

in his list of names, and, as he says, "not a word about the MacMillans, the Clynes, the Woodwards, the Farrises, the Bell-Irvings."

We are all, in one way or another, people Cameron likes, which shows another of his characteristics as a writer. There is nothing in him of the smart aleck, of the cheap malice with which so many weekly journalists seek to titillate their readers and needle their subjects. He writes indeed with such manifest affection that one longs for a sharp word, a critical barb. It is the nostalgic vision of the returning native that Cameron presents, and somehow it tints us all *en couleur de rose*.

Vancouver

GEORGE WOODCOCK

The Economic Constitution of Federal States, by Albert Breton and Anthony Scott. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978. Pp. 166. \$10.00.

Most readers of this journal are aware of "economic imperialism." Fewer readers are likely to be aware of "economics imperialism." In the latter case the analytic assumptions and deductive reasoning of the discipline of economics are applied to political, legal and social questions. The study of politics, law and society is being reassessed in the face of such initiatives, which have burgeoned in the last two decades.

This eagerly awaited book by two Canadian economists is an example of "economics imperialism." It is also an example of theoretical inquiry on the most important research frontier in the scholarly field, namely the analysis of constitutions. Constitutional arrangements are seen as the crucial factors affecting the operation of governments, and in turn the behaviour and welfare of citizens, groups and private corporations.

The book is, thirdly, an example of one of three thrusts of research on constitutions. The traditional approach of economists in making policy prescriptions is to assume that government can affect policy changes in the light of citizen preferences at zero cost. This is structurally the same as assuming that constitutions cede complete authority to a benevolent despot. A second approach is to assess constitutions directly in the light of ethical criteria about individual welfare in a just society. And the third approach, typified by the Breton and Scott work, is to evaluate constitutional arrangements by the degree to which they economize on the scarcity of resources available in any society. Put more intuitively, Breton and

Scott, as well as other works, prefer constitutions that make governments efficient.

The basic model in the book assumes that a constituent assembly or constitutional convention will assign various functions of government between national, provincial and other levels so as to minimize the costs of policy making and implementation to both citizens and governments. Four kinds of costs are identified, two each for the citizenry and the government jurisdictions. Citizens will wish to minimize the cost of signalling to government their dissatisfaction with current policies, as well as minimize their migration costs to another jurisdiction as a result of their "frustration." Governments will wish to minimize administration costs or the costs of setting up their own institutions and running them, as well as co-ordination costs in dealing with other governments. Once the constituent assembly has assigned functions to different levels of government in such a least-cost manner, and so determined the degree of centralization in any state, the net investment in signalling and mobility (by citizens) and in administration and co-ordination (by governments) will be zero.

The remainder of the book consists of analytical elaborations on this basic model, and of applications of the model to recurring problems in public finance, such as the degree of centralization necessary for governments to provide redistributive, stabilizing and other functions in a least-cost manner.

Unfortunately the book contains two major analytical flaws which will limit its appeal to scholars in the field. First, the authors ignore "the monopoly problem" in deriving the least-cost division of powers between levels of government. An assignment of functions to one level of government or another can yield a structure of stable monopolies unconstrained by any or all of the four cost considerations. Even the elaborated model, in which a representative assembly of elected politicians and their bureaucrat advisers assign functions, can yield a similar structure.

Secondly, citizens are assumed to invest in political participation (signalling and mobility) solely as a function of their desire to reduce their loss in welfare as a result of differences between their preferred and actual levels of public goods (or tax prices for these goods) provided by governments. This assumption ignores investments by citizens for tangible private benefits, including rent seeking. These latter investments are likely, *ceteris paribus*, to render unstable any assignment of functions.

In conclusion, the book is an interesting addition to a rapidly growing field of academic inquiry. It is not a book for the general reader; it presumes a knowledge of a large body of literature and much of the exposi-

tion is mathematical and diagrammatical. It is a book that many economists should read if only because it proves, once again, that neither scale economies nor spillovers are necessary or sufficient conditions for centralized political systems. But it is also a book that, because of its flaws, will do little to advance our knowledge about an optimal constitution for any society.

University of Victoria

MARK SPROULE-JONES

Indian Fishing: Early Methods on the Northwest Coast, by Hilary Stewart.
Vancouver: J. J. Douglas, 1977. Pp. 181.

Hilary Stewart's latest book is an accomplishment that can perhaps only be fully appreciated by someone who has similarly attempted to slog his way through the forest of northwest coast ethnography in pursuit of some topic. Her topic is fishing and she has assembled for us a very satisfying collection of material. More than this, as with her *Artifacts of the Northwest Coast Indians* volume, she has built her presentation around drawings and sketches that are faithful representations of museum objects, and illustrations from published sources, or plausible reconstructions of implements and techniques where pictures have until now been lacking.

For this reviewer the illustrations alone are worth the purchase price. They have a fascination which is difficult to define, but it is comparable to what one experiences in the works of Eric Sloane and C. W. Jeffreys. The various fishing devices — hooks, harpoons, weirs and traps — are presented with such devoted attention to detail that there is an almost irresistible urge to set about manufacturing them. I have no doubt that some readers will succumb.

The organization and emphasis of the book are apparent from the principal chapter headings: "Hook, Line and Sinker," "Spears and Harpoons," "Nets and Netting," "Traps and Weirs," "Cooking and Preserving Fish" and "Spiritual Realms." As can be readily seen, most of the book deals with the technological aspects of fishing, although there is also a useful section concerned with the ideology — with the beliefs — of these fishermen. The volume could equally usefully have included a section on the social organization of fishing activity. Admittedly there are many references to people and society within the text, but specific attention to social arrangements associated with the various fishing technologies might have led the author to include descriptions of such social units as the distinctive reef net camps of the Straits Salish with their captains and