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The Pacific Province: A History of British Columbia, edited by Hugh Johnston. Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1996. 352 pp. Maps. $26.95 paper.

The Pacific Province is the work of current and former faculty and graduate students from Simon Fraser University. Its editor, Hugh Johnston, reports that this new history of British Columbia is "a team project in the sense that, while the authorship of each chapter belongs to one or two people, the contributors as a group determined the general framework — a thematic approach within broad periods — and discussed, critiqued and suggested changes to each others' drafts."

The prototype in English for the genre of collaborative histories that are more than collections of discrete articles but less than a single, multi-authored text is the *Cambridge Modern History.* Lord Acton, who conceived and planned this text, also provided us with criteria by which we can judge the merits of such works. Acton told contributors: "Our purpose is to obtain

the best history of modern times that the published or unpublished sources of information admit . . . By the judicious division of labour we should be able . . . to bring home to every man the last document, and the ripest conclusions of international research . . . The result would amount to an ordinary volume . . . [that] would exhibit in the clearest light the vast difference between history, original and authentic, and history, antiquated and lower than [the] high-water mark of present learning."[1]

Implicit in Acton's prospectus was the notion that this "new" sort of history would replace "antiquated," single-author volumes for all except monographic works. *The Pacific Province* demonstrates well both the merits of Acton's new sort of book and, perhaps, why old-fashioned volumes still find a welcome place in the hands and on the shelves of most readers. In keeping with its distinguished predecessor, *The Pacific Province* is organized topically, with the topics presented, in turn, in chronological order. Unfortunately, Johnston's preface only lightly touches on what principles governed the group's "judicious division" of its labours. Nonetheless, the topical organization works well in the surprisingly large proportion of the book given over to the years leading up to the First World War.

Although not "an ordinary volume" in the commonsense way we might apply the term to a history of the province, *The Pacific Province* is, indeed, far more than the sum of its parts. Two overall strengths soon reveal themselves. Although all the authors put a strong personal stamp on their chapters, each also shows an authoritative grasp of the extensive work of other scholars. Students will find the thorough annotations a useful starting point as they embark on the term paper topics instructors will undoubtedly mine from the text.

The reach of each chapter is wide rather than narrow. Veronica Strong-Boag, for example, begins hers with a statement that emphasizes perhaps the most important single theme that runs through the volume: "British Columbia is a prosperous province, but it contains persistent fundamental inequalities based on class, race and gender." One of the great strengths of this book is the generous attention that all its authors give to how these variables have played themselves out in people's lives, both the lives of those whom it calls "the first British Columbians" and the lives of those from other cultures and races who arrived later.

R.L. Carlson opens the book with a useful summary of what archaeologists have concluded about the three periods into which they divide the province's prehistory. While the nature of archaeological evidence explains the generally static quality of what he describes, one wonders if employing the growing collection of oral evidence about First Nations history might lead to a more dynamic portrait, at least of the years immediately preceding the arrival of Europeans.

[1] John Emerich Edward Dalberg-Acton, *First Baron Acton, Lectures on Modern History* (London: Macmillan, 1906), 315-18.

In the second section, Robin Fisher, J. L. Little, and Sharon Meen take us from the arrival of Juan Perez in 1774 up to the colony's union with Canada in 1871. Fisher succinctly summarizes his earlier research, showing that Native peoples played a decisive role in the early history of the province. Little's fine contribution regarding the organization and nature of governance in the colonial era shows the strong merits of extracting a complex topic for thorough treatment. Meen's chapter then presents a wide-ranging survey of social and economic development during these years.

The topical organization works particularly well for the three chapters that deal with the era from Confederation to the First World War. John Douglas Belshaw provides a "connecting theme" that enables us to understand the confusing (and, to most of us, boring) politics of the era: "The province's political elites invariably sought to resolve conflicts so that broader economic and political goals could be achieved in a setting of relative stability." Hugh Johnston's chapter shows how a growing economy provided very different rewards to its English-speaking majority, to its Asian and European workers, and to Native peoples, respectively. For the last named, he notes, there "was no ready way up from the bottom rung of the ladder." In perhaps the book's best example of the merits of specialist chapters, Allen Seager explains how the resource economy of the province mirrored the revolutionary changes taking place in the world economy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The topical format reveals its disadvantages in the three chapters that deal with the history of the province since the First World War. Veronica Strong-Boag's survey of the social history of the province in this century, with its welcome attention to children and family life, stands reasonably well by itself. However, the chapter on political patterns, written by Fisher and David Mitchell, and that on the economy, written by Mitchell and Belshaw, are the least successful of the book. In their fine biographies of Duff Pattullo and Cece Bennett, Fisher and Mitchell have already demonstrated their point that those who study provincial politics "have important things to say about British Columbia, its people, and how they lived their lives." Unlike the aforementioned chapters, both biographies also showed the enormous degree to which the "important things" in provincial politics interwove with and expressed people's economic and social concerns.

