

Book Reviews

British Columbia: A History of the Province, by George Woodcock. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1990. xv, 288 pp. Illus. \$34.95 cloth.

Anyone familiar with even a small sample of the more than forty books by George Woodcock will expect "a good read"; his most recent volume will not disappoint such readers. Others, and they must be few in number, will enjoy their discovery of one of our most lucid and engaging prose writers. With enormous skill Woodcock presents a great deal of information without compromising style and readability. Thanks to the author's extensive travels over many years, his strong sense of place, and his descriptive powers, the physical features of this most diverse of provinces are often vividly present to the reader.

In introducing his book, the author notes that the last general history of British Columbia, Margaret Ormsby's, was published more than thirty years ago, while Martin Robin's more specifically political and avowedly radical two volume history was completed nearly two decades ago. Woodcock's justification for writing another general history is hardly necessary, for, as he points out, earlier histories inevitably become outdated with the passage of time, which brings new research and different perspectives. However, a new history is warranted in Woodcock's view "even more because of shared limits of approach. Both [Ormsby and Robin] are essentially histories from the point of view of the white population." Promising to remedy this defect by presenting a reconstruction of native cultures 'before history' and an understanding of their continuing significance, Woodcock delivers admirably on his promise.

In emphasizing the role of native peoples in the history of the province, Woodcock is not simply responding to current fashion, for his credentials as a student of Indian cultures have been well established in several earlier books going back to the 1950s, although he now considers some of that work to be "superficial in its insights." His emphasis on native cultures allows the author to devote over half the book to the colonial period before

British Columbia's entry into the Canadian confederation in 1871 when three-quarters of the population were still rooted in those cultures. After that, attention is increasingly directed toward the activities of white people, but the Indian peoples are always visible as actors in history, in recent times progressively recovering a positive identity and "beginning to face the white men as Maquinna faced Cook, equal and distinct."

Woodcock captures well the rapacious and exploitive character of the province's economic development and the politics based on it. How much is summarized in his reference to the 1880s premier, Robert Beaven, as "the first of a series of politically weak leaders who would act as servants rather than restrainers of the economic and political predators about to descend on the vast storehouse of natural resources that was British Columbia." A century later how little had changed!

While fully depicting entrepreneurial vigour at the top of society, Woodcock gives considerable attention to working men (little to women), their trade unions, and the socialist parties they supported. Other challenges to the dominant patterns of society are found in the utopian communities which have been notable features of the province, and of long-standing interest to Woodcock, beginning with his studies of Doukobhor settlements. Well before the Doukobhors, missionaries of several denominations had established model communities — "villages of God," as Woodcock describes them. The first and most famous of these, Metlakatla, William Duncan's settlement of Tsimshians near Port Simpson, was typical of others in attempting to rescue its inhabitants not only from a pagan past but also from the worst features of the modern world, as these were defined by the Victorian missionary mind.

Woodcock explores the impact since World War II of successive waves of immigrants, especially Asians, which has now made the province *British Columbia* "only in name and in history." Acknowledging that the life of the province is not totally devoted to "getting and spending," Woodcock gives concise but illuminating attention to the expansion of education and the growth of the creative and performing arts.

Three maps show the territories of the major groups of native peoples, early fur trade routes and posts, and the later development of transportation, while forty-five well-chosen black-and-white photographs of people and places from Captain Cook to W. A. C. Bennett add much to a handsome volume.

Totem Poles, by Hilary Stewart. Vancouver and Seattle: Douglas & McIntyre, 1990. 192 pp. Illus., maps. \$29.95 cloth.

As still another example of the "Tradition and Revival" genre of Northwest Coast Native art books, Hilary Stewart's *Totem Poles* is pure formula. Part I describes a traditional culture in the past tense; Part II mixes past and present tenses (see below) in a romanticized discussion of totem poles and the artist heroes said to be responsible for reviving them (*cf.*, the absurd claim that "Several Nuu-chah-nulth artist-carvers have re-established many of the values and ceremonies of their culture. . . ." p. 47); Part III is a catalogue of images and anecdotal stories about 113 poles, most of them carved in the past two decades.

