

For those for whom sociological writing is often cryptic, dry, and overly "quantitative," Culhane Speck's account presents a lively change. Her main objective, she explains, has been to present the story as it was understood by the people in the native community, a point of view which is rarely taken seriously. Culhane Speck states clearly that this is a story which demanded that sides be chosen and that she took a side and had no regrets about her choice. She herself was a key actor in the account and hence could not stand aloof and present the story as a detached outsider.

This is a piece of real social scientific merit, one which acknowledges and incorporates the perspective of the "observer" as well as the "observed." It is beautifully written, highly readable, and educational for both an academic and a general audience.

*Vancouver*

WENDY C. WICKWIRE

*The People of the Snow: The Story of Kitimat*, by John Kendrick. Toronto: N.C. Press Limited, 1987.

John Kendrick has written an important human interest story about the people who constructed and were affected by Alcan's huge Kitimat project, completed in the early 1950s. As one of the major actors, he provides a valuable personal perspective on this exciting time in the development of the province.

Before assessing Kendrick's book, one should recall that Kitimat was one of the largest single private construction projects ever undertaken in Canada. As resident engineer for Alcan, Kendrick modestly omits clear reference to its colossal scale. The project required the construction of a major dam, 80 km from the nearest road, to reverse the flow of the Nechako River; a 16 km tunnel, 120 km from the nearest road, to feed the water to an underground powerhouse which was also at an inaccessible location; a transmission line over rugged mountain tops and through avalanche-prone valleys; a world-class aluminum smelter at the head of Douglas Channel, then only accessible by boat; and lastly, a new town to house over 10,000 people. In spite of the size and complexity of the project, a mere forty-two months elapsed from the start of construction to the time the first aluminum ingot was poured.

Kendrick's long association with Kitimat commenced in 1937 when, as an engineering student, he was hired by the B.C. government to work on remote field surveys of the hydroelectric potential of the area, which could

be realized by reversing the eastward flow of the drainage system that rises in the coast range close to tide water. This work was resumed ten years later when as a government employee Kendrick was again involved in a reconnaissance of the hydroelectric potential stimulated by Alcan's interest in the project. Shortly thereafter, in 1949, he was employed by Alcan to conduct three years of engineering feasibility studies, which culminated in a decision to proceed.

Kendrick's story commences with accounts of the pioneers in the area. He deals first with the aborted settlement at the current townsite and then recounts the saga of the settlers at Ootsa Lake who trudged 240 km on foot from Hazelton. With this background in place, he describes his own experience and somewhat anecdotally presents the cast of characters he encountered from 1937 onwards. Such a personalized account provides useful insight and primary data for those who wish to understand the times and at least some of the values of the people who were in government, in Alcan, and in the firms which constructed the project. Although not identified as such by Kendrick, what emerges is a picture of purposeful individuals, with well-defined objectives, who made uncomplicated decisions of momentous proportions, based on limited information, only taking account of clearly apparent consequences.

Kendrick is at his best in conveying the human drama associated with this massive project. He then proceeds quite fairly but somewhat less successfully to address some of the project's deficiencies that would have been corrected if it had proceeded under current circumstances. What stands out are the poor cost estimates and the wasteful practices of the cost-plus contract awarded to Morrison Knudsen for the construction of the hydroelectric components of the project; the limited consideration of environmental impacts; the somewhat doubtful treatment of the displaced settlers on Ootsa Lake; and the hurried and unfortunate treatment of the Indians at Cheslatta. Kendrick could, in my opinion, have added to this list the inadequate consideration of the project's impacts on the Haisla Indians who live near the site of the smelter and new town.

Had Kendrick concluded at this level of analysis I would have no criticism of the work. Unfortunately, he also attempts a shallow macro level social, economic, and environmental assessment of this complex undertaking and the water resource licence granted to Alcan that has not yet been completely utilized. Such an analysis is well beyond the scope of what Kendrick should have undertaken in this slim volume.

In summary, Kendrick has made a valuable contribution to B.C. studies which joins the list of memoirs that add richness to our understanding of

the development of the province. Unfortunately, the account tells us little about his own role as resident engineer for Alcan. Considering the project's accomplishments I believe he has been excessively modest, and this also tells us something about the engineers who have built this province.

University of British Columbia

BRAHM WIESMAN

*Hastings and Main: Stories from an Inner City Neighbourhood*, edited by Jo-Ann Canning-Dew with interviews by Laurel Kimbly. A project of the Carnegie Community Centre Association. Vancouver: New Star Books, 1987. Pp. 158, paper \$9.95.

*Hastings and Main* comprises twenty oral histories of life in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. The area, nestled between the city's business district and Chinatown or Strathcona and overlapping with the western half of what is known as the East End, has historically been distinguished by the diversity, transiency, and poverty of its residents. This volume explores the way in which these demographic abstractions have played themselves out in the lives of individual men and women.

The project on which the book was based originated, not surprisingly, in the Carnegie Community Centre located at the junction of Hastings and Main Streets and, since its opening in the old Carnegie Library building in 1980, the physical and emotional centre of the Downtown Eastside. Fifty-four residents contributed their life stories to an Oral History Project, from which twenty were selected to "reflect the profile of the neighbourhood" (p. 15). While it is left unclear what role the interviewer played in suggesting topic areas (apparently a favourite question was "What gives you the incentive to get up and keep going?" [p. 18]) or whether any editing of individual stories occurred prior to publication, the explicit point is made that "opinions are stated as such" and social activities "are mentioned within the context of their importance for each speaker" (p. 15). As to precise methodology, the interviewer notes that "first I spoke to a person, got his or her story, and then went back and did the interview on tape" (p. 17), as an end in itself without any knowledge at the time that a book might result.

On the assumption that the twenty recollections do represent individuals' own perspectives on their experiences, they take on some importance as social documents, comparable to the oral histories making up the earlier *Opening Doors: Vancouver's East End* (edited Daphne Marlatt and