

Book Reviews

The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia, by Jean Barman. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991. xx, 430 pp. Illus., maps, tables. \$35.00 cloth.

This book owes a good deal to Margaret Ormsby's centennial volume of 1958. Jean Barman acknowledges the debt by describing Margaret Ormsby's history as "an invaluable beginning point." Barman has also drawn on the explosion of recent research that has taken British Columbia's history in many independent directions. This expansion of the subject makes her attempt at synthesis a challenging and important enterprise. In addition, where she has found both Ormsby and the general body of secondary literature deficient, she has searched for the voices of contemporaries as expressed in diaries, memoirs, journals, and elsewhere. In her Introduction, Barman mentions Ormsby first, then the recent work of other historians and finally her own digging for personal material. The order of mention suggests the way in which she went about writing her book, and this is significant because her procedure has determined the content and structure. She has changed the shape of British Columbia's history, but not too much; and that will be welcomed by all who are looking for familiar landmarks while expecting a new emphasis.

When she discusses the colonial period, Barman follows the chronological and topical arrangement of Ormsby's history. The approach by sea, the land based fur trade, the early colonization of Vancouver Island, and the Fraser river gold rush are the building blocks of this narrative, with Bering, Quadra, Cook, Mackenzie, Fraser, Thompson, Simpson, McLaughlin, and Douglas appearing in familiar succession. All this is told in comparatively few pages. The life and times of James Douglas, which took up nearly a third of Ormsby's book, get less than half the space in this one. But the main purpose of the account remains a traditional one — explaining the evolution of European interest in the Northwest Coast. In 1958 Ormsby ended her history with the observation "British Columbia" was an apt

name for the province. Now we are not so sure. Barman finds the name deceptive: other people were involved besides the British. Yet she has not escaped the old construction of the province's early history, with its emphasis on questions of diplomacy and sovereignty and the establishment of a British presence. If there are other dimensions to this history, they have not come to the fore.

For the half-century from Confederation to the end of the First World War, we get a far more original treatment. Barman has moved the focal point of British Columbia history forward to this period by devoting a third of her book to it with five thematic chapters. Ormsby is no longer the guide and the concerns that surface reflect a more contemporary sensibility. Native Indians, who appear only briefly in Barman's discussion of the colonial period, have her attention for a full chapter in the post-Confederation era. Here she emphasizes the persistence and resilience of Native Indian society despite the negative features of Dominion Indian policy, economic change, and the racist attitudes of white society. Race is a persistent theme. A chapter on immigration and population growth encompasses the many minority elements that made up the province and the ethnic exclusiveness and racism that they faced. And a chapter on reform recognizes the blind spot of both the working class labour movement and middle class social reform movement on the subject of race. But race is only a part of the story. In describing the British Columbia of this period, Barman develops a variety of themes of current interest: a staples-based economy dominated by outside financial interests, a province divided in circumstance and attitude between the large urban cluster in the southern coastal region and the small dispersed communities of the hinterland, a distinctive political culture, and an ambivalence towards the rest of the country. The whole picture is multi-dimensional, and these five chapters are the heart and strength of the book.

Barman moves more rapidly through the balance of her account, compressing the 1918-45 years into a single — admittedly longer than average — chapter, devoting somewhat more space to the quarter century following the Second World War, and adding a short chapter to bring the story to 1990. Her discussion of the years since the Second World War gives particular significance to the social changes that softened the racial, gender, and class inequalities that she found so pronounced in British Columbia previously. All this goes well beyond Ormsby, not just in the period covered, but also in a sense of the subjects that a general history should address.

There is one other comparison that, inevitably, I find I make. In the two small corners of British Columbia's history in which I have a specialized

knowledge, *The West Beyond the West* offers some disappointing inaccuracies. On the same subjects, Margaret Ormsby's *British Columbia* gets the facts right; and I suspect that of the two books it remains the more authoritative.

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Mutual Hostages: Canadians and Japanese during the Second World War, by Patricia Roy, J. L. Granatstein, Masako Iino, and Hiroko Takamura. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990. xii, 281 pp. Illus. \$24.95 cloth.

This book is the undertaking of four historians, two in Canada, two in Japan, who embarked upon a comparative study of confinement practices of the Japanese and Canadian governments during World War II. Their stated objectives were to "set out what happened," without condoning or condemning, to question whether the two governments looked upon those under their control as "mutual hostages," to clarify differences in the two approaches, to determine what the two governments and peoples knew and believed about each other, and to understand the "divided loyalties," especially of Japanese Canadians.

As a comparative analysis the work meets limited success. The impressive number of archives consulted yielded much interesting material, but did not allow a comparison in the strict sense. The book ends up being almost entirely about the treatment of *Canadians* as hostages, including soldiers and civilians in Asia, but mainly Canadians of Japanese ancestry in Canada. Of the 218 pages of text, only 52 concern the Pacific War and/or the treatment of Canadian prisoners in Japanese hands. The balance of the book concerns almost entirely the treatment by the Canadian government of 21,000 Canadians of Japanese ancestry, and fewer than 5,000 civilian Japanese nationals who were living in Canada in 1941.¹

A short introductory chapter on Japanese immigration to Canada, written from a diplomatic point of view, provides an excellent background for understanding the precarious position of Canadians of Japanese ancestry beginning in the late nineteenth century. This chapter underscores the

¹ Reference is often made to 21,000 Japanese Canadians (*including* 5,000 Japanese Nationals) uprooted from coastal British Columbia during the early years of the war. That figure does not include 1,000 people already outside the "protected zone," also affected by the measures against Japanese Canadians although not uprooted, or those who were born while the conditions of the War Measures Act were in effect, from December 1941 to March 1949 (a net increase of 4,000). 26,000 were thus affected by the actions of the Canadian government.