With authenticity confined to previous centuries, twentieth century cultural difference becomes more of the same, and totem poles are celebrated as anachronisms. Notice the use of the past tense in the following sentences from Stewart's section on "The Depiction of Legends":

Some aspects of these legends may seem mystifying in today's world, but that does not negate their reality to a people whose culture encompassed a spiritual and cosmic understanding of their environment. Traditional knowledge lies behind these marvelous stories handed down from early times, and belief in them was as closely held as those of any other deeply rooted culture or religion. (p. 42)

Stewart's *Totem Poles* might have still been useful had Part III been a much needed survey of the "proliferation of new totem poles," including those "placed along highways; at ferry terminals; in parks, gardens and shopping plazas; outside hotels, public buildings, tourist bureaus, schools and, of course, museums" (pp. 7-8). Many of these are indeed here, but many remain uncatalogued. Stewart's purpose here is to present a selection of both old and new poles "useful to the traveller" (p. 8), i.e., marking century-old tourist routes north from the U.S.-British Columbia border to Juneau, Alaska. She does not rationalize her choices beyond referring to "space limitations," the wishes of the villages of Kitwanga and Kitwancool not to be included, letting us know that "several good poles that I would have liked to include have been left out," and "some poles of lesser quality have been included for special reasons" (p. 8).

Not that "quality" is really permitted to matter here, for the catalogue of poles in Part III features Stewart's own drawings. "The different styles of design on totem poles among Northwest Coast peoples may at first look alike," she writes (p. 46) — and indeed they do, for her own heavy style dominates the subtleties of its subjects.

Nor is the text any more respectful. In a review in the *Times Colonist* (10 November 1990, p. A12), Nimpkish band member and former curator of the U'Mista Cultural Centre in Alert Bay, Gloria Cranmer Webster, discusses some dozen factual errors (including some in information she personally provided to Stewart) and then writes, "There is neither time nor space to list all the mistakes in her book which relate just to our own cultural area." She concludes that "it is offensive to us that the culture we have struggled to keep alive is presented in so careless and insensitive a manner."

It seems to me important to take advantage of the opportunity such books offer to ponder this question of Respect. Perhaps the escalating political resistance of native and other Others to mainstream appropriation and (mis)representation is anchored here. All re-presentation of people, things, actions, and events is always already interpretation. When offered with respect, re-presentation can enhance and affirm; when it is self-serving, it dominates and diminishes. Those of us in the culture business, including publishers, had better learn the difference.

University of British Columbia

MARJORIE HALPIN

A Fruitful Century: The British Columbia Fruit Growers' Association, 1889-1989, by David Dendy and Kathleen M. Kyle. Kelowna: British Columbia Fruit Growers' Association, 1990. xii, 207 pp. Illus. \$27.50.

David Dendy's and Kathleen Kyle's *A Fruitful Century: The British Columbia Fruit Growers' Association 1889-1989* is first and foremost an institutional history of one of the province's most enduring agricultural associations. Of perhaps more interest to the average reader, it also offers a history of the tree fruit industry in the Okanagan Valley. Dendy justifies the dual nature of the book by arguing that "the history of the Association would make little sense without the background of the history of the industry it serves." He might have added that the need to provide extensive context also arises from a serious lack of historical scholarship on the tree fruit industry and provincial agriculture in general.

The book is divided into six chapters — the first five by Dendy and the last by Kyle. They are arranged chronologically and represent periods dominated by particular concerns. The majority of the narrative is devoted to the institutional development of the British Columbia Fruit Growers' Association (BCFGA) and, to a lesser extent, the growth of the tree fruit industry and regulating legislation. Interesting stories or anecdotes not

directly pertaining to the narrative are relegated to numerous "Vignettes." While the vignettes are clearly delineated from the text, they tend to physically disrupt the flow of the narrative. The text is also interspersed with numerous illustrations.

Although individual chapters revolve around specific issues, a number of concerns are common to all periods, and they provide the study's unifying threads. Several appear to be characteristic of British Columbian agriculture in general; these include persistent problems with marketing, a lack of farmer co-operation, and intense competition from growers south of the border. Much of the BCFGA's first century was spent working to overcome these difficulties through the dissemination of information and, at times, the lobbying of government to enact favourable legislation. More commonly, the BCFGA has attempted to achieve its goals by close co-operation with government and the creation of co-operative marketing and processing ventures such as B.C. Tree Fruits Ltd. and Sun-Rype Products Ltd. The association's at times cosy relationship with government and its strong advocacy of central marketing has not always found favour with its membership, and tension between growers and the BCFGA is a recurrent and ongoing theme.

With a few exceptions, most notably the final chapter, *A Fruitful Century* is well written and its documentation is impressive for a book not primarily aimed at the academic market. The fact that Dendy has at least a master's degree in history helps explain the extensive documentation; a paucity of scholarship on the agricultural history of B.C. similarly accounts for the preponderance of primary sources. Another notable strength is the vignettes. They help maintain the reader's interest and add a human dimension that is so often absent in institutional histories. The vignettes cover diverse topics ranging from the post Second World War Portuguese immigrant community to the marketing strategies and cultural messages behind packing box labels.

