

Book Reviews

In the Sea of Sterile Mountains, The Chinese in British Columbia, by James Morton. Vancouver: J. J. Douglas, 1973. 280 pp. \$12.50.

In 1874, Edward Blake, the Member of Parliament from South Bruce, Ontario, told his constituents that British Columbia was "an inhospitable country, a sea of sterile mountains." In choosing this epithet as title for his book, Dr. Morton leaves the reader wondering whether he himself thinks of British Columbia as "an inhospitable place," whether he believes the Chinese saw it so, or whether he has simply been so taken with the phrase as to ignore its total irrelevance to his book. One suspects the last, for the book is full of irrelevant or extravagant *bons mots* that may enhance it for the aspiring middle-brow. The introduction also seems aimed in that direction and tells us nothing about the book or why it was written. Indeed, after finishing the book, I am still wondering why.

Is this book intended to be of interest to the layman or the scholar? Surely not the layman, for the organization is designed to bore. In chapters that cut the century into arbitrary chronological chunks, the book brings together extracts from two of the four Royal Commissions relevant to the subject with over a hundred years of clippings from the *Colonist*, *Gazette*, *News*, *British Columbian*, *Cariboo Sentinel*, and the *Herald*. One suspects, indeed, that it contains every single reference to Chinese in any of these papers, during the nineteenth century at least, for Morton manages to work in such irrelevant details as Amor De Cosmos' remark (1862?) that a new sewer being dug on Bastion Street, Victoria, smelled "worse than a Chinese stink-pot" (p. 14). The citizen interested in finding out something about the Chinese and their relations with the "Europeans" in British Columbia must search for the interesting facts buried in a mass of details.

Such meticulous scholarship, which must have involved long hours of diligent searching through the entire file of several newspapers, is work for an historian, and Dr. Morton will be the first to admit he is not one.

Historians will remain indebted to Dr. Morton for this labour of love, but its usefulness to them is sadly and unnecessarily marred by the lack of any scholarly apparatus whatsoever. Nowhere in the book is there any indication of how the research was done. There is no list of newspapers consulted or their dates, so any historian starting in the field would have to duplicate Dr. Morton's work, a sad waste indeed. The short list of "Sources Other than Newspapers" (p. 269) includes five titles, two of them trivial. The exact sources of the numerous details Dr. Morton has collected are seldom noted. For instance, when Dr. Morton states (p. 144) that "In 1884, the Chinese population of Burrard Inlet consisted of . . . a total of 114," and that they "had settled largely in wooden shacks around the shore of False Creek," the reader would like to know where these figures and locations came from so that he could compare them to information available from other sources. As a reference book for further research, it is therefore disappointingly limited.

Although he nowhere states it clearly, it is evident from the nature of his source material that Dr. Morton did not set out to write a book about the Chinese in British Columbia, but only about white reactions to them. Nevertheless, with a little prior reading on his part, the author could have used his sources to provide a richer story of the Chinese community itself and avoided some mistakes. The trivial references to the Chinese Benevolent Association (pp. 123, 180, 253) suggest the author had not read David Lai's useful articles on its origins and early activities (*BC Studies* nos. 15, 18.) He mistakenly describes the Chinese Empire Reform Association as anti-Manchu, thereby missing entirely the political struggles that have split the Chinese community, which appears in this book as a faceless, monolithic blob to which the real people in history (i.e., whites) react in various outlandish ways.

Good scholarship and readability are not incompatible — quite the opposite: a thoroughly documented, well argued scholarly thesis makes much more interesting reading for everyone than does a compendium. Scholarly judgment is at the heart of the difference, something this book sorely lacks. A trivial example of this is the inconsistency in spellings due to simply copying from different newspaper articles (e.g. Tai-Soong on p. 13, Ty-Soon on p. 29). More serious is the absence of any discussion Chinese immigration and industry might reflect the positions of their owners. A vital image of nineteenth-century Victoria or New Westminster never emerges from the welter of details.

There is an index and a useful chronology. The book is well presented, with two sets of photographs and an attractive dust-jacket in three colours.

University of Canterbury
New Zealand.

W. E. WILLMOTT

Oil Pollution as an International Problem. A Study of Puget Sound and the Strait of Georgia, by William M. Ross. Western Geographical Series, Volume 6. University of Victoria, pp. 279. \$4.00.

In the preface to this book, the author takes the unusual step of laying bare his "environmental conscience" and of proclaiming his biases and his beliefs about environmental problems, and thus leads one to fear that what follows will be merely special pleading in support of preconceived ideas. Fortunately, this fear is not realized. Although the book is in a sense a piece of advocacy, it is on the whole a balanced and well argued treatment of the problems of dealing with international pollution of the sea caused mainly by spills of persistent oil from large tankers.

