

ally by 1918 to have first established the basis for a sound university and second to have enabled it to survive the difficulties posed by World War I. The University was finally opened in 1915 and it did survive long past 1918, the year that Wesbrook died, literally a victim of his eighteen-hour-a-day effort to cope with an impossible task.

The villain of the piece was the government. There is some excuse for its withdrawal of expected funds from 1915 on, but, in the light of the promises made to Wesbrook, none for its failure to provide the funds needed to establish the university before the outbreak of World War I. There are, of course, explanations — unexpected (though one suspects not unpredictable) reductions of provincial revenue and other governmental commitments, notably railway construction. But there is a difference between explanation and excuse.

The chief value of Dr. Gibson's book is that it does provide an accurate and detailed portrait of Frank Wesbrook, an honourable man. It does not, unfortunately, add anything to our knowledge of the University of British Columbia and its relations to the government that is not contained in Harry Logan's *Tuum Est*.

This would be less disappointing had the government's position been clearly outlined in Margaret Ormsby's *British Columbia: a History*, a work, which as the footnote references to both the University and Wesbrook indicate, effectively ignores the situation. The story is still untold, the puzzle of U.B.C. remains.

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*People in the Way*, by J. W. Wilson. Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 1973. xiv, 200 Pp. \$12.50.

In the spring of 1964 it became apparent that the Pearson government had decided to ratify the Columbia River Treaty. This meant that the time was rapidly approaching when we at the B.C. Hydro and Power Authority would become responsible for the construction of three major dams on the Columbia system in Canada.

From the beginning it was clear that our most serious problem would arise from the fact that some 2000 people would have to move to escape the water that would rise behind the dam to be constructed at the foot of the Arrow Lakes. We were all conscious of the importance of this critical interference with a long-established way of life and that we would

need the assistance of skilled help. Fortunately, we knew of a man with the essential qualifications — technical expertise, wide experience and, above all, sensitivity and deep human sympathies. James W. Wilson was born in Scotland and trained as a civil engineer (Glasgow and M.I.T.). He later studied regional planning at the University of North Carolina and then worked with the Tennessee Valley Authority before coming to British Columbia. In 1964 he was Executive Director of the Lower Mainland Regional Planning Board and a man of outstanding reputation in his field. He was also lecturing at U.B.C. (where, incidentally, the present provincial Minister of Lands, Forests, and Water Resources, The Honourable R. A. Williams, was one of his superior students!).

After some persuasion Mr. Wilson agreed to join the Hydro staff and for nearly two years he was responsible for meeting the people of the Columbia Valley and for making recommendations as to how their problems of resettlement could best be solved. His work was of enormous value to us and to the people he came to know and admire. His book, *People in the Way*, is the report of his experiences, of his conclusions as to what things were well done, what mistakes were made, and how in future such projects should be approached. (Today, as Executive Director of B.C. Hydro, Mr. Wilson may have concrete opportunities to apply his skills.) The book is admirable and should be read by planners, engineers, sociologists, ecologists and, indeed, by everyone with an interest in human beings and in their social relationships. Fortunately, the author's prose reflects credit on his Scottish teachers and his own sense of style. His report is clear — as well as being objective, humorous, vivid, emotional and humane.

Mr. Wilson's task was as difficult as it was important. He was expected to learn to know the people, to understand their needs, and to assist them to adjust to the inevitable changes. It was also his duty to advise us as to how we could carry out our responsibilities with the least distress and the most benefit to the persons affected. *People in the Way* describes how, with the assistance of Hydro personnel, he developed his proposals; and the degree to which he was successful, or failed, in persuading the Authority to take the actions he considered desirable. It is a complicated story of physical, psychological, financial, political and organizational complexities — and of human nature under stress.

The book is no apologia for B.C. Hydro. It firmly records the author's belief that the Authority should have done much more than it did to meet the needs of those who were adversely affected. He records mistakes of omission and commission. The fact that he attributes many of

the errors and defaults to the policies — or lack of policies — of the provincial government is only a partial defence for Hydro.

With most of the author's strictures I agree.

But it is fair to add that Mr. Wilson records the inevitable difficulties in negotiating with people whose whole way of life is being uprooted, even if to others that way of life may seem circumscribed and poor. The Arrow Lakes communities constituted, in modern terms, a badly depressed area. Many of the people were glad to take their compensation and leave. But many others had found satisfactions in their way of living for which no compensation could be a substitute. Disruption itself was painful and shocking and this was not always recognized by those in charge of Hydro's programme. As Mr. Wilson states

Most of us (Hydro personnel) were essentially urban people with middle-class ideas about 'proper dress', adequate housing, and tidy serviced communities. The people of the Lakes did not share these values, yet some of them were sensitive about the difference and quick to feel that they were regarded as Canadian hillbillies.

