

including regular hours if any, copying facilities and phone number. Examination of this list indicates that the overwhelming majority of materials are to be found in Kelowna, the remainder almost all within easy commuting distance.

The second section details each individual set of records. Entries contain inclusive dates, physical size, type of material, restrictions if any, a detailed summary of contents, possible finding aids, and any other useful information. This section makes clear that the history of the Okanagan fruit-growing industry is just waiting to be researched and written. Also included are such diverse and tantalizing items as the reminiscences of Lady Aberdeen's daughter, the financial records of a Chinese store at Yale from 1869 to 1884, and the minutes of a theosophical society during the First World War and of a Buddhist temple from 1933 to the present. The last major section, and possibly the most important, is a detailed index by subject and name.

The lesson of this bibliographical tool should not be lost on us. If we are properly to fulfil our mandate as scholars of British Columbia, it is insufficient just to squirrel together the source materials most useful for our own private purposes. We have a responsibility also to ensure their accessibility to the broader intellectual community. Such agencies as British Columbia Heritage Trust and SSHRCC, through its Canadian Studies Research Tools programme, have provided the financial means to do so. Such publications as the *Guide to Labour Records and Resources in British Columbia* (Louise May, comp. Vancouver: Special Collections Division, UBC Library, 1985), the *Vancouver Centennial Bibliography* (Linda Hale, comp. Vancouver: Vancouver Historical Society, 1986), and, most recently, the *Union Catalogue of British Columbia Newspapers* (Hana Komorous, comp. Vancouver: B.C. Library Association, 1989) provide exemplars of what can be accomplished. *The Central Okanagan Records Survey* proudly stands in this tradition.

University of British Columbia

JEAN BARMAN

*A Communist Life: Jack Scott and the Canadian Workers Movement, 1927-1985*, edited by Bryan D. Palmer, Committee on Canadian Labour History, St. John's, Nfld., 1988.

The rich and powerful in this country and province have their biographers and hagiographers. The business pages of our newspapers and centre-pieces of our glossy magazines are replete with details of their deal-making,

their fortunes and chicanery, their marriages, divorces, and finally their deaths. The less rich and powerful are another matter. Political figures of the left — CCF/NDP, and even occasionally Communist Party — may attract some attention, along with key trade-union leaders like Jack Munro or Bob White. Once we move to the rank-and-file of the Canadian working class, the usual pattern is silence.

It therefore gives me real pleasure to review a book which in singular fashion breaks with this silence. Jack Scott, as some *BC Studies* readers may know, is a figure who has made his mark on the British Columbia left and in a variety of organizations and activities — the Canadian Communist Party, Progressive Worker, the Canada-China Friendship Association, Spartacus Books, the writing of labour history — and who has led a life as variegated in its way as that of any corporate prince or political courtier. *A Communist Life* is essentially Jack Scott's autobiography, as recorded, transcribed, and very ably edited by Bryan Palmer. The result is a fascinating yarn that keeps the attentive reader riveted from start to finish.

From Scott's early Irish days to his Depression experience in the Workers Unity League and Communist Party, from his war-time service in the Canadian Armed Forces to his trade-union activities in post-World War II B.C. and the Far North, from his move out of the CP to a position far more supportive of Maoist China, we have here the stuff of lived experience that those of a later generation will probably never know. Here is Scott on how an impromptu street meeting would be organized in the mid-1930s: "You know, you just got up there and yelled any goddamn thing you could think of. The idea was to get a crowd together." Of the attitude of the CP leadership towards the rank and file: "They were the ones that did the work, we were the guys who do the thinking." His own rebelliousness served him in good stead, first as a signaller overseas ("I did do a good job. One reason why I did was because I didn't follow the rules"), no less than as a foot-soldier in the larger working-class cause in this country. Not surprisingly, this led him into conflict with the party hierarchs and eventually to expulsion. Even in his pro-China days, when he visited that country at the height of the Cultural Revolution as an honoured guest of the Chinese Communist Party, he was able to retain a modestly critical attitude towards the Great Helmsman. "Some of the parts were good in the sense of youth that were prepared to rebel. On the other hand, what disturbed me more than anything else was the tremendous personal power that Mao appeared to have, the sway that he had over the multitudes. . . . That I did not associate with socialism."

The book is filled with personal recollections spanning fifty years. Never

one to pull his punches, Scott can be extremely tough on his opponents; e.g., the CPC-ML of Hardial Bains, and cutting in his personal comments on a host of people he has known. Yet the book gains from the zest and passion that he shows, and the editor was very wise not to anaesthetize his story. From figures in the Communist Party or trade-union movement of the 1930s and 1940s like Tim Buck, Harvey Murphy, David Archer, and Stanley Ryerson, to those on the Vancouver labour or left scene of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, to much larger events on the world scale (e.g., the China which Scott visited three times in 1967, 1976, and 1984), there is the stuff here of acute observation by a self-educated and self-confident member of the Canadian working class.

For B.C. readers, Scott's autobiography will have some additional attraction. Writing of Slim Evans, leader of the 1935 On-to-Ottawa Trek, Scott notes: "It wasn't strange that Evans, who came from British Columbia, should prove a thorn in the side of the Party leadership. BC was always criticized for being too leftist and too militant and not properly analyzing the situation." Of the frustrations of starting a would-be national organization like Progressive Workers on the west coast in the 1960s, "We grew a bit locally, not terribly. The main problem was we didn't get groups going in the rest of the country. It became a local BC group, which we never wanted to happen." On B.C. politics in the 1980s: "There was, in my view, real potential in Solidarity . . . for building an independent working-class political movement that could have brought in allies." On more recent developments: "I think it's downer than it's ever been down before right now. . . . It's an extremely reactionary period." On the B.C. NDP: "Good Christ, you've got to go almost to the right of Genghis Khan to get to the right of what the NDP has been in the last number of years."

One is by no means obliged to share all of Scott's judgements. Nor is he all that sensitive to new themes and movements that have arisen — e.g., environmentalism or native issues. But his is not only an extremely interesting life, but also one which in the very different conditions of late twentieth-century Canada and B.C., with the resource and manufacturing sectors in decline, the trade-union movement on the defensive, the communist movement internationally in disarray, could simply not be lived in the same way again. Far more than memorabilia or nostalgia for proletarian causes of the past, what comes through loud and clear in Scott's memoirs is his fighting spirit. Something of that spirit is Jack Scott's true legacy to his readers and to the Canadian and B.C. left.