

These samplings imply another cliché. This book should have been titled "Vancouver Visions" or "Vancouver and Surroundings." Certainly the interior and the islands get very short shrift. But the emphasis is another aspect of the promised land. Vancouver is desirable partly because it is as much an imperial centre within British Columbia as Toronto is within Canada. That Vancouver's dominance is not much noticed in the book is part of its idyll.

Woodall's definitions of dabbling may also explain why this review is mostly a list of quotations with few transitions. The feeling of the book is of an anthology of mostly journalistic memoirs, occasionally provocative (Gary Cristall's celebration of the creative potential of "political polarization" or Jeani Read's vision of the earth moving), often suggesting topics (Jack Hodgins on Island dialect, Michael Mercer on place names) for more extended essays. But pending such essays, this book that just dabbles at being a book is seldom merely slight because it does reveal a community "slowly getting better at something," at articulating a mythology of mountains and rain, in resolute low key.

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Solidarity: The Rise and Fall of an Opposition in British Columbia, by Bryan D. Palmer. Vancouver: New Star Books, 1987. Pp. 120. \$6.95 paper.

Was the Solidarity movement that burgeoned in the summer and fall of 1983 in opposition to the Bennett government's restraint program betrayed by the social democratic and labour leadership? Could a general strike have been carried off successfully, forcing Social Credit to retreat on most or all of the twenty-six measures introduced? Could the politicization that would have resulted have helped move the province's labour movement and the province more generally in a more socialist direction? The answer to these questions, argues Palmer, is yes.

Let me begin with the strengths of his essay. Palmer writes with verve and commitment, bringing to bear a detailed knowledge of the events in question and a more than passing acquaintance with the history and class character of twentieth-century labour movements, both in North America and in Europe. If Trotsky's theme of "the revolution betrayed" is applied altogether too mechanistically and, in my opinion, inappropriately to the B.C. situation, it is also fair to recognize that it is precisely the broader,

world historical perspective of Palmer's Marxism that makes his *Solidarity* the highly coherent and readable volume that it is.

Yet those very strengths turn into weaknesses the moment we re-examine the events of July-November 1983 in the cold light of day. Were there really "hundreds of thousands of people marching in protest rallies" (p. 9)? Was the result of the 1983 provincial election "indecisive" (p. 52)? Were elected strike committees, implicitly modelled on the *soviets* or *Räte* of the Russian and German revolutions (p. 93), ever a serious option in the political climate of B.C. (and North America), where the "broad left" as Palmer terms them are but a tiny minority of the population and indeed the labour movement as a whole? What Palmer fails to recognize, in his almost theological obsession with "betrayal," is that the 1905 and 1917 scenarios are not really appropriate to the very different battles faced by B.C. labour in 1983. If there have been revolutionaries in this province in the past five years, they have been of a neo-conservative, not Marxist-Leninist, disposition. *Solidarity* was an essentially *defensive* reaction to the most serious direct attack on organized labour and the post-war social contract that we have seen in Canada. It was the new right that was aggressively attempting to shift the goal posts on such things as human rights, tenant rights, and collective bargaining with the full backing of the machinery of state which it controlled. Extraparliamentary opposition was the one and only weapon that remained in the hands of labour and the left — a weapon that could at best wrest certain concessions from a bloody-minded government, but could not really force it to change course.

While there is room for legitimate debate as to whether the Kelowna Accord settled matters all too cheaply or whether *Solidarity's* leadership might not have pressed harder for concessions on the Human Rights Commission, it is quite another matter to overestimate the material and political support that could have been garnered in an all-out confrontation with the Bennett government. Palmer downplays the internal tensions within the trade union and teachers' groups that were out on strike, the strong inclination on the part of many in the rank-and-file for a settlement, the power of both law and the media to muzzle and discredit any untoward radical developments, and the inevitable counter-organization on the right that would have accompanied an escalating general strike. The *Solidarity* leadership did not misjudge the political situation in the province by putting real limits on just how far it would use the strike weapon.

Palmer's unrelenting sarcasm, directed particularly against "labour bureaucrats" such as Art Kube and Larry Kuehn, and his revolutionary holier-than-thou tone, recalls nothing so much as the impossibilism of the

Socialist Party of Canada of the beginning of this century. If only the trade union leadership had been more revolutionary and class conscious, if only the social democrats had not pooh-poohed any and all militancy, if only the Communist Party and others in the "broad left" had not played up to the B.C. Fed leadership, how different things might have been. Perhaps. But in the short run, Solidarity did provide a lesson in extraparliamentary opposition to neo-conservative policies without parallel in the English-speaking world. B.C. labour, too, has continued to weather on-going attacks from Social Credit, and not without considerable dignity and backbone, as witness the one-day general strike organized by the B.C. Federation of Labour on 1 June 1987 against Bill 19. And the example of coalition-building that the Solidarity movement pointed to remains a more lasting legacy for the Canadian left in the late 1980s and into the 1990s than the echoes of proletarian revolutions-past that underlie Palmer's essay.

Vancouver

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British Columbia Prehistory, by Knut R. Fladmark. Ottawa: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1986.

Once again, Knut R. Fladmark succeeds at a new undertaking — contributing a public-oriented book entitled *British Columbia Prehistory*. In his own words, "This book is an attempt to make some of the richness and fascination of British Columbia's ancient past more accessible, although I hope that it will also be of interest to professional archaeologists and their students . . ." (ix). He succeeds by combining the abundant "shadow literature" of the numerous obscure archaeological reports and theses from British Columbia into a brilliantly prepared book of broad/general and professional quality. He states his strategy best by introduction: "On our tour we will glimpse a mosaic of dynamic landscapes filled with shifting glaciers, rising and falling oceans and changeable forests. In these settings, a kaleidoscope of human life — men, women and children, artists, warriors and mystics — will appear, flicker and vanish with the march of years" (2).

The tour involves at least 12,000 years, contributing well developed descriptions and illustrations from ninety years of B.C. archaeological results. A highlight is the small fictitious vignettes that place us on location at different time periods of British Columbia's rich human past. My main regret is that the vignettes are not longer! They are very well written and