

workers' daily lives. To be sure, this does appear, in photographs of arrests, kitchen work and cannery labour, but it is nowhere explicit and unambiguous. The medium passes on to us, implicitly and subtly, an undeniable message. We need some words to let us know why and how this is happening.

To raise questions like these is, no doubt, to stretch this work past what it was meant to do, to quibble too cantankerously. But this is much too good a book to let these matters slip by without comment. It is, of course, a celebration of one hundred years of working in Vancouver, and as that it is a great success. The Working Lives Collective should be justifiably proud. Certainly it has answered Bill Bennett's 1936 call for a tribute to working people, although Old Bill might have wondered whatever happened to the Communist Party, which receives only the most indirect treatment here. Why, he might ponder, do feminist unions in the 1970s merit explicit coverage, when the Communist Party, so much a part of Vancouver's labour history since the 1930s, receives no comparable space? Another Bill Bennett, however, surely won't see this as a problem. Indeed, what will the former provincial Premier have to say about this book? I expect he'll like the pictures.

Queen's University

BRYAN D. PALMER

Hamilton Mack Laing: Hunter-Naturalist, by Richard Mackie. Victoria: Sono Nis Press, 1985. Pp. 282, illus. \$19.95.

The ambivalence towards nature that is revealed in the desire to at once both celebrate it and control it is perhaps particularly Canadian. The nature story is in many ways a Canadian genre, just as hunting is a major national pastime. Hamilton Mack Laing was an exponent of both, and, according to Richard Mackie, this "Hunter-Naturalist" saw no contradiction between writing stories that celebrated the natural world and also going out with his gun to kill vast numbers of birds and animals. Indeed, Mackie argues that Laing's apparently contradictory attitudes were a natural product of the Canadian frontier.

Mack Laing felt cheated by being born in Ontario in 1883, but he grew up in rural Manitoba as the west was opening up to settlement. After leaving school he became a teacher, serving in a number of small communities through the first decade of this century. It was during this period that he wrote his first stories. Laing was very much influenced by

the nature writer Ernest Thompson Seton, and he followed in Seton's footsteps by leaving Manitoba for art school in New York in 1911. In the 1920s Laing was a naturalist and museum collector on expeditions to different parts of western Canada before settling down to spend the rest of his years on Comox Bay. The Comox coast was rich in bird life, and birds were Laing's primary area of expertise as well as his abiding passion. Throughout his life Laing collected thousands of birds and animals for museums and private collections, he wrote hundreds of nature stories that were published in a variety of newspapers and magazines, and he was the author of several books, most of which were never published. Yet he was a naturalist for whom the hunting instinct remained fundamental. He never lost the Manitoba farm boy's view that nature must be controlled by man: that predatory birds and animals ought not to be protected, but rather the natural order should be balanced by man in the role of game warden. For nature "left to its own devices would invariably result in a reign of terror by crows, hawks, eagles, owls and wolves" (22).

Richard Mackie has done us the service of introducing a man who spent much of his life in British Columbia, who was an avid collector and a prolific writer, and yet is now probably not known to many. As a biographer Mackie is better at description than he is at explanation. This is so notwithstanding the fact that several chapters are arranged topically rather than chronologically, an approach that also results in a certain amount of repetition. The author often stands aside at crucial points to allow Laing to speak for himself with long quotes from the naturalist's own writings. Laing is thereby given too much control. We do not get far below the surface of his personality, and in this respect Mackie's book is very different from E. Bennett Metcalfe's recent life of another British Columbia nature writer, Roderick Haig-Brown.¹ Even the basic dichotomy between the naturalist and the hunter is described, but not probed in any depth. Mackie does point out that Laing's ideas about hunting as a means of controlling nature's "savagery" were outdated by the 1930s with the development of the conservation movement in Canada, but one wonders if such notions were ever widely held among nature enthusiasts. Certainly there were contemporary critics of the shooting naturalists. And Mackie's assertion that Laing's justification for killing predators because they were "bad" animals was firmly grounded in Seton's nature stories is based on a very different interpretation of Seton's writing than that

¹ E. Bennett Metcalfe, *A Man of Some Importance: The Life of Roderick Langmere Haig-Brown* (Seattle and Vancouver: James W. Wood, 1985).

offered by John Wadland.² To the end of this book Laing remains an interesting character but does not become a rounded personality, as some aspects of his activities are passed over much too quickly.

One such activity arose from Laing's interest as a young man in a species of wildlife that tends to be ignored by other naturalists. Nowadays the hog is, if not endangered, then certainly threatened, unless, of course, it can be preserved by the boys from Porsche. But Laing knew the beast well before it became a cult item. In 1915 he rode his Harley-Davidson, which he named "Barking Betsy," from New York to San Francisco. The account that he wrote of the journey, entitled "Transcontinentalizing or Joy of the Road," was one of his many "books" that was never published. The Harley-Davidson Motor Company felt that it was too long to run in its monthly magazine, *Enthusiast*. In its letter of rejection the Milwaukee Company did note, however, that the demand for power had become so urgent of late that the engineering department had finally perfected a 74 cubic inch model "that would make old Betsy look like a mere weakling."³ And so it did. But even in 1915 the Harley had its mystique and, while the male students were sceptical, a number of the young ladies from his art school in New York wanted to accompany Laing on his journey. Betsy's rigid frame, murderous swept-back bars and suicide shift must have made "transcontinentalizing" a touch uncomfortable at times. Yet, even then, the classic V-twin engine was reliable enough to take him from coast to coast and, booting across the great American desert, Laing surely knew the meaning of the words "live to ride" long before they gained currency in the biker fraternity.

Simon Fraser University

ROBIN FISHER

² John Henry Wadland, *Ernest Thompson Seton: Man in Nature and the Progressive Era 1880-1915* (New York: Arno Press, 1978), 447-51.

³ Harley-Davidson Motor Co. to Hamilton M. Laing, 30 March 1922, H. M. Laing Papers, Add Ms 1900, Box 16, Provincial Archives of British Columbia.

The Chinese Connection, Getting Plugged In To Pacific Rim Real Estate, Trade and Capital Markets, by Michael Goldberg. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1985.

The objective of Goldberg's book is to analyze the behaviour of overseas Chinese entrepreneurs. Goldberg hopes that this will contribute to the understanding of entrepreneurial behaviour in general and to the