

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

text in Edgell's essay on "Forestry") or office employment. Furthermore, the social and cultural geography of the province get short shrift, addressed only by two essays.

The historical geography of British Columbia, however, is better represented. The first essay, Forward's "Evolution of Regional Character," provides thumbnail historical sketches of eleven sub-regions within the province. Unfortunately, these offer only fragments of that regional character, not an integrated portrait. Gilmartin's "Key maps of British Columbia's past" that follows is the best essay in the book. Unlike many of the contributors she does not allow clumps of statistics (or maps) to submerge the story she tells. She nicely demonstrates how the symbols engraved on the maps are symbolic of a wider European outlook and knowledge of the New World.

The next three essays on the physical geography of British Columbia are competent but for the most part unexciting (Foster's "Landforms and Natural Hazards," Tuller's "Climate," and Edgell's "Vegetation"). Foster's essay would be improved if he had discussed the broader context of natural hazards, while Edgell's essay was overfull of lists and lists of lists. Tuller's piece, though, was clear, straightforward, and used examples well.

The primary resource industries are discussed in the following six essays (Edgell's "Forestry," Wood's "Agriculture," Ross's "Mining" and "Fisheries," and Sewell's "Water Resources" and "Energy Resources"). Sewell's two essays were animated, although Wood's contribution came alive when he discussed some real family farms. The problem, and this was endemic to the whole collection, was the lack of any larger theoretical framework that explained the things at hand. The character of the province was continually squashed flat by the weight of statistics, tables, figures, and maps that were used to describe it.

The following three essays on tourism (Dearden's "Marine-Based Recreation," Downie's "Land-Based Recreation," and Murphy's "Tourism") were adequate, although for the most part uninspired. Murphy's essay was particularly disappointing given his other good work on this topic. It focused only on public policy, ignoring the most intriguing questions about tourism within the province (What makes a tourist place? What is the nature of the tourist experience?). The social and cultural geography of the province is dealt with by Wood's "Population and Ethnic Groups" and Lai's "Chinese Communities." Wood's essay turned into an examination of the province's quality of life, a curious turn given that the essay's supposed focus is ethnicity and demographics. Lai's essay was a straightforward historical narrative, attributing the historical discrimination

against the Chinese community in the province to economic factors. Such an attribution, however, goes against recent studies in social geography that argue that racism should also be seen as a cultural phenomenon.

The final two essays deal with urbanization. Forward's "The Urban System" is an overview of the development of B.C. urban hierarchy, but it is confused by the imposition of the current Census Metropolitan Areas onto historically earlier urban systems. For example, in the period 1870-91 Forward shows that Vancouver was the province's second most populated city, but this is not because the currently defined Vancouver was large but because of New Westminster's population size, which now falls within the C.M.A. Finally, although Porteous's "Single Enterprise Communities" provides a glimpse of life in a resource town, he uses questionnaire data from the early 1970s, and he too quickly moves away from the experience of resource towns to discuss public policy.

In summary, although *British Columbia: Its Resources and People* does have some interesting essays that might be used for undergraduate, and certainly high school, teaching, the volume does not meet the editor's goal of illustrating "the distinctiveness of British Columbia within Canada . . ." (p. iv). There are only fragments here — fragments that require sensitive integration if British Columbia's distinctive character is to emerge.

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