

has gained access to some important sources in private hands, for example the diaries of William and Mary Harmston, that have not been available to previous historians. He has been well served by his publishers, and has included good sets of maps and illustrations.

Mackie has brought to his study not only much fresh archival research but also a lively style of presentation. He combines clarity of outline and argument with abundant interesting social and economic detail. He conveys well the quality of life in an isolated settlement that already had some twenty-five years of development behind it when Mary Harmston recorded in her diary the news of the destruction by fire of the new town of Vancouver in 1886. He brings out the unique features of a place that like the Gulf Islands could be reached only by boat but unlike them was on the edge of a great hinterland of forest and mountain, wilderness profound indeed, in which early settlers occasionally became lost never to be seen again. A main theme of his historical narrative is the diversification from the agricultural settlement of the 1860s into logging and coal mining in the 1880s and 1890s, as it became apparent that much of the district's future would lie in the exploitation of the resources of this hinterland.

While Mackie shows appreciation for the work of Drabble and other Comox pioneers in establishing in very difficult circumstances the physical, social, and institutional infrastructure that still determines much of the character of the district, he does not write in the simple triumphal mode that might once have prevailed. He never allows us to forget that the new Comox settlement of the 1860s was established in an area of very much older Native settlements. He recognizes that the figure of the surveyor is now often seen as the very symbol of the destruction of the natural world and its indigenous inhabitants. He comments: "Drabble assigned permanent section or lot numbers to all the land he surveyed, and he obliterated Native cultural, spiritual, or economic sites beneath a cartographic grid of squares, rectangles, and straight lines." He notes how "shamefully" small were the areas marked on the new maps as Indian reserves throughout the Gulf of Georgia. This volume is evidence that more than 500 years after Columbus the writing of local history has become increasingly complex and increasingly informed by an awareness of larger issues. One might perhaps paraphrase the axiom that all politics is local and conclude that all history is local.

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ALLAN PRITCHARD

Historic Nelson: The Early Years, by John Norris. Lantzville: Oolichan Books, 1995. 320 pp. Illus., maps. \$36.95 cloth, \$21.95 paper.

The author seems to have read every existing record of the earliest White visitors to the West Kootenays. He links these sketchy references together to

paint a word picture of the district before European and American settlers imposed any structural changes. Finally, on page 95, the future town of Nelson is surveyed by a visiting bureaucrat from Victoria.

Each chapter begins with a droll sentence introducing the principal character or activity about to be described. On occasion, this introduction advises those eager to find out whether plans in the previous chapter were implemented to "turn to Chapter — and return to this page later." When buildings appear on the anticipated main streets (Baker and Vernon), very early photographs are shown and the builders/settlers described in detail. The final chapter in this first volume of the history of Nelson describes a socially active centre, with school, churches, railway terminal, a sanitary inspector, and a men's club — a community rich enough to apply for, and receive, city status.

There are a minimum of footnotes (all useful). The book would be improved by the inclusion of a modern map of Nelson, which would be consulted when reference is made to a building site at the corner of _____ and _____ Streets.

British Columbia Historical News

NAOMI MILLER

Red Flags & Red Tape: The Making of a Labour Bureaucracy, by Mark Leier. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995. 245 p. \$50 cloth, \$17.95 paper.

According to Mark Leier in *Red Flags & Red Tape*, labour bureaucracy is "a question of who has power over whom, rather than a conflict over ideology" (p. 34). Trade union officials, innately, are neither more nor less conservative or radical than rank-and file members, and socialist bureaucrats behave little differently from labourist ones. Instead, the one consistent belief shared by all labour bureaucrats is "that the working class must be managed, that the masses cannot determine their struggle" (p. 34). This conviction that they alone understand and can defend the true interests of the working class leads labour bureaucrats to make the promotion and preservation of their own position of power their top priority, which in turn necessitates compromise and accommodation with other social classes. Using the experience of the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council (VTLIC) during its formative years, 1889-1910, as his example, Leier explores this complex interplay between bureaucracy, class, and ideology to answer the question posed by German sociologist Werner Sombart in 1906: Why is there no socialism in North America?

Leier performs this task in three stages. First, he provides a critical review of the theoretical debate on the labour bureaucracy, identifying the relative strengths and weaknesses of the divergent interpretations forwarded by Weber, Michels, Perlman, Lenin, and Lipset, as well as summarizing the