Although *A Fruitful Century* differs from most institutional histories by virtue of vignettes and a greater emphasis on context, it still suffers from many of that genre's weaknesses. For example, it is primarily descriptive, and it lacks a significant interpretive element. Any hint of criticism of the BCFGA or the Okanagan tree fruit industry is similarly missing, despite Dendy's assertion that the association "did not assume the role of the censor." Issues in need of more critical analyses include the origins and nature of traditional grower opposition to the BCFGA and the deleterious impact of the industry on the local environment, the health of farm workers, and the exploitation of seasonal labour. As is the case with many

institutional histories, the study is also very much an insider publication. Readers unfamiliar with the geography of the Okanagan Valley or the mechanics of fruit production and marketing may find aspects of the book that are confusing.

All criticisms aside, *A Fruitful Century* represents a useful addition to the historical literature on the province's agrarian past. It should appeal to the general reader and academics alike, and the authors are to be commended for their efforts and the BCFGAs for their sponsorship. While deserving of praise on its own merits, *A Fruitful Century* is far from a comprehensive history of fruit growing in the Okanagan Valley, let alone in British Columbia. Commercial fruit production on the Coast is barely touched upon, despite Dendy's claim that the book "is also a history of fruit growing and marketing in British Columbia" and the history of farm labour, women, culture, and society are virtually ignored. So too are developments outside the Okanagan which had an impact on markets, transportation and consumer demand. These topics and many more have to be addressed for both the tree fruit industry and the farm sector as a whole before we can begin to assess and appreciate agriculture's historical role in British Columbia.

Vancouver, B.C.

CLINT EVANS

Guest of Hirohito, by Kenneth Cambon. Vancouver: P. W. Press, 1990.
184 pp. \$10.00 paper.

Prisoners of war who tried, in the aftermath, to describe their appalling experiences and mistreatment during their incarceration often experienced singular obstacles. Their urgent and laudable desire was to depict the horror of the "other planet" from which they had returned, to pay tribute to those who had perished, and to try and find some explanation for all their sufferings. But how were they to break through the barriers of incredulity, scepticism and indifference at home which they often faced? Especially in the case of Canadian troops captured by the Japanese in the early days of the Pacific War, how to indict their own government for crass inefficiency and stupidity in sending these virtually unarmed soldiers to become so easily taken prisoner without any real chance of resistance?

Many of these survivors, as was only to be expected, not only had strong feelings of resentment, which added fuel to their determination to achieve recompense, and to prevent any cover-up of political folly. But at a deeper level, there was also a need to record, in "factually insistent" narratives,

every detail of their traumatic experiences, lest it be thought that such unimaginable horrors had only been invented later on to evoke sympathy with their plight, or to enhance their chances of reparation. But all too often, their emotional turmoil and bitterness gave their accounts a highly subjective tone which rendered more difficult identification with their sufferings.

At the same time, few of these writers were conscious of the limitations of language. Even if the brutal and dehumanizing conditions of the prison camps were unprecedented, the available language and figures to describe these were not. How to find the forms of language appropriate to the terror of these events, when the reality outstripped language's capacity to represent them? Furthermore, the very act of selecting and writing down their experiences gave a symmetry and coherence to events which contradicted the paralyzing violence and sense of discontinuity they have lived through.

No less complex was the difficulty of finding a sense of moral balance. If the Japanese mistreatment of prisoners was as inhuman and destructive as some accounts maintain, its victims must have been psychologically maimed and brutalized. On the other hand, if prisoners were as noble and stalwart as depicted by some survivors, could the system really have been all that oppressive?

The longer the interval between the events described and the time of writing about them, the more likely will the lapses of memory or the effects of time creep in. Inevitably, too, such memoirs bear the mark of trying to show how successfully or otherwise the survivors have dealt with their experiences, the kinds of interpretation they have adopted, or the ways they now understand the world in the light of their past sufferings.

