

emotional state. The historian's task is always to search out the truth, for truth is essential to history.

When Graham speaks of "the horrifying history of a forgotten people," of marine agents co-authoring "a long, dark chapter in Canadian history, inflicting hardships few Canadians could even contemplate," with Ottawa guaranteeing keepers a "life on the mudsill of society," the reader could be forgiven for thinking that not since the antebellum South has slavery been so fashionable. The truth is that while lightkeepers' wages *were* low and social benefits *were* non-existent, their lot was certainly no better or worse than most workers in turn-of-the-century Canada.

In 1889, The Royal Commission on the Relations of Capital and Labour reported widespread exploitation in the manufacturing industry. In particular, it noted inadequate protection from belts, pulleys, and steam engines; crowded and unhealthy conditions; widespread child labour; frequent unemployment; lack of compensation for industrial accident victims; workers forced to eat at their work post; and lack of job security.

By not placing the lightkeepers' struggle within the larger context of Canadian labour history, Graham leaves the impression that somehow these "exiles" on the shores of British Columbia were singled out for inhumane treatment.

Having expressed my reservations about the book, I believe nonetheless that Donald Graham has achieved one of his stated purposes. He has made a strong case against automating the lights. I know the need to keep the lights staffed. I was raised on the west coast of Vancouver Island, and while at university I spent summers working at a number of lighthouses. The fishermen quoted in the book are right: "If men leave the lights other men will die."

Graham's book adds a useful chapter to the history of Canada's west coast. If, in addition, his work helps reverse the trend toward lighthouse automation, he will have rendered all mariners a great service.

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Gordon Shrum: An Autobiography, with Peter Stursberg, edited by Clive Cocking. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986. Pp. xvi, 158.

This portrait is like Gordon Shrum: brisk, clear, forthright. Shrum loved doing; one could even say, "il aimait à faire faire" — he loved getting things done. Larry MacKenzie, UBC's President, 1944-1962, roundly

asserted that Shrum was "the best expediter" that he had ever seen. Powerful, energetic, decisive, abrupt, Shrum could not have been an easy man to live with; he was a driver; he drove himself and all those around him. He had few soft hypocrisies; he said what he thought. As co-chairman of B.C. Hydro and Chancellor of Simon Fraser, he was always in hot water from some frank opinion and a too-vivid mode of rendering it.

One need not expect Shrum's autobiography to be allusive, reflective, a thing of lights and shades, of patterns held in apposition and juxtaposition, of ironies. There isn't much of that; it's a good story, vigorously told. Shrum was too much the man of action to have bothered with words; they were simply tools to him. His reminiscences are not written, they are taped. Their quality is partly Shrum himself, partly good editing.

Shrum preferred to do business by telephone; letters were too slow. W. A. C. Bennett could be the same way. In May 1963 he phoned Shrum at B.C. Hydro (where Shrum was busy with the Peace River project) and said, "I want you to be the chancellor of the new university of the Fraser Valley. Select a site, build it and get it going. I want it to open in September 1965." Shrum, for once, hesitated. Bennett quickly noted it. "Maybe, Dr. Shrum, you'd like to take a little time and think it over." "You know, Mr. Premier," Shrum replied, "if you want it by September 1965, I haven't very much time to think whether I should take it or not. I'll take it and I'll get on with it right away." Simon Fraser University opened in September 1965.

With such a man, not much given to introspection, the autobiography coming straight off dictation, the light is bound to be a little flat. Like skiing on a cloudy day in high mountains, you don't make out the shadows. There is only passing mention (pp. 145-46) of his two wives, from both of whom Shrum separated. His marriages are, one suspects, a strange, sad story; there is another side to Shrum unrevealed.

Shrum was capable of wonderful acts of selflessness. In 1925, when he decided to leave Toronto, he had two offers — one from the University of Manitoba at \$2,800, the other from U.B.C. at \$2,500. He intended to accept the better one, but a married colleague begged to be given the chance to take more lucrative Winnipeg. Shrum was a gentleman, and single, and thus chose U.B.C. He never regretted it. Shrum's appreciation of Larry MacKenzie, a president of whom he at first disapproved, was open and generous, 10 May 1946:

Your energy, courage, imagination and unselfishness have won the loyalty and support of everyone both on and off the campus. Only those of us who

were here before you arrived can have any real appreciation of the transformation which you have effected.

These sidelights on Shrum are not in his autobiography. There is that dimension missing, which is no one's fault. The idea of getting Shrum to do his reminiscences was excellent; the editing is impeccable; but, except for Peter Stursberg's brief, lively introduction, we do not see Shrum in the round, and probably cannot, unless there are Shrum Papers. One fears there may not be; there remains an uneasy suspicion that with this straightforward book we have got all of Gordon Shrum that we are likely to get.

What comes forcibly upon one is this fate, as one may call it, of Shrum who did his business quickly and expertly, by telephony. So did Larry MacKenzie; but MacKenzie also kept records; the telephone did not create the biographical hiatus for him that it may well do for Shrum. Larry MacKenzie left 200 feet of archives, for historians to write a biography. That was, of course, intended. Shrum may well have shrunk from that coyness about papers and records — about, in effect, fame. His autobiography is singular in its artlessness, carrying its own translucent demonstration of Shrum's rather solitary voyage, his sensibility imposing its own silence, and however northern, or chilled, he found solace in doing the world's business supremely well.

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