

paper into a book. The chapter on the Pacific Rim economy contains information which is irrelevant to the study, such as the number of telephones per capita. The chapter on the overseas Chinese comprises largely quotes and data from several other studies. Why bother printing it? The final chapters on changes in the world economy and policy suggestions for the Canadian economy bear little relation to the actual core of Goldberg's study. Nonetheless, Goldberg's book addresses an important issue for British Columbia. It contains some useful insights on the nature of Chinese entrepreneurs and economic development. It also contains an impressive bibliography which any researcher on Pacific Rim issues will find invaluable.

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School Wars — The Assault on B.C. Education, by Crawford Kilian.
Vancouver: New Star Books, 1985.

Crawford Kilian's *School Wars* is, as he describes it, "a personal book about a public institution in crisis" and a book that presents one account of the events that have led to the recent turmoil in British Columbia education. Kilian, a teacher at Capilano College and education columnist for the *Vancouver Province*, served as a North Vancouver school trustee from 1980 to 1982 and is, in his own words, not "a friend to the Social Credit Government or sympathetic to its priorities."

Believing obviously that the pen is mightier than the sword — and, indeed, he wields it sometimes with the subtlety of a blunt instrument — Kilian has set out in this 241-page volume to catalogue the evils that have befallen public education since the introduction of the government's restraint legislation in 1982 and to indict government leaders for their "incompetence and malice." As he puts it: "In three years, the Socreds have thrown a major social institution into chaos. Careers have been ruined, money has been wasted on a titanic scale, and the whole atmosphere of British Columbia social life has been poisoned."

Government attempts to control educational spending in the 1980s and to reduce dramatically the number of public sector workers are historically grounded, Kilian explains, and may be traced to the reactionary attitudes found in certain elements of the business community in the 1930s as well as to ever-present currents of anti-intellectualism within the provincial character itself. In addition, recent government attacks on the schools,

colleges and universities have been made possible by changes in demographics and by the declining "political power of people who consider education important." Since the downturn of the provincial economy in the early 1980s, Kilian points out, the struggle for philosophical and political control of the schools has been won by atavistic conservative forces who espouse an educational creed "which not only recognizes but even celebrates the law of the jungle." The influence of the "ecumenicals," as he terms those who seek educational opportunities for "every child regardless of background or abilities," has given way to that of the efficiency-conscious "schismatics" who see the schools as factories or as agencies for social and economic selection.

This change in public sentiment, Kilian contends, was recognized by a government eager to seize opportunities for political advantage and, with the help of "a few morally catatonic bureaucrats," government leaders capitalized on the new public mood by declaring war on education through the restraint program. "The Bennett Government," according to Kilian, "consciously chose not only to make education a low priority, but to make it, along with other fields, a scapegoat for the province's economic woes — to portray it as a problem rather than a solution, because an unhappy and frightened populace was looking for someone to blame."

What followed the restraint legislation of 1982, in Kilian's view, was three years of "chaos and uncertainty," marked by abortive attempts at curriculum reform, teacher layoffs, a teachers' strike, the removal of local school board autonomy, the dismissal of rebellious trustees, program and faculty cutbacks at colleges and universities and a general decline in the morale of the educational community. The net result of all of this, he argues, has been a crisis not only in education but in the broader realm of public social policy.

Although it is not difficult to sympathize with some aspects of Kilian's concern about the state of provincial education — or to accept his ideas about education's importance to individuals and the nation — his volume is flawed in several ways, not the least of which is its one-sidedness and its treatment of complex issues in sometimes superficial ways. Without question, the government has cut the rate of growth of educational spending, and this has had serious consequences for those who work and study in provincial institutions. However, in presenting only the anti-government viewpoint, and in attributing the reasons for the restraint program largely to the government's anti-intellectual bias, if not mean-spiritedness, Kilian does little to illuminate the nature of the economic and political

