

Book Reviews

Strangers Entertained: A History of the Ethnic Groups of British Columbia, by John Norris. Vancouver, British Columbia: Evergreen Press Limited, 1971. 254 pp., \$6.95.

The interest in history engendered by centennial celebrations is giving Canadians an opportunity to repair their neglect of the history of ethnic groups. *Strangers Entertained*, published by the British Columbia Centennial '71 Committee, is a pioneer study of forty-six ethnic groups that have been and are taking part in the building of British Columbian society. It is based on accounts prepared by members of the ethnic groups, supplemented by reports by two graduate students at the University of British Columbia. Historian John Norris rewrote these materials and furnished a substantial integrative introduction and a brief conclusion.

Norris's preoccupation is with integration-assimilation and ethnic preservation. In view of the title of his book, it is tempting to summarize his position by saying that he is on the side of the angels. In the past, he holds, groups have integrated without assimilating; now the second generation assimilates willy-nilly; yet ethnic diversity is good and even necessary as a counteragent to influences from the United States, and should be maintained through continued immigration and policies favouring diversity. Every one of these propositions is debatable, but Norris makes his case well, and with disarming flexibility.

His introduction is built around various factors that affect integration-assimilation and ethnic preservation. It is systematic and thoughtful, and in parts fresh and innovative, as, for example, in his relating of pre-migration social background to preservation of ethnicity, integration, and cultural impact, with due regard for different periods of immigration. His discussion of the important topic of language and education is marred, however, by a misreading of the *Report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism*, the less excusable for occurring in the same paragraph as an almost word-for-word borrowing of several lines from the report.

Norris begins by stating that all who live in British Columbia are immigrants or descendants of immigrants, and his catalogue of ethnic groups is exceptionally complete. Curiously, however, he omits the group that by his own assessment has "made the largest contribution of any group to the development of British Columbia," English-speaking Canadians of British or other European background. His ground for doing so is that their roots are in Canada, and yet he includes the Native Indians, who "met the boat," and the French Canadians, whose Canadian roots are longer than those of the English Canadians.

The French Canadians and the French are given separate treatment, and are listed separately in an appendix giving "numbers in ethnic groups in British Columbia (according to the Census of 1961)." The numbers appear to be for ethnic origin. It is a pity that Norris does not divulge how those of French origin were sorted into two categories: the origin question in the census does not seem to permit this.

The chapters on the various groups are informative and well written. That many seem too short is in part a tribute to their quality. In most there is an excellent balance between general analysis and piquant detail. A certain blandness and complacency is probably inevitable, in view of the fact that Norris was to a considerable extent dependent upon what representatives of various groups wrote about their ethnic fellows, and that a centennial celebration is an occasion for congratulation, including self-congratulation, rather than the exhibition of sores. Norris's rewriting gives a unity of treatment and style unusual in a work to which several dozen people have made contributions.

The organization of the book, with separate discussions of the various groups, brings home the diversity of British Columbia's population. However, the effort to include all groups restricts the space available for treating some of the larger, more complex or more significant ones. It also prevents adequate attention to ethnic phenomena that transcend particular groups (such as social stratification and power relations) and to the relations between groups, and limits comparison between groups.

The book is unnecessarily impoverished by its resolute focusing on British Columbia to the neglect of the Canadian context. Greater attention to relations between members of particular groups in British Columbia and in other parts of the country, and between British Columbian policies and those of other provinces and the federal government, would have given greater depth to the work. More pages would not have been required, but simply a broader perspective.

The value of the book is also diminished by failure to indicate sources

and to include a bibliography. The author may have felt that documentation would alienate some readers. A reasonable number of footnotes and a bibliography would, however, have enabled general readers to find out more about some of the events and peoples tantalizingly sketched in the book, and saved scholars intense frustration. Careful editing, incidentally, would have removed a considerable number of vagaries of punctuation, a mild frustration for the pettish.

Strangers Entertained is readable and instructive. Its author terms it a preliminary report; the measure of its success will be the number and quality of the works that it inspires. It is to be hoped that by this measure it will succeed brilliantly.

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The Canadian Indian: a History Since 1500, by E. Palmer Patterson II.
Don Mills, Collier-Macmillan Canada, Ltd., 1972. Pp. 210, illus.,
maps. \$3.00.

In contrast to other former British settlement colonies the study of relations between European settlers and the indigenous people has not been an important aspect of Canadian historical writing. It is an area in which much of the basic research has yet to be done. It is therefore surprising, even given the Canadian penchant for survey history, that we are now confronted with a general history of the Canadian Indian. An attempt to deal with the history of the Canadian Indian since 1500 in less than 180 pages of text at this stage in the development of the field could be called courageous; or, perhaps, presumptuous.

Patterson's book is divided into two sections. In the first he advances some theoretical proposals and the second is a narrative of the history of the Indian in Canada. In part one it is argued that comparative study of the Canadian Indian and other races in colonial situations would produce useful results. Some of the problems of comparative history are also inadvertently revealed. If valid conclusions are to be reached a reasonable knowledge of both sides of a comparison is required, and in this regard Patterson's description of Harold Miller (whom he misquotes in the New Zealand context) as an "authority" does little to inspire confidence. The examples that are used from other colonies tend to be rather eclectic. There is clearly a difference between the nature of culture contact in