Having described the nature and scope of the dangers from oil pollution in general and outlined the economic aspects of the problem (chapters 1 and 2), the author goes on to consider oil pollution in Puget Sound and the Strait of Georgia, describing in particular the American and Canadian laws that are applicable to oil pollution in this area (chapter 3). He then proceeds to examine the relevant international laws and institutions (chapter 4), and to set forth his own recommendations and conclusions on how the matter should be dealt with (chapters 5 and 6). He ends with a postscript bringing his story up-to-date to near the end of 1972. He attaches a lengthy bibliography which should be useful to those who wish to go more deeply into the subject.

The main contribution of this work is perhaps its focusing attention on the danger of marine pollution by oil and bringing to bear on the problem the learning drawn from several disciplines. Preventing and controlling marine pollution is a complex matter involving in particular shipping technology and seamanship, national and international law and institutions, and large economic questions. The author has discussed these aspects lucidly, so that the general reader can get a good understanding of the issues and the steps that have been taken by the United States and Canada by the international community to deal with them.

While the book provides an overall picture of the subject that is inform-

ative and useful to the non-specialist, it is not altogether satisfactory for the specialist in one of the fields discussed; at least it is not for the lawyer. This is probably inevitable, for a single author cannot be expected to master many disciplines. The author of this book is a geographer and should not therefore be taken to task for inaccuracies in his statements about intricacies in other fields. It seems fair, however, to warn the reader that there are some inaccuracies. A couple of examples may be given concerning the law. The precise limits of the Trail Smelter Arbitration are misstated; the Tribunal did not hold "as a matter of general international law, that extra-territorial damage from pollution is cause for action only between sovereign states" (page 77); nor can it be deduced from this decision that, in the case of transboundary pollution, "the laws of the jurisdiction damaged would be employed by an international tribunal in awarding damages" (pages 132 and 136). And the statement that Canada has not ratified the Geneva Conventions on the law of the sea (page 163) needs modification; in 1970 she ratified the Convention on the Continental Shelf.

In his concluding sentences, the author calls for "a new order for international pollution prevention and control." The prescription he recommends for the pollution threat to Puget Sound and the Strait of Georgia is the establishment of a bilateral commission with wide legislative, administrative, and even judicial powers, which go far beyond those that have been given to the International Joint Commission under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement of 1972. It is idealistic, but his arguments in favour of such a commission are cogent.

University of British Columbia

CHARLES B. BOURNE

John McLoughlin's Business Correspondence, 1847-48, edited by William R. Sampson. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1973. Pp. li, 179. Illus. \$12.50.

At first sight this would appear to be a collection of a hundred letters, most of them brief and dealing with routine business, overwhelmed by an introduction, footnotes, appendices and bibliography that between them fill nearly three quarters of the book's 230 pages. But detailed examination shows that in spite of this somewhat startling imbalance the exercise has been well worth while.

The letters, copied from a letter book now deposited at Fort Vancouver

National Historic Site, tell us a good deal about McLoughlin's interests and activities during a period that has hitherto been very scantily documented. They extend in date from March 1847 to May of 1848, the only time when he was destined to enjoy anything approaching tranquillity. By the spring of 1847 he was settled at Oregon City, to which he had moved in January 1846, when he left the service of the Hudson's Bay Company, and was established there as a general merchant and proprietor of lumber and grist mills. The Methodist Mission that had been such a thorn in his flesh had been closed, and that most unchristian of missionaries, the Rev. Alvin Waller, who had been a leader in a determined and disgraceful effort to deprive McLoughlin of his Oregon City land claims, had moved to The Dalles. The Oregon Boundary Treaty had been signed, but official government by the Americans had not yet been established. Mercifully hidden from McLoughlin was a future in which Samuel Thurston, first Oregon Territory representative in Washington, would prove to be a worthy successor to Waller and would contrive to have a clause inserted in the Oregon Donation Land Act of 1850 that would once again dispossess him of title to his Oregon City properties.

McLoughlin's trading ambitions were on a far-flung scale. He established contacts and had agents in Honolulu, San Francisco, Montreal and London and proposed to send goods in chartered vessels to Tahiti and Manila. He even contemplated entering into a partnership to acquire a ship of his own. Exports included wheat, flour, salmon, lumber and shingles, and he imported a wide variety of general merchandise, mostly through Honolulu, for retail sale at Oregon City. These business dealings brought him into frequent contact with his former colleagues at Fort Vancouver; James Douglas appears to have been the most friendly of them, always ready to lend a helping hand. John Work, by contrast, felt that McLoughlin had come down in the world. Writing to Edward Ermatinger in 1848 he would remark: "I regret to hear he lowers himself by keeping a shop and retailing out trifling articles to the Yankees."

The most important local happening of the time was the Whitman massacre, which McLoughlin attributed to an epidemic of measles. This had taken its usual heavy toll of the Indians, who suspected that it was "Bad Medicine thrown on them by the Americans." McLoughlin was worried about the danger of further clashes between Indians and immigrants, and he wrote to the Secretary of War expressing the view that this danger was not so much due to the Indians as to the ignorance of immigrants as to how to approach and deal with them. He urged the necessity of providing well armed escorts for parties of incoming settlers,

and was confident that if these were available the Indians would pose no threat.