forces that caused government leaders to take such a radical step. In this respect, Kilian might easily have explored the enormous growth that occurred in all parts of public education during the 1960s and 1970s (the number of employees within the Ministry of Education itself doubled during this period), the burden such growth placed on business and residential taxpayers, or the need for elected policy makers to attenuate or otherwise address the public's almost insatiable desire for higher levels of educational service — levels that the public may not, in fact, be able to afford. Moreover, he might have discussed how the restraint program sought to arrest mounting public pressure on government to curtail social speeding or have investigated the kinds of choices open to decision makers at a time when provincial revenues were sharply declining and costs for health and education were skyrocketing. In this way, we might have gleaned at least a clearer understanding of the grounds on which the school wars have been fought. Instead, all the reader has is a fairly unrevealing portrait of the "good guys and bad guys."

Leaving aside the forces spurring the government to act or the general demoralization brought about by a provincial economy in a state of contraction, Kilian could similarly have investigated the economic and political motives driving the other combatants. He does not examine in any comprehensive way the motives of the government's opponents — the Solidarity coalition, the British Columbia Teachers' Federation, the dissident school boards, or other labour or professional groups — or what such groups stood to win or lose in their confrontation with government over its education policies. By not inquiring into the self-interest of these groups, Kilian neglects the realpolitik of the labour-management struggle in the province, or the way in which education served as a lightning rod around which to attract general anti-government sentiments from a variety of constituencies. Nor, it should be noted, has he probed very deeply into the strategy of the New Democrats or their own less than unblemished record in funding higher education. Yet, he concludes: "On Churchillian grounds, the NDP would deserve support no matter what its stand might be, since the urgent need of the mid-1980s' schools is to remove Social Credit from power. When any stick will do to beat a dog, the NDP is perfectly serviceable."

Ultimately, what the reader is left with in this volume is a reconstruction of events which reads like a twentieth-century morality play. Within this drama, Kilian characterizes educators and their supporters as self-sacrificing and righteous forces of light locked in a life or death struggle with the dark forces of politics and government officialdom. Admittedly,

the author of *School Wars* has not claimed to be even-handed in his treatment of events or their meaning — and in this regard he may have excused himself from his transgressions against the canons of historical scholarship. Clearly, the intent of this work is less historical than polemical; it is less concerned with augmenting our understanding of the recent past than with sounding a call-to-arms for those opposed to government policies in education.

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Vancouver Short Stories, edited by Carole Gerson. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1985. \$9.50.

Vancouver Fiction, edited by David Watmough. Polestar Press. N.p.

The historical occasion for the appearance of these two collections — Vancouver's centennial — offers a locally restricted, literary context within which to frame one of the historic and thorny questions for Canadian Studies: how do we define the relations between place (or setting), tradition (literary, or more broadly, cultural) and nationality (geographical or racial), given the exigencies of what Frye has called our "fore-shortened history"? Is "Vancouver fiction" written *about* Vancouver — its atmospherics, its settings, its cultures; written *in* Vancouver — in Point Grey, Kitsilano, Kerrisdale, on Commercial Avenue (in Dollarton?); or written *by* Vancouverites — by whatever dubious criteria we might identify these latter-day natives? (Of Carole Gerson's twenty writers, four — William McConnell, Joy Kogawa, Wayson Choy and Frances Duncan — are Vancouver-born; of the thirteen writers in David Watmough's collection, Keath Fraser is the sole Vancouver native.)

Carole Gerson's "Introduction" addresses these and related questions succinctly and intelligently, pointing out that the book "is not a collection of Vancouver authors, but of Vancouver short stories, chosen because they highlight facets of the city's social history and literary development." But choosing stories which highlight facets of Vancouver's social history created a problem and begs a question: Gerson found that "for the first seventy-five years of Vancouver's existence there is too little material, and for the last twenty-five there is too much." Presumably, this scarcity influenced Gerson's inclusion of the first selection, Frances Owen's lurid "The Prophetess" (1907). The story may indeed be "an intriguing account of