Ken Cambon's account of his imprisonment, written nearly fifty years later, steers successfully through these perilous thickets. Enlisting under age, he was one of the first group of Canadians to be captured in Hong Kong in December 1941, and subsequently was sent to a revolting hard-labour camp in Japan. Of course he shares the widespread indignation at the Canadian government's blunders, but is generous in his depiction of his fellow sufferers. He was very young, and the process of maturing in such dreadful conditions left its scars, which became all the more notable when he returned to Canada and found his family and contemporaries unable or unwilling to recognize what his trials had done to him. Yet his courageous determination to copy the example of those who had saved his life during the disease-ridden years of captivity, and to devote himself to a medical career, makes clear that he had the capacity of turning his sufferings into a positive channel. His account of his Japanese captors, too, is

remarkably restrained, and points to an eirenic spirit of compassion. The candour and consciousness of his story carries conviction, and is strengthened by his readiness to forgive, if not forget. And the inclusion of an epilogue describing a return journey to Japan in 1985 is heartfelt testimony to the fact that, for at least one Canadian prisoner, the memories of the past, and the accompanying fears and doubts, could be turned to an experience of renewed hope for the future.

University of British Columbia

JOHN S. CONWAY

Grassroots Politicians: Party Activists in British Columbia, by Donald E. Blake, R. K. Carty, and Lynda Erickson. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1991. x, 168 pp. \$19.95 paper; \$39.95 cloth.

Admitting at the outset that little is known about "the men and women who make up the parties in the provinces and who keep these political organizations functioning at the grassroots" (p. 13), the authors of this important new book have contributed a significant first to the growing literature on Canada's provincial party systems. To explain the pattern of party polarization in British Columbia and its impact on those "who drive the system," Professors Blake, Carty, and Erickson have examined systematically the "values and beliefs of those who constitute the party cores" (p. 13). They conducted a demographic and attitudinal survey of the delegates in attendance at three provincial leadership conventions held over a fourteen-month interval in 1986-87. This book is the product of that research.

In keeping with the parties themselves, the conventions were a study in contrasts. The governing Social Credit party replaced one William with another (Bennett, the party modernizer, with Vander Zalm, the populist) in what remains to this day, with its twelve leadership candidates, the most contested convention in Canada's history. The New Democrats, the only other party with a legislative presence at the time, "quietly agreed" (p. 19) on the ex-mayor of Vancouver, Mike Harcourt, in an uncontested convention. And the Liberals, long accustomed to having no MLAs and to winning only a fraction of the province-wide popular vote, chose an obscure college instructor, Gordon Wilson, by acclamation.

By first establishing that the rhetoric "and sometimes the substance" (p. 85) of British Columbia's electoral politics is indeed as polarized as it has been typically described, the authors demonstrate how that feature of B.C. politics has manifested itself at the grassroots level. As in the description of the Anglican church being Britain's Tory party at prayer, British

Columbia's Social Credit party can safely be said to be Canada's federal PCs at the provincial level. That much was confirmed by the survey responses. Socred activists were also found to be both more heterogeneous and less likely to have changed over time in their socio-economic characteristics than those in the NDP. Compared with those in the other two parties, New Democratic activists showed the greatest ideological cohesion. They also shared closely the beliefs and values of their national party. Liberal activists occupied the ideological centre in B.C. politics, as their party's rhetoric would have it, even though in terms of social characteristics they were found to resemble those in the NDP more than Social Credit activists.

The size of this book belies the wealth of data and the sophisticated analysis it contains. The authors set the stage for their examination of party activists with a particularly fine introductory chapter reviewing briefly the history of B.C. politics. It is followed by eight chapters that are a model for the comparative study of party politics. Those who willingly put in the hours to serve as the backbone of modern political parties are analyzed carefully, and astute observations are offered about their behaviour and attitudes. The final chapter draws on a small number of theories of party competition and raises important questions about the future direction of B.C. parties. The authors speculate about the social and attitudinal changes that must first take place among party activists if B.C.'s party system is to become more centrist and less polarized. Although one might question the authors' description of Anthony Downs' theory of two-party competition as leading "inevitably" to parties locating "themselves immediately adjacent to one another at the centre" (p. 121), the final chapter nonetheless deserves close attention for what it tells us about change in a dynamic two-party system.

Understandably, much is made in this book of British Columbia's polarized party system. For a reviewer from a province with equally polarized electoral two-party competition and a centrist party squeezed in the middle, the parallels are obvious. Veteran Saskatchewan voters recalling the electoral oscillation from Tommy Douglas, Woodrow Lloyd, and Alan Blakeney on the one hand to Ross Thatcher and Grant Divine on the other would have good cause to challenge the statement on page 124 that "party competition in British Columbia has a sharper left/right focus than in any other part of English-speaking North America." Polarized politics, in rhetoric and in substance, can be said to characterize at least two of Canada's provinces.