(A few pages later he records that Hydro was criticized because in a picture in the Property Owners' Guide — a booklet issued to assist those who would have to move — both a Hydro representative and a local resident were shown wearing ties — "a dead giveaway" as according to a local saying "only teachers 'n preachers wear ties." But what would the critics have said if the local resident had *not* been given a tie?)

The author agrees that the Authority did make a serious effort to deal fairly with those being displaced, particularly the old and poor. He quotes one severe critic of the programme as saying that in the matter of compensation in most cases the Authority "leaned over backwards to be generous." He recognized the good intent behind the appointment of an "Ombudsman" who was selected and whose terms of reference were approved by the Chief Justice of British Columbia.

Among those affected there were some people who, from strong political or personal motivations, would not have approved no matter what Hydro did. And he quotes a Nakusp councillor as saying: "A lot of people scream about the poor deal they are getting and round at the back door they brag about how much they got."

Reviewing the basic difficulties of the task, Mr. Wilson wrote:

Does this imply that every Hydro representative, especially those with the prickly task of negotiation, would have to be a paragon of compassion, objectivity, and firmness? It does. It also points out that it is impossible for a

program of this kind to be completely trouble free. There just are not enough saints to go around.

When he returned to the Columbia in 1970, Mr. Wilson tried to assess the feelings of the local people through interviews, and by circulating a questionnaire to those still remaining of the persons who had gone through the displacement period. Unfortunately, only a meagre number of replies were received: too few, as Mr. Wilson says, to provide any serious statistical proof. The people who bothered to reply, moreover, could be assumed to include a disproportionate number of those who still harboured ill feelings: many of those who had been satisfied were more likely to throw the questionnaire away. Nevertheless, the response did disclose that almost everyone agreed that the roads, ferries, town facilities had been vastly improved; "newer, brighter communities" had developed. Sixty per cent, moreover, were generally "satisfied" with the compensation they had received. But almost unanimously the respondents said that their payments were not "fair"; some were treated better than others. Satisfactory but unfair!

The author has a most excellent final chapter in which he outlines the considerations that should govern, and the procedures that should be followed, if another dam should be built in a valley from which residents will have to move. Naturally this is a statement of an ideal but it is an ideal that should certainly be accepted as the objective by whatever agency is assigned the task.

There are a few minor matters which, in a subsequent edition, the author may wish to reconsider.

The statement on page 157 that the Ombudsman's services became "available only *after* the normal negotiating process had been completed" is contradicted by the terms of reference, and by the actual facts. Again, there is very little reference to the notable effect of the Treaty dams in reducing flooding downstream in Canada. Yet in 1972 the city of Trail was saved from the worst flood in its long history of inundations by the existence of the Arrow reservoir. The editor of the *Trail Times*, a paper that had once been critical of the whole programme, wrote that a visitor to the Trail-Castlegar area in 1972 would have heard "Prayers of thanks for the new dams." In the Creston area over 25,000 acres are now permanently protected.

Pertinent to the general theme is the fact that in 1970 the American Public Power Association, having organized a panel to study all major hydro construction activities on the continent, selected B.C. Hydro's

Arrow project as one of only two recipients of its honour award. The panel which made the decision was drawn from the American Societies of *Civil Engineers, Architects, Landscape Architects*, and of *Planners!* Their report said in part that the programme "has contributed greatly to the entire region surrounding the artificial lake. It has created a regional facility in the lake and brought life back to a whole community up and down the lake."

Nor should it be forgotten that B.C. Hydro and the provincial government have spent something over \$50 million in excess of the cost of "replacing like with like" on amenities in the area.

One of the statements in the book that has my unqualified concurrence is the last sentence in Chapter Four:

If Hydro is judged to have emerged with credit from its exercise in the Arrow Lakes, it will be largely to the credit of its field men — its appraisers, engineers, planners, and information officers — who did their difficult jobs, for the most part, with understanding and humanity.

And prominent among all those who contributed understanding and humanity was Jim Wilson.

*Victoria*

HUGH L. KEENLEYSIDE

*Recollections of the On To Ottawa Trek*, by Ronald Liversedge. *With Documents related to the Vancouver Strike and the On To Ottawa Trek* edited by Victor Hoar. Toronto: The Carleton Library No. 66. McClelland and Stewart, 1973. xviii, 331 pp. \$4.50.

In the annals of social dissent in the 1930's the On To Ottawa Trek is a landmark. The number of men involved, their objectives and leadership. The support they received in Western Canada and the tragic riot in Regina on July 1, 1935, attracted widespread attention, caused a great deal of controversy and contributed to the defeat of R. B. Bennett's Conservatives in the federal election several months later.

Amongst the scattered literature on the subject, Ronald Liversedge's *Recollections* has occupied a place of honour ever since they were made available in a limited mimeographed edition a dozen years ago. He belongs to that rare breed of Canadian writers: a manual worker who sets down his reminiscences on paper. Like many other opponents of the status quo in the 1930's, Liversedge was an immigrant. Born in England,