Some of the old antagonisms persisted. He was still smarting under the critical remarks that had been made in the reports sent back by Warre and Vavasour and deeply resentful of the Hudson's Bay Company's criticism of his generosity to immigrants — generosity which in truth had been prompted by practical prudence as well as a warm heart. The immigrants were not the kind to sit quietly by and starve beside the Company's well stocked warehouses. Simpson and the London officials of the Hudson's Bay Company had also been critical of his dealings with Nathaniel Wyeth, with whom he continued to correspond. The two longest letters in this collection were written to Wyeth, advising him of how McLoughlin thought Wyeth could best protect the title to his Oregon properties.

It is interesting to find that at one time McLoughlin thought of moving to California — this in spite of the fact that he considered the Willamette Valley to be "the most comfortable Residence for Civilised Man in North America."

A wealth of material has been assembled in the notes and introduction. The latter is a sketch of McLoughlin's entire career, based primarily on the volumes of letters published by the Hudson's Bay Record Society and *The McLoughlin Empire and its Rulers* by the late Dr. Burt Brown Barker. The very extensive footnotes represent, amongst other things, a diligent and successful effort to identify every person mentioned in the letters, 31 of whom are dealt with at greater length in a biographical appendix. An extensive bibliography provides a guide to contemporary accounts and secondary sources. In sum, in addition to the letters the book constitutes a useful and convenient reference for anyone interested in the area and period.

One must search carefully to find either misprints or errors of fact, but Lovat and Milbanke Sound are misspelled on pages xv and xxxv and, contrary to the statement on page xxxiv, the engines of the famous steamer *Beaver* were not installed at Fort Vancouver; only the paddle-wheels were fitted there.

Vancouver

W. KAYE LAMB

Land Grab: One Man Against the Authority, by Donald Waterfield.
Toronto: Clarke Irwin, 1973. pp. 193, \$7.95.

Three years after the publication of his first book on the Columbia River controversy (*Continental Waterboy*), Donald Waterfield has produced another dealing with the same public policy question. Only this time his focus is much narrower, for his concern here has been to record in detail the experiences of one Arrow Lakes Valley resident, Oliver Buerge, parts of whose land holdings were submerged by a major new reservoir. Mr. Buerge rejected the compensation offered him by the Canadian entity in the Columbia's development, the B.C. Hydro and Power Authority, fought Hydro on the issue in the courts, and almost uniquely, Mr. Waterfield suggests, ended up a winner.

Mr. Waterfield's evocative power with his pen prompts the reader to empathize — as he clearly does — with the little man in the contest. Furthermore, his skillful blending of careful editing with an informative commentary helps sustain interest (and understanding) when he reproduces some very long verbatim excerpts from transcripts of courtroom proceedings. One of the real merits of this book is the manner in which it underscores the cost to people, in material and non-material terms, of expropriation proceedings which are unduly protracted. What Mr. Waterfield has to say on this subject is dealt with at greater length in J. W. Wilson's *People in the Way*.

While one cannot help admiring this persuasively engaging author, who peripherally was a participant observer in the contest he is describing, one is still left wondering how balanced his record really is. To be fair, he does make it clear on a number of occasions that he felt Mr. Buerge was inclined to push his claims too far. But nowhere, really, does he attempt to put himself in the shoes of an authority which had negotiated agreements with the vast majority of those dispossessed, and which did have to consider the implications, in equity terms, of reaching belated settlements with a very few hard-nosed hold-out bargainers. The issue is complex, as indeed Mr. Waterfield agrees. To repeat my point, what the reader will not find here is B.C. Hydro's side to this story.

There are a few factual errors in the manuscript — for example, the Columbia River Engineering Board was not commissioned by Prime Minister King, nor was it to report to the Canadian section of the IJC (p. 13) — but these are minor. What the reader needs to be reminded of again in conclusion is that Mr. Waterfield is not a dispassionate observer. Take, for example, the description to which he certainly sub-

scribes on the dust jacket of this book: "In the wake of one of the worst sell-outs in Canadian history — the signing of the Columbia River Treaty in Washington in 1961 . . ." Mr. Waterfield of course is quite entitled to his opinion, which is very much in the tradition of Canadians' nationalistic reconstructions of so many of our past trans-border negotiations with the United States. But, as George Glazebrook reminds us, opinions of this sort need not, and frequently do not, accord with the facts. In the absence of dispassionate reviews of the record (and oft, long after them), views of the sort cited above remain opinions, and should be identified as such, as they were not identified in this case. It is not clear here, however, whether my quarrel on this issue is with Mr. Waterfield or his publisher.

University of Victoria

NEIL A. SWAINSON