

times showed its authors anxious . . . to situate British Columbia in an appropriately comprehensive framework of analysis and discussion." At its best, provincial history is not parochial. For the most part the essays gathered in this collection live up to that standard. Certainly the list of those that do not is much shorter than the list of those that do. This reader stands as a challenge to British Columbia historians to complete the analysis and description of the province's social evolution in its Canadian context.

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Clifford Sifton. Volume One: The Young Napoleon, 1861-1900, by David J. Hall. Vancouver and London: University of British Columbia Press, 1981. Pp. 361; *illus.*; index, \$27.50.

David Hall has been on the trail of Clifford Sifton for a dozen years. He has left no stone unturned — nor whatever dwelt underneath — in his patient and enormously thorough search. The result is this densely packed account of Sifton's career to the mid-point of his tenure as Minister of the Interior in Laurier's government. Sifton's progress to this point is summed up in the sobriquet which is the subtitle of this volume, *The Young Napoleon*, and which, the author might have told us, was applied to the aggressive minister by the opposition derisively.

This first volume divides naturally into Sifton's years in the Greenway government of Manitoba and his federal career. What links the two is the remarkable degree of flexibility of principles exhibited by Sifton. Almost every issue that he stoutly opposed as a member of the Manitoba cabinet — tariff, CPR, concessions to the Catholic minority, etc. — he found himself able to support vigorously in Ottawa. Does that make him a pragmatist, as Professor Hall suggests, or simply a trimmer?

The detail in the book is, at times, somewhat daunting; but the prodigious research has turned up many nuggets. Hall presents the first plausible explanation of the Logan case (Sifton instigated it), which has never made much sense. He closely analyzes the Manitoba Grain Act, hailed as a prairie Magna Carta, and exposes its fatal weaknesses. There are many other examples which could be cited.

But there is some dross as well. Least satisfactory is the section dealing

with Sifton and the Yukon. Perhaps the evidence simply does not exist, but one is left with the impression that there is much more to Sifton's involvement than is presented here. There is little comment on the minister's activities in the granting of timber berths, despite continued questioning in the House. T. A. Burrows, Sifton's brother-in-law, seldom failed to be successful in his bids. It is not that the author is overcautious; when he has the evidence, he does not hesitate.

These lacunae should not detract from a very impressive piece of research; and one hopes for the second volume soon. Sifton was not a likeable man, but he has been fairly served by Professor Hall. It is also pleasant to conclude by remarking that the early high standards of U.B.C. Press are being well maintained.

University of Manitoba

J. E. REA

Distant Dominion: Britain and the Northwest Coast of North America, 1579-1809, by Barry Gough. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1981.

This is a book which one does not hesitate to recommend, especially to British Columbians.

The period it spans is determined by the facts that 1579 is the year in which Francis Drake started on the first voyage an Englishman made to America's west coast and that 1810 is the opening date of another of Mr. Gough's books, *The Royal Navy and the Northwest Coast of North America, 1810-1914*.

A chapter to which I would very particularly call readers' attention is Mr. Gough's first — on the "Tyranny of Distance." This is something it takes an effort to understand in these days when we can arrive at Heathrow a mere dozen hours after taking off from Vancouver airport. Before the coming of the steamboat (in its infancy in 1809) the speed of travel at sea was determined by the natural forces of winds and currents; and it was low. Captain Bligh's *Bounty* averaged 108 miles per day over the 27,086 miles he sailed between England and Tahiti. Better speeds might indeed be made on short voyages favoured by good winds, or worse against headwinds, but 100 miles a day was a good average for a long voyage. Add that wooden ships were frail as well as slow. The eighteenth century was three-quarters gone before men learned the value of copper