the book — for they have packaged it so that it appears as if wrapped in a grey paper bag, suitable for sale under the counter at your local class-struggle outlet.

Queen's University BRYAN D. PALMER

Beyond the Blue Mountains: An Autobiography, by George Woodcock. Markham: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1988. Pp. 300. $24.95 cloth.

Beyond the Blue Mountains is the second volume of George Woodcock's autobiography, covering the period from his return to Canada in 1949 to his retirement as editor of *Canadian Literature* in 1977. Even those acquainted with Woodcock's career will be struck by the fullness of his life during these years and the prodigious extent and variety of his accomplishments.

Woodcock's opening account of his attempt to combine subsistence farming with an intellectual life offers a foretaste of the determination with which he addressed life throughout this period. In pursuit of this immigrant dream he built a cabin in the forests of Vancouver Island not once but twice. His attempts to live by his writing in the Canada of 1949 were equally quixotic, though royalties, radio talks, articles, friends, and, eventually, fellowships enabled him somehow to survive and carry out his

regular travels in Europe. A session of teaching at the University of Washington would have led to a very different New World career had the American authorities not prohibited his immigration on the grounds of his anarchist past. He finally found financial security in a teaching position at the University of British Columbia, a job which metamorphosed into the editorship of *Canadian Literature* after he had created that journal in 1959.

Long after he had thus established himself in Canada, Woodcock sustained his place in the English literary world through such writings as his history of Anarchism and his biographies of George Orwell, Aldous Huxley, and Herbert Read. If it offered nothing else, this volume would be of value for its personal glimpses of the literary scene in England, in the United States, through Woodcock's acquaintance with such figures as Kenneth Rexroth and Theodore Roethke, and in Canada, where Woodcock knew all of the leading writers. There is, in this connection, a puzzling omission in the chapter entitled "Literary Skirmishes." Woodcock's account of a legal confrontation between Margaret Atwood and the editor of *Northern Review* ends in mid-sentence at the foot of page 267. There is no leaf missing; a new chapter begins with page 270 printed on the verso of 267.

Much of *Blue Mountains* is occupied with Woodcock's travels, both domestic — to explore native villages, interview Doukhobors, or visit the Arctic — and world-wide. Most of these travels served, and were financed by, his writing projects, from travel books such as *South Sea Journey* and *Faces of India* to the biographies and other intensive studies such as *The Greeks in India* and *Kerala*. His journey to Mexico, typically, yielded five articles and a verse play for radio. Readers will be rewarded by Woodcock's astute commentary, particularly on the Indian sub-continent, to which he formed a deep attachment, even straying into philanthropy to organize the very successful Tibetan Refugee Aid Society after an acquaintance with the Dalai Lama.

Most readers will be abashed at Woodcock's capacity for life and his enormous productivity in editing and writing books, articles, plays, radio scripts, librettos, translations, and poetry. While writing *Who Killed the British Empire* (a work he compares with Gibbon's) he took on extra tasks, as he says, "to vary my work and earn ready money," including a series of lectures on philosophic pessimism treating Nietzsche, Spengler, Julian Benda, Ortega y Gasset, and Albert Camus. His ninety-minute verse drama on Maximilian he completed in five days; his *Gabriel Dumont* he completed "just three hours off schedule." I had a personal glimpse of

Woodcock's incredible efficiency when, in 1966, I submitted to him my fledgling attempt at a critical article. During that year he had five books coming off the press and was actually writing two, yet my manuscript was returned promptly with a full page of carefully detailed editorial advice. Those who come to Woodcock's autobiography looking for a bomb-throwing anarchist may be disappointed to find all this purposeful and constructive activity directed to ends so consistent with the values of a cultivated professional class.

Beyond the Blue Mountains is as readable and as rich in significant event as the first volume of Woodcock's autobiography, *Letter to the Past*, yet it is finally less satisfying. Its limitations may be partly explained by an observation Woodcock makes in *Letter*, that he reached maturity as a poet at about twenty-eight and as a prose writer at thirty-three. His style and literary persona were established, he says, and "by the time I published *William Godwin* my world view was established, and my perceptions of existence have not changed greatly since then. . . ." Woodcock returned to Canada mature and complete, and while this later segment of his life is not without crises and well-explained development, the details he recounts lack the universal significance of growth to maturity, and their sequence lacks the satisfying natural form of the *Kunstlerroman* that shapes the earlier volume. The narrative proceeds, like the writer's mature life, from one achievement to the next, chronicling the success of the expert craftsman more than the growth of the artist or the man.

It is surprising to see Woodcock describe his "metamorphosis from an English-oriented writer living in Canada to a Canadian writer" as taking more than twenty years after his return and as, in part, an accidental slide tipped by the negligent behaviour of British publishers. George Woodcock is generally regarded as a pivotal figure in Canadian literature during its period of most dynamic development. It may be useful to consider his career not only as an influence but as an analogue to the process by which an essentially immigrant literature has taken root in Canadian soil.

University of Alberta DICK HARRISON