Book Reviews

Exploiting our economic potential, edited by Ron Shearer. Toronto: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1968. 152 pp. $4.75.

The publication of *Exploiting our economic potential*, edited by Ron Shearer, is a welcome event quite unrelated to the merits of the book itself. The barren wasteland that has comprised economic writing on the British Columbia region for so many years makes any addition to the field a major one. Perhaps, as Edwin Black suggests in his contribution to the volume, the fact that there are relatively so few British Columbia natives in the educational establishment has inhibited the development of a strong interest in the study of British Columbia's economic and social policy. Whatever the reason, intelligent debate on the political economy of the province has suffered as a result.

This new volume, however, offers only limited benefit to students of BC affairs. Like any collection of papers by seven different scholars on their research interests, where the only common denominator is a primary or secondary concern with the application of their ideas to a specific economic region, there is a noticeable and sometimes disconcerting lack of continuity, transition, and level of abstraction. In fairness to the authors, the papers were originally given as a University of British Columbia extension course and were not designed to serve the specialist in economic affairs. Under such conditions, the central theme, the political and economic factors governing the exploitation of provincial resources, is sufficient to hold the series together. In print, it is much less successful.

A major problem is one of consistency in the level of abstraction. Professor Shearer, for instance, offers a straightforward, descriptive analysis of the economic basis of the BC regional economy without jargon or elaborate theoretical structures. There is little that is new to the economist, but it is well suited to a non-professional audience. Similarly, Peter

Pierce's critique of the economic waste involved in natural resource exploitation policy (in part because of a non-economic approach to resource management, in part a result of conflicting federal-provincial responsibility for resource management), while involving the introduction of technical economic concepts of efficiency and of cost-benefit, is readily intelligible (and usable) by the layman. Slightly more complex is Tait Montague's presentation on industrial relations problems in BC and their relation to industrial and union concentration. Nonetheless, his unequivocal support for the retention of the work stoppage as a necessary element in the efficiency of the labour market mechanism is understandingly stated and argued.

But at the other extreme are found papers that can only be considered of little relevance to the general audience. Gordon Munroe's contribution on BC's stake in free trade makes the usual Herculean assumptions and abstractions necessary for such studies but is largely meaningless for the layman. The effect of relaxing these assumptions is hardly discussed, but for the economist not enough information is given to make a considered criticism. The worst offender, however, is Neil Perry's analysis of the political economy of education which appears to introduce almost deliberately obscure, theoretical abstractions which do not, within the context of his paper, do anything to explain, or to provide grounds to predict, the level of educational expenditures. Nor do they provide a firm basis on which such expenditures are, or should be, determined. He does suggest one useful analytic tool — the difference between educational widening (more course hours) and deepening (more research) and the conflict between the two.

A second lack of consistency lies in the varying degrees to which the papers really deal with BC, except in a peripheral way. Perry's article is general and not closely related to the BC context. In his defence, it must be pointed out that as deputy minister of education in a government excessively suspicious of economic expertise (as several of the other papers amply document), he does not have the critical freedom that the other authors have. John Vandercamp's paper on manpower policy is a clear concise explanation of the need for, and the benefits of, a manpower policy in improving the efficiency of the labour market allocation process. Its major weakness is that it is not particularly applied to structural problems of the BC economy, which it could very well have been.

The one paper that seems most relevant and to the point, providing not only an analysis which is surprisingly successful in linking these diverse contributions into something like a meaningful whole, but also

an insightful explanation of the basis of economic policy formation in BC, is Professor Black's "The Politics of Exploitation." If, as he argues, BC is politically preoccupied with economic growth based on rapid resource exploitation, it is incumbent upon BC economists to provide information and analysis to the public and to other social scientists upon which a national appraisal is possible. Despite its weaknesses, *Exploiting our economic potential* is a significant first step. One can only hope that it encourages further efforts.

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Guests never leave hungry: The autobiography of James Sewid, a Kwakiutl Indian, edited by James P. Spradley. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1969. 310 pp. $10.00.

The title of this book is misleading. It seems to imply that the book was intended to be a folksy best-seller, when in fact it is the case history of someone who kept the key values of his native culture while absorbing the progressive views and technology of twentieth-century Western culture. "Guests never leave hungry" is a Kwakiutl epithet, one of a number given the author at a potlatch held for him by his uncle before he was a year old. These epithets form the titles of the nine chapters in the book and are appropriate to actions recorded in each: "A very high ranking man," "Always giving away wealth," etc. In other words these chapter headings confirm the editor's contention that James Sewid lived up to the values expected of someone of his heritage. But he did more:

> . . . he actively pursued the goals of both cultures in spite of the contradictions in these two ways of life. Although he was more Western-oriented and participated in Western institutions more than most other Kwakiutl, at the same time he was more committed to the traditional culture and social institutions than many of his peers. His way of adapting to the conflict was to become *bicultural* (p. 277).

He insisted on combining the two cultures, bringing Western living conditions, work patterns, and religion to his people while at the same time fighting for Indian rights through contact with the federal and provincial governments. He also tried to bring Indian and whites together in the town of Alert Bay, where he was born in 1913 and where he settled with his own family in 1945.