

image of scrubbed-down, safe socialism. But such an image was distorted at the start of last year's provincial election when the question of public ownership of B.C. Telephone was raised by Tom Berger; this certainly looked like a reversion to the old hard line, a sign that the movement was alive and well and living in B.C. It provided Premier Bennett with the club for which he had been looking — free enterprise against runaway socialism — and he proceeded to beat the NDP unmercifully with the weapon shaped by a party leader who could not escape the movement side of his party's history. Here again was that old evangelical fervour for socialism troubling the party; here again was oblique reference to the belief that man could be perfected.

It is interesting to note that — after the election was safely over — Premier Bennett announced he was plugged into God; this connection undoubtedly confirmed for the premier the validity of the doctrine of original sin and the election results would seem to bear out his conviction. The premier knew that he was working with an electorate that was considerably lower than the angels; the NDP, still showing signs of being a child of the Enlightenment, could not believe this and paid for its disbelief.

*University of British Columbia*

CHARLES HUMPHRIES

*Vancouver's Svenskar: A History of the Swedish Community in Vancouver*, by Irene Howard. Vancouver, Vancouver Historical Society, 1970. 127 pp. \$6.50.

The Vancouver Historical Society deserves warm congratulations on the publication of its first Occasional Paper which is, in fact, not a paper but a book and a very handsomely produced one at that. The subject matter of this first "Paper" is an excellent choice. With the exception of the Japanese and Doukhobors, no immigrant group in British Columbia has been the subject of a full scale book. Mrs. Howard's study of the Swedish community is thus a particularly welcome contribution to the historiography of British Columbia.

Mrs. Howard did not set out to write an academic treatise. The absence of footnotes (there is, however, a good bibliography) is the most conspicuous indication of this. More significantly, the book has not been conceived within any theoretical framework and has no thesis except to

show that there is still a "Swedish fact" in Vancouver. The author's aim has been simply to tell the story of the Swedes in British Columbia — the subtitle is misleading — and that she has done well.

Generally, Mrs. Howard has avoided the common weakness of many ethnic histories. Rather than giving tedious lists of members of the ethnic group who have "made good" in politics, the arts and letters and business, she has skillfully woven many names into a smooth flowing narrative. This system, however, does break down. For example, she quite properly devotes a chapter to E. A. Alm, a prosperous real estate man and philanthropist who underwrote the costs of publication. But then, as a separate "chapter," she prints the correspondence concerning his donation of a Canadian collection to the library of the Swedish city of Österlund.

The separate chapter on Alm and one on Paul Boving, a professor of agriculture at the University of British Columbia who actively disseminated a knowledge of Scandinavian culture to the community at large, are exceptions. Mrs. Howard's main interest is the ordinary Swede in British Columbia, and particularly, the "underdog" in the Labour movement. On several occasions she remarks on the importance of Scandinavians, especially Swedes, in unionizing the loggers.

Her explanation for the predominance of the Swedes in union activities does not satisfy the reader. Her only explanation is a brief quote from *Svenska Pressen*, a weekly Vancouver newspaper, suggesting that in Sweden working conditions were better. This may be the sole explanation but as it stands, it only tantalizes the reader. It would be helpful to know, for example, if many of the Swedes who were early members of the militant Lumber Workers' Industrial Union had had union experience in their motherland. Because of the relationship of the L.W.I.U. with the Workers' Unity League [p. 79], the participation of several Swedish loggers in the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion and the publication of Marxist literature in *Frihet*, the journal of the Scandinavian Workers' and Farmers' League, it would be interesting to learn if these Communist sympathies were acquired in North America or brought from Sweden. In short, did the Swedes have something unique in their background which catapulted them into a prominent place in left wing labour movements or were they merely one of many immigrant groups working in primary industries who were acutely affected by the Depression?

In other aspects of her study, however, Mrs. Howard provides some answers for questions which she had not consciously asked. The student who is seeking evidence for an examination of such concepts as metropolitanism and the cultural mosaic of Canada will find some useful

examples. The fact that the subtitle is misleading is indicative not of an error in the author's logic but rather of the fact that Vancouver was the metropolis for loggers in upcoast and Vancouver Island camps. Vancouver was the city in which they were hired, to which they escaped in time of unemployment or for holidays and from which their unions were organized. Vancouver was also a metropolis for coastal miners but these workers are represented in this volume merely by a melancholy poem from one of the local Swedish newspapers.

*Vancouver's Svenskar* provides answers but no simple solution to the question of whether or not the Swedish community reflected the "mosaic" or "melting pot." The early history of the Swedes in Vancouver suggests that despite their desire to be assimilated into the Canadian community, the concept of the "mosaic" is the more suitable description. They established their own Lutheran church, their own sick benefit society, lodges and press and frequently married within their own community. By the 1930's and 1940's, however, some assimilation into the "melting pot" had taken place. The church welcomed non-Swedish members and sermons were given in English; most of the surviving societies were using English rather than Swedish at their meetings and although *Svenska Pressen* advocated a policy of "Swedishness," most Vancouver Swedes were "more interested in the urgent task of physical survival than in culture." [p. 96] Nevertheless, in the post-war years, the Scandinavian Central Committee, which embraces Swedish groups representing a varied political spectrum, continued to sponsor midsummer and midwinter festivals "through which the existence of an ethnic community was regularly reaffirmed." [pp. 93-94] And, in 1964, a Swedish language school was established to teach Swedish to the children of the third generation. The first immigrants, anxious to be assimilated and fearful of embarrassment as a consequence of being unable to speak English, had not taught the mother tongue to their children, the second generation. That Mrs. Howard is herself a second generation Swede is not without significance. Once assimilated into the general community, the Swedes could afford to advertise their Swedishness as part of the Canadian "mosaic."

It is to be hoped that consciousness of the "mosaic" among other ethnic groups will encourage the publication of similar studies. The Vancouver Historical Society has made an excellent first step by sponsoring this volume which deserves a place on every shelf of British Columbian.