

Christopher Lundin Brown, the pioneer Anglican missionary in the Lillooet area, was a bachelor whose publications encouraged immigration to British Columbia and resulted in the sending of bride ships to Victoria from England in 1862-63. He remained a bachelor. "Captain" John Evans, a Welsh miner, never quite made good in mining but as a well-known figure in the Cariboo and a member of the Legislature he left the stamp of his Congregationalist conscience on the province.

A most valuable feature of the dictionary is the inclusion of comprehensive bibliographies after each biography, giving manuscript and published sources related to that entry. There is also a lengthy general bibliography of both primary and secondary sources for the period covered by the volume. Finally, there is an index of all persons mentioned in the volume, so that information can be found on some 5,000 persons in addition to the 547 who are the main subjects. With such wealth to come, may further volumes follow soon.

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The Wonderful World of W. A. C. Bennett, by Ronald B. Worley.
Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1972, pp. 290. \$10.00.

Canadian history has been well served by the art of biography. It is impossible to study this country's past without reading Creighton's Macdonald, Careless's Brown, McNaught's Woodsworth, Graham's Meighen and so on. Provincial political leaders have been less well served, although the libraries of many universities carry the earnest efforts of many an M.A. or Ph.D. student in the form of studies of one provincial politician or another. It is perhaps the measure of our federal consciousness that we have left the lives of our provincial politicians to graduate students.

Yet who can deny the signal influence of such provincial worthies as Oliver Mowat, Ernest Manning, T. C. Douglas, Joseph Smallwood, Maurice Duplessis and W. A. C. Bennett. Admittedly, several of these have been described by journalists — Pierre Laporte's *The True Face of Duplessis*, and Robert Tyre's phillipic *Douglas of Saskatchewan*, are two examples. Nevertheless, the serious, scholarly work has tended to be confined to national politicians, to men who shape the destiny of a nation rather than to those who shape the policies of a region. Some of the provincial political leaders deserve better treatment, if only because they did

manage to cling to office longer than any federal politician — with the exception, of course, of Mackenzie King.

It may be, however, that provincial leaders don't deserve any more than this. After all, what matters of great moment can we attribute to the likes of Sir Richard McBride, Dufferin Patullo, John Hart or Byron Johnson? For the most part, narrow, noisy men with little vision, whose view of politics was that of the business man. What is there to say about them save that they got into power, they bent their efforts toward staying there and that they did all they could for their friends and associates. But then, even that might be worth knowing about, if presented by a conscientious biographer with a passion for objectivity and accuracy.

W. A. C. Bennett is a provincial politician who has had two biographies written — one by Paddy Sherman based largely on Mr. Sherman's columns while he was legislative reporter — and the other, the book under review, by Ronald Worley, sometime executive assistant to the premier, flack, and ardent Bennett worshipper, and that rules out both objectivity and accuracy.

It may be incorrect to describe *The Wonderful World of W. A. C. Bennett* as a biography, for it is a good deal about Ronald Worley's life with W. A. C. Bennett and, moreover, some parts of it lead one to feel it would be better categorized as hagiography. Mr. Bennett emerges as a man of inordinate wisdom — however homely — and Mr. Worley as one of the Premier's few intimates (although it is clear that W. A. C. Bennett is never really intimate with any one, indeed it is difficult to see how anyone could be intimate with a man whose speech, according to Worley, sounds like a politician's handbook).

The book begins with a brief description of Mr. Bennett's early life, but then moves quickly into the B.C. political scene: the decline and fall of Duff Patullo, Bennett's departure, with Tilly Rolston, from the Conservative party after his rather chequered career as candidate for the provincial leadership of the party and his abortive attempt to enter federal politics; and then the departure of Ronald B. Worley from the Liberal party to stand by Bennett's side. The burden of the narrative concerns the twenty years of Social Credit in power in B.C.

To be fair to Mr. Worley, once the reader has managed to overcome the cloying sycophancy of the book and the author's penchant for inventing conversations (although this is a failing of many popular biographers) the book does offer both an interesting record of events during the Bennett era and an intriguing picture of the Social Credit leader. How accurate the record is and how reliable the picture can only be deter-

mined when some painstaking scholar provides a documented study. It does seem likely, however, that Mr. Worley's imagination knows some limit and that at least some of what he says has a factual basis.

The picture of the premier that emerges is of a man with an enormous ego, a staggering conviction of his own rectitude and great faith in his own destiny. He appears to be one seldom assailed by doubt, the living embodiment of all the virtues Dale Carnegie and Norman Vincent Peale ever expounded. Chief amongst these is loyalty for once a man was inducted into the leader's retinue, he was never cast aside, electoral mishaps notwithstanding — the career of Einar Gunderson is a good example, that of Ronald Worley another. Indeed, if one can believe Mr. Worley, few provincial premiers can have picked their colleagues with less thought yet clung to them with more tenacity than W. A. C. Bennet.

It may be that at some point in the future, someone will sit down to the documents and attempt a serious biography of W. A. C. Bennett. They will need to read Mr. Worley's hymn of praise and self-advertisement because it will offer an object lesson in bad biography and because there may be something in it that, when checked, will offer an insight into the life of the first and probably the last Social Credit premier of British Columbia.

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