

*After Bennett: A New Politics for British Columbia*, edited by Warren Magnusson, R. B. J. Walker, Charles Doyle, and John DeMarco. Vancouver: New Star Books, 1986.

This book is a collection of critiques and proposals on aspects of the economy, society, and politics in British Columbia from the perspective of the contemporary left. It was written partly in response to circumstances and events in B.C. politics since the introduction of the "restraint" budget of 1983, and partly in response to charges that the programmes of the left are stale and inadequate for a society in the late twentieth century. The major theme throughout the book is the renewed importance for the left of democratic values and the challenge to a participatory, democratic society posed not just by capitalism but also by centralized bureaucratic state structures. Addressed to the general public, it is a useful primer on the issues and constituencies that concern socialists.

The book is in two parts; one is concerned with the economy, the other with a variety of social and political issues. The essays on the economy are divided into three sections. The first, on economic revival, includes a critique by Michael Lebowitz of the individualist assumptions of neo-conservative economists and two pieces on the weaknesses of and strategies for B.C.'s resource-based economy, one by Mel Watkins and the other by Thomas Gunton. Gunton in particular suggests a number of interesting strategies that, although eclectic, tend to resemble economic management approaches we are familiar with in other social democratic systems. The second section on the economy is concerned with new and more democratic alternatives to corporate power. Warren Magnusson proposes the expansion and decentralization of the non-profit public sector, Wes Shira describes some community-based economic projects, and John Richards makes the case for worker participation in management. The lively debate between Richards and John Calvert which follows Richard's proposals is one of the most interesting parts of the book. The final section on the economy, although entitled "Resources and Development," is more restricted than one might expect, limited to articles on agriculture by Alan Drengson and John Warnock and on the Stein Valley and resource development by Mike M'Gonigle.

Throughout the essays on the economy, there is an apparent tension between the characterization of corporate power which seems to require powerful countervailing structures on one hand and the decentralization required for effective democratization on the other, between the external economic forces that impinge on B.C. and the capacity for effective reforms

within B.C. These tensions, although recognized, are not always effectively resolved.

The second part of the book begins with a section on government. Philip Resnick makes some interesting observations on the ambivalent relationship between the state and socialism, both historically (in Europe) and in contemporary B.C., and then calls for an extension of the public sphere but not the state sphere. What appears to distinguish the two is localized democratic control of the former and centralized bureaucratic control in the latter. Norman Ruff then argues that while the Social Credit government has created centralized policy centres with decentralized administration, more "relevant" policy emerges only through feedback from administrators to the policy-making process. Magnusson continues the decentralization theme by arguing the virtues and importance of powerful local governments, and Dan Gottesman concludes this section with an argument in support of aboriginal self-government.

The next section on culture and society begins with a critique of the mass media by Robert Hackett, Richard Pinet, and Myles Ruggles. The mass media, they argue, inhibit popular democracy by creating and reinforcing "dominant definitions of social reality" that discourage participation and de-emphasize dissent and conflict and they do so because of the consequences of commercialism. In an essay on culture, George Woodcock describes the lack of support from both government and the community for producers of culture in B.C. and argues that artists should expect some status and style of life "commensurate with their services" but not of a sort as to produce complacency. Gordon Bailey, on education, criticizes the notion that it is politically neutral in either curriculum or in its teaching procedures and on health care; John DeMarco and Donna Heughan argue that the costs and ineffectiveness of the current system are attributable to the medical model in which individuals are treated for illness after it has set in.

In the final section of the book, on politics and social movements, R. B. J. Walker argues that the problems with democracy in B.C. rest in part with the divorce of politics and everyday life. Christine St. Peter describes feminist proposals for equality of the sexes and suggests a reform of politics to include the extension of "womanly" values of community and caring to the public sphere. Josephine Schofield, in an essay on the poor, describes the dimensions of poverty in B.C., organizations for the poor, and the problems facing such organizations. Finally, Elaine Bernard, discussing organized labour, proposes that in the face of challenges from technology and

its own weakened economic position, labour's most effective tactics lie in finding allies, not in stopping production.

While the central theme of democracy and decentralization is apparent throughout, the essays in this book suggest some diversity of approach. For example, some are clearly less uncomfortable making accommodations with the existing system. More direct debate on such issues would have made for more lively reading. As might be expected in a book of this sort, there is considerable repetition of themes and proposals, and the style occasionally becomes excessively rhetorical. Although the title of the book suggests that its major thrust is proposals for change, for this reader its strength is more apparent in the various analyses of contemporary British Columbia. Overall, as a book directed to the general public, it is a welcome addition to the debate on alternate visions for B.C.

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*British Columbia: Its Resources and People*, edited by Charles N. Forward. Western Geographical Series Volume 22. Victoria: Department of Geography, University of Victoria, 1987. Pp. xxiii, 433.

Over the last thirty years human geography has moved one full turn in the evolutionary spiral of a discipline. In the 1950s regional geography was in full swing. During the 1960s and 1970s abstract theory was in vogue. Now, in the 1980s, geographers are calling for a "new" regional geography, one that combines both the specificity of place with the generality of theory. Such a combination, it is argued, allows an integrated account of place, one in which difference and distinctiveness emerge. Unfortunately, the regional geography portrayed in *British Columbia: Its Resources and People* is generally of the old kind. It defines British Columbia's uniqueness by a mass of facts and figures arranged according to the time-honoured categories of Relief, Climate, Vegetation, Industry, and so on. But missing is any sense of integration and synthesis, any sense that British Columbia is a distinct and different place.

For the most part the eighteen essays that make up the volume focus on B.C.'s resources, broadly defined. In fact, the title of the book is a misnomer. People are conspicuous by their absence in many of the essays. In addition, one must also question the comprehensiveness of the volume. For example, although there are three essays on tourism, there are none on manufacturing (sawmilling and pulp and paper each get only two pages of