The preface to the first volume of the *Cambridge Modern History* explained that "politics, economics, and social life must remain the chief concern of this History; art and literature, except in their direct bearing on these subjects, are best treated in separate and special works."[2] Showing the persistence of this perspective, Douglas Cole treats the "cultural" history of the province from the eighteenth century to the present in a separate final

[2] A.W. Ward et al., *The Cambridge Modern History*. Vol. 1, *The Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1902), vii-viii.

chapter. In his entirely engaging analysis of the "tensions of margin and centre, of provincial and cosmopolitan civilization" as a "major theme in the cultural development of British Columbia," Cole also demonstrates why we persist in taking pleasure in a well-written single narrative with a distinct voice.

Neither the *Cambridge Modern History* (in either its first or its second editions) nor *The Pacific Province* represents the triumph of the team approach over other approaches to history. On the whole, *The Pacific Province* does "bring home" the "ripest conclusions of international research." On the other hand, so also did their single-author predecessors. Each has contributed to our growing understanding of the history of British Columbia, and all may be read for benefit as well as pleasure.

University of British Columbia NEIL SUTHERLAND

The Pacific Province is a product of ten scholars from the field of British Columbian history or related disciplines. The team approach has its pros and cons. The division of labour not only allows a much shorter completion time but also makes possible a greater specialization in both subject matter and methodology. Such variety, in turn, better reflects the multifaceted nature of a maturing historical discipline. Against these advantages must be weighed the difficulties of ten people with differing writing styles and perspectives trying to develop an integrated narrative. *The Pacific Province* illustrates both the strengths and some of the weaknesses of the team approach, but, on balance, British Columbia, which has traditionally led the way in provincial/regional syntheses, has again been well served by its historians.

The study does not attempt a thesis and its significance does not lie in its recurring theme of Pacific influence. Most important is its portrayal of recent historical research, the impact of which can be observed by comparing it with previous provincial histories. The authors have attempted an inclusive and balanced portrayal of the people of British Columbia. Native peoples are placed front and centre in most chapters through to the Great War, and the analysis suggests a considerable shedding of European ethnocentric attitudes. They have also tried to be sensitive to gender. An index in which male names outnumber female by about four to one both suggests progress and continuing deficiencies in the field of BC history.

The authors have attempted a judicious balancing of chronology and theme. Archaeologist Roy Carlson leads off with a survey of 10,000 years of pre-history, leading up to the immediate ancestry of individual Native groups. He explains the jargon and classifications of his discipline with grace and clarity. His chapter merges smoothly with Robin Fisher's mature and lucid treatment of European-Native contacts and the development

of the fur trade to 1849. This is followed by Jack Little's chapter, "The Foundations of Government."

Here is the most serious discontinuity in the work. Without an introduction to the gold rush and the population patterns that it created, or even a map of the areas under discussion, the reader is unprepared to absorb Little's sophisticated analysis. The irony is that all of these are supplied in Sharon Meen's "Colonial Society and Economy," which immediately follows. A simple juxtaposition of the chapters would not only render Little more comprehensible, but his narrative of the confederation movement would blend neatly with John Belshaw's analysis of British Columbian politics to 1916.

Belshaw's study, which links political factions to economic interests and finds other plausible patterns as British Columbia's political culture "grew closer to the political culture of eastern Canada," serves as a viable introduction to a section of the volume in which the population and economy are each given separate chapters. Hugh Johnson's delineation of Natives, English-speaking settlers, and Asiatic communities has a freshness and specificity that sustains the reader's interest despite the heavy dose of statistics. Alan Seager's chapter on the resource economy is strong on both local patterns of development and the national context.

Robin Fisher and David Mitchell confidently analyze the "distinctive rhythms" of British Columbian politics since 1916, while suggesting that their "volatility" not be exaggerated. Belshaw and Mitchell's attempt to analyze the economy for the same period seems to reflect a less mature research base, as one is left with a murky picture of the province's industrial role in Canada's war effort and the whys and wherefores of its failure to consolidate advances at the war's end. In this penultimate section, Veronica Strong-Boag's chapter on society, inserted between politics and the economy, analyzes lifestyle changes in the modern province — treating population changes, education, health, social programs, consumer developments, and recreation. The concluding section reinforces our picture of peoples' lives, as Doug Cole interprets the cultural history of the province since the arrival of the Europeans and concludes with a brief statement concerning the Native tradition. These innovative chapters reveal another minor faux pas in overlapping sections on recreation. Surprisingly, both authors, in describing British Columbians' recreational pursuits from gardening to opera, have virtually nothing to say about hunting and angling — pursuits that offered British Columbian residents, both urban and rural, a greater variety of opportunities than were available anywhere else in the world.

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