Perspectives on Sustainable Development in Water Management: Towards Agreement in the Fraser River Basin (Vol. 1), ed. Anthony H. J. Dorcey. Vancouver: Westwater Research Centre, University of British Columbia, 1991. xi, 592 pp. Illus., maps, tables. \$25.00 paper.

This is a very big book. It consists of 592 pages and 22 chapters of academic analysis (mostly by UBC scholars) on sustainable development of and for the Fraser River Basin. Sustainable development is a difficult concept anyway. In a book with twenty contributors, it gets used as part metaphor, part environmental indicator, and part prescriptive method. In some contributions, it barely rates a passing mention. And the book is also densely packed with factual information, especially the eight chapters on "Resources" of the Basin.

So is the book worth reading? The answer is yes, for a number of reasons (parenthetically, the book is worth buying; it is only \$25). For the student of British Columbia, some of the chapters provide valuable syntheses of empirical information: about resources, institutions, economies, and societies in the Basin. With the possible exception of Jean-Pierre Savard's chapter on "Birds of the Fraser Basin in Sustainable Development," the chapters tend to rely on previously published material.

For the student of sustainable development, the book provides an interesting series of interpretations and applications. The contributions were, in fact, prepared as background papers to help guide the research program of Westwater Research Centre on sustainable development for the Fraser. There is not much new theory in these background papers, but the eclectic understandings of the concept of sustainable development contribute (by default) to ongoing scholarship on the kind of basic logic that is needed to explain and to measure the concept. The editor, in his introductory and concluding chapters, attempts to summarize and integrate these understandings. That he succeeds only partially is still a credit to his synthesizing skills.

Thirdly, the book should be read by natural resource management specialists. Many of the chapters extend our knowledge in critical areas. For example, Tony Scott provides a fascinating history and analysis of water rights in British Columbia. Such contributions do not need the brief references to sustainable development to merit publication in their own right.

Space does not permit an extended critique of every chapter in the book. The format of the book and (measured) comments on the major themes will, however, be presented. The introductory chapter by Dorcey was

written before the remaining papers were commissioned. It reviews many of the different interpretations of sustainable development, and emphasizes how the concept is best understood as an evolving ethic about the interdependencies between the biophysical and human systems. This interpretation thus makes possible the wide range of understanding of sustainable development that follow in the next four parts to the book.

Part I consists of two chapters, one on native Indians and one on Vancouver. The former, by Michael Kew and Julian Griggs, attempts to show that native Indian culture is historically compatible with sustainable development principles. The latter, by Thomas Hutton and Craig Davis, provides both systematic evidence and intelligent guesses about how far the regional economy of Vancouver also meets such principles. Both contributions, and later ones too, emphasize the virtues of local decision-making, and the theory connecting this to sustainable development is often missing. So too are analyses of the many other "white" settlements in the Fraser Basin.

Part II comprises eight chapters on different resources and resource uses. As mentioned, many are valuable aggregations of empirical evidence on sedimentation, floodplains, salmon, birds, forests, energy, and Vancouver's point source waste disposal. Particularly useful to this reader were Slaymaker's summary of sedimentation and Henderson's summary of the salmon resource. A major lacuna in this section is the lack of contributions on secondary manufacturing of resources and on residuals management during their many stages from extraction to final consumption. This may arguably be a generic weakness in B.C. books.

Part III consists of five chapters on institutions, more particularly regional governance, non-governmental organizations, water rights, water pricing, and regulatory compliance. There seems to be no particular rationale for the choice of these five topics, given the wide range of institutional arrangements that exist for different resource uses. Indeed, this is arguably the weakest section, as some contributors prefer prescription to both description and analysis.

Part IV is called "Outlooks," and it brings together another article on water pricing and related tools, and articles on the ecosystemic approach to both the environment and the economy, on redistribution of wealth, and on aboriginal rights. These pieces could have been better integrated with Parts I and III. As they stand, they provide encapsulated articles on the writings of economists Peter Pearse and Donald Tate, and of ecologist Bill Rees. Some bolder editorial work might at least have helped the other two articles.

Finally, Dorcey writes two concluding chapters attempting to synthesize the work in the book and look forward to Westwater's own volume (yet to be published). He argues, unconvincingly to this reviewer, that there is increasing consensus on the meaning and practice of sustainable development.

We now await Westwater's own work. Westwater and particularly Dorcey have always managed to pose theoretical problems in such a way so as to understand and prescribe better management of water and related resources. This is a methodology that should have been emulated for the book under review. Instead, theory and practice remain largely disconnected. This is an ironic conclusion to make about a book on the concept of sustainable development, a concept that could help to integrate theory and practice in a number of academic disciplines.

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