

eccentric. In a book entitled *Radical Roots*, one would expect to find significant material surrounding the 1930s, a key decade in British Columbia's history. Events such as the On-to-Ottawa Trek and the Post Office Sit-Down Strike of 1938 are given short shrift. Similarly, there is virtually no mention of the post-Second World War period. A discussion of the Solidarity movement, for example, would have added a great deal.

Betty Griffin has said that Hal wanted to entitle this work *The Way*

to Cathay; after Betty took on the task of publishing the book, she decided to rename it *Radical Roots*. Given the book's themes of movement, change, and searching, *The Way to Cathay* would have been a better title. Despite these small caveats, *Radical Roots* provides an important and entertaining look at BC history. Betty Griffin should be commended for the effort that she put into getting the book published.

*The IWA in Canada:
The Life and Times of an Industrial Union*

Andrew Neufeld and Andrew Parnaby

Vancouver: IWA Canada/New Star Books, 2000. 321 pp. Illus. \$50 cloth

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BRITISH COLUMBIA'S HISTORY cannot be written without reference to trees: their use, their value, their presence or absence are central to the symbolic vision and material practices of the province. And there has been (arguably) no more important an organization related to the work done with the province's trees than the IWA (once the International Woodworkers of America; and, since 1994, the Industrial, Wood and Allied Workers of Canada). The publication of an official history of the IWA in Canada, then, is intrinsically important for BC historians.

Andrew Neufeld and Andrew Parnaby provide a story that, in its broad outlines, should be familiar to

many, rooted as it is in key developments of twentieth-century labour history. An entire chapter (perhaps the best) traces the pre-IWA origins of labour organization in the forests. The formation of the IWA in 1937, they argue, must be seen in the context of the efforts of previous workers and organizations – including the International Workers of the World, the One Big Union, the Lumber Workers Industrial Union (headed by later British Columbia Co-operative Commonwealth Federation leader Ernest Winch), and the Communist Party of Canada – to battle harsh working conditions. With these origins in place, the book's narrative moves on to the organizing efforts of the Depression and the breakthrough

brought by the Second World War. In the postwar years, the IWA's experience fits into the broader story of compromise, incremental gain, and struggle that characterizes much labour history of the period. However, the chapters on the 1950s are equally worth reading for the detail they provide on labour relations in what is commonly understood as an era of compromise between business and labour. For example, the story of the IWA's tense battles to organize in Newfoundland is a pertinent reminder to historians of the postwar years that consensus did not mean acquiescence. Beginning in the 1970s and continuing up to the 1990s, real challenges and setbacks seriously eroded even the contested postwar gains: the stagflation and wage and price controls debates of the 1970s were exacerbated by efforts from companies to contract out and to downsize operations. Overall, technological change, questions of sustainability, the environmental movement, and unfriendly employers and governments presented constant challenges to the union.

Altogether, this story is told in readable and, at times, entertaining prose. Neufeld and Parnaby present a determinedly upbeat perspective, emphasizing struggle, agency, and collective effort. The book's style supports this active perspective: inserted sections tell the history of particular locals; the text is filled with strike narratives and the work of individual leaders; and every tale of setback is balanced with a recognition of effort, sacrifice, and a realistic appreciation of past unionists' tough work.

But *The IWA in Canada* is not a scholarly book, at least not if we believe that scholarship's purpose is to

truly understand its object of inquiry. This is an official history. And this official status is, at times, a problem because it tends to lead to distortion. A couple of instances are particularly jarring. The role of IWA chief Jack Munro in putting an end to Operation Solidarity in 1983 is glossed over in three paragraphs. Without any discussion of opposing views, Munro's bargain with the Social Credit government, which ended what was possibly the most significant labour battle in Canada since the end of the Second World War, is explained away as an act of responsible foresight. The place of forestry workers in environmental politics receives more treatment but is equally frustrating. We are told that the environmental movement is the "Goliath" fighting against the workers' "David." Forestry workers are the real environmentalists, or, as the heading of one section puts it, "environmentalists with their working clothes on." The role of workers in battles over the environment is a fascinating topic that is often overlooked. But the posturing and name-calling that occurs in this book do not help us to explain how and why workers, environmentalists, governments, and forestry companies have created the kind of modern logging politics with which we are now so familiar. In both these and other instances, the book needed more questions and fewer assertions.

Overall, the last section of *The IWA in Canada* – "Sources and Suggestions for Further Reading" – is probably the most important. Within the context of the larger literature that Neufeld and Parnaby cite, and never forgetting its "official" status, *The IWA in Canada* is a very useful book for BC historians.