

pass the basic test for any meaningful comparison – that of commensurability. Granted, both involve cross-border pollution by smelters, but I find it hard to accept that a case from the Depression can be compared in such close detail with one from the 1980s. Nor does it seem possible to discuss either case without paying careful attention to power. In a book largely concerned with judicial and political decision making, *Smelter Smoke's* failure to examine authority and power in any detail is curious. To imagine – as the author does – that successive American governments treat Canadian or Mexican governments as equals in any but the strictly technical and formal sense is naive. However, this as-

sumed equality informs the book's argument about the emergence of the "continental commons," where jurisdictions happily cooperate in North American harmony. There is evidence of cross-border cooperation, if only at the level of publicizing our continentalist future: the dust jacket solemnly records that the book was "published with the assistance of the Government of Canada."

As an enthusiast for comparative history, mining history, and cross-border issues, I looked forward to reading this book. It proved a disappointing read: implicitly nationalistic in its approach, often naive in its analysis, and unconvincing in its prognosis concerning the brave new continentalist world ahead.

*A Young Man's Benefit:
The Independent Order of Odd Fellows and Sickness
Insurance in the United States and Canada, 1860-1929*

George Emery and J.C. Herbert Emery

Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999.
184 pp. Illus. \$39.95 cloth.

By Lynne Bowen
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FATHER and son researchers historian George Emery and economist J.C. Herbert Emery have produced a clearly written book for a limited audience. The book is based on extensive research into the archives of six Independent Order of Odd Fellows (IOOF) grand lodges in Canada and the United States. The Emerys subject their data to the analysis of their respective disciplines "to discover when and why the IOOF ceased to be an important source of sickness

insurance" (3). They conclude that "a change in the character of the membership" (115) led to the benefit being abolished in 1925. They also note that the factors that led the IOOF to make this decision were among the reasons why the United States and Canada did not enact compulsory sickness insurance in the decade after the First World War.

An examination of the reasons why North America's interest in sickness insurance declined while Germany's

(1883) and Great Britain's (1911) rose should be of interest to a wide audience. But the juxtaposition of history and economics, and the failure to provide historical context, limits the appeal and usefulness of this book. The target audience could only be one that understands the theory, terminology, and formulae of economics and, in addition, is familiar with the origins of the self-help movement from which the 100F evolved – material that the Emerys fail to provide.

The self-help movement was the foundation of the modern welfare state. The movement's origins were in the pubs of Great Britain, where members contributed to a burial fund in order to avoid a pauper's grave. The story of how those early beginnings led to the science of the actuary and, from that, to the formation of the life insurance industry, medicare, unemployment insurance, old age pensions, and workers' compensation is a fascinating one. The inclusion of a brief account of this process would have enabled readers unfamiliar with the

story to place the Emerys' thesis in historical context and to judge it accordingly.

Scholars with knowledge of this context and an understanding of economic theory will welcome this book as an addition to the literature on friendly societies – a field in which, until the last twenty years, there have been few up-to-date publications. Those within this select group who have an interest in British Columbia will find sufficient reference to this province's experience to justify reading *A Young Man's Benefit*.

As the Canadian health care system struggles to adjust to changes in funding and demands for service, and as forty-five million Americans continue to be unable to afford health insurance, the analysis and conclusions of George and Herbert Emery should help us to gain an understanding of both the causes of, and solutions to, the problems we are currently facing. It is a pity that the audience they will reach will be such a limited one.

*Rebel Life: The Life and Times of Robert Gosden,
Revolutionary, Mystic, Labour Spy*

Mark Leier

Vancouver: New Star, 1999. 238 pp. Illus. \$19 paper.

By Ivan Avakumovic

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GOVERNMENTS and big business have always been interested in revolutionary organizations and radical labour unions. Reliable information about them and, better still, their ability to

manipulate the ranks of opponents of the status quo were valuable tools in a struggle that never seemed to end. Canada was no exception, although the dearth of ample documentary evidence available to academics, jour-