

This would be a better book, though admittedly a different one too, if the author had opted for more analysis and fewer details. Consider, for example, his praise for the press corps whose "tasks . . . could not be better performed by anyone else, not even the official opposition." What tasks? How were they different from those of the official opposition? And why, for that matter, is the official opposition so muted throughout the book? What is the relationship of the Vancouver press (which is the only one mentioned) to the rest of the province?

Or, more generally, how is political opinion formed or transformed in the province? Very little is said here about politics outside the klieg lights of metropolitan British Columbia. There appears to have been only one by-election in the whole period under review (there is no index by which to check, nor tables to determine the length or dates of sessions) and that contest Social Credit won. In light of the indictment the author has compiled, how is the victory to be explained?

The administrative mores of Social Credit dismally fall short of the model Persky applies to gauge political conduct. Cabinet's overruling of the Land Commission, thereby allowing agricultural land to be used for industrial or commercial but always profitable and suspected partisan purposes, is roundly condemned. The cry of one minister about "what is so wrong with elected people having the last say," is noted but not discussed, nor is another minister's charge that the NDP "think they invented democracy." And yet, much of the book's argument would seem to confirm that in fact there are two versions of democracy abroad in British Columbia: the one the moribund model of responsible government which Persky laments, the other the direct, at times even extra-legislative, rule that Social Credit provides and which the electorate sustains.

The strength of *Bennett II* is that it describes the peculiar features of this province's politics; its weakness is that it fails to explain them.

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The Klondike Quest. A Photographic Essay, 1897-1899, written and edited by Pierre Berton. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1983. Pp. 240, illus. \$50.00.

Historians and other academics have greeted Pierre Berton's forays into their domains with decidedly mixed opinions. His aim is at the mass market and his method is to tell a story well; neither of these is a hall-

mark of academic writing. In many ways an evangelist of Canadian nationalism, Berton has succeeded in bringing an awareness of the Canadian past to a far greater audience than even our most renowned historians. The present book, however, is quite unlike his recent histories of the CPR and the War of 1812.

The Klondike Quest is like a published version of one of Berton's old television series, "My Canada," since it relies heavily on visual material and is accompanied by a brief text which tells the story with an eye to the drama of the event. The jacket blurb states that the text has been written from a different point of view than his earlier *Klondike*, but it seems simply to be an eviscerated version. The story proceeds from the viewpoint of the average gold seeker, following him from his home in Vancouver or Seattle in 1897, up the coast of Skagway, across both the Chilkoot and White Passes and down the Yukon River to Dawson in the spring of 1898. There follow a few chapters on Dawson and the creeks in their heyday. Presumably the intent is to showcase the photographs and to use the words simply to give them a context. One must not, therefore, quibble over the text, which reads wonderfully easily and does its job.

The photographs are the point of the book, and on their merits it must be judged. There are two points to consider: how well suited are the photographs chosen to tell the story; and, does the presentation support the photographs? The book uses over 200 photographs of more than 10,000 found in archives and libraries. The number alone intimidates yet substantiates the degree to which the Gold Rush seized contemporary attention.

The photographs are generally well chosen, but in the last few chapters on Dawson and the gold creeks there is a disproportionate space devoted to the dance halls, saloons and prostitutes and too little to a more balanced view of Dawson society. The double-page spread of Front Street (pages 190-91) reveals a forest of signs advertising restaurants, laundries, dentists, trading stores, tailors, jewellers, coffee shops, a newspaper and only one saloon and one theatre, yet the accompanying caption stresses "new theatres, saloons, and gaming houses springing up like mushrooms." Are we to believe that all these tradespeople and shopkeepers spent their nights in the saloons and theatres amidst glitter and debauchery? There are plenty of photographs available which reveal a more sedate side to Dawson; one or two would have given a more balanced presentation.

The photographs lack explanatory captions indicating place and date. Instead there are occasional narrative captions which refer to some of

the photographs and repeat what has appeared already in the each chapter's textual introduction. The failure to credit the photographers who are responsible for this book is an inexcusable omission. E. A. Hegg, Larss & Duclos, Asahel Curtis, M. H. Craig and Frank LaRoche, to name a few, deserve greater attention than they have received here. This is surprising, given Mr. Berton's insistence on the rights of authors.

The book offers little help to others who might want to do further research. Only the barest indication of where the photos come from is given, yet many institutions request that credit be given also to the photographer and that the picture's identifying number be included to speed future requests and to aid other researchers.

Another serious deficiency is Frank Newfeld's design. The majority of the photographs are well reproduced, but there are two major faults. No fewer than fifty-six of the photos are run across the gutter of the page. This is a device beloved of designers and despised by all who want to see the photographs clearly. Secondly, someone appears to have discovered the wealth of detail to be found in a photograph, and this epiphany has been incorporated into the design of the book by enlarging details of photos. This can be a useful and interesting tool which takes advantage of a major strength of photography, but it is overdone here and for no obvious reason. Nine photos are accompanied by enlargements of portions of them which extend to two pages. The result is huge grain, no detail and flat, muddy tones. Without exception they are an expensive, pointless waste of space. It is probably no fault of the designer, but there are far too many other photographs which are reproduced too large or could have been replaced by better quality images. Heavy grain and flat tones are even more obvious when they appear with the many other superbly reproduced photos printed from original negatives.

In short, this is an interesting book, well worth looking at and studying in spite of its deficiencies. The photographs have a directness of impact that is seldom approached by narrative. Still, at fifty dollars it is definitely not a book to buy. It is just not worth the money!