

HAROLD INNIS AND THE WRITING OF HISTORY

Graeme Patterson

IT IS GENERALLY AGREED that the early work of Harold Innis has had a considerable influence upon Canadian thought. Indeed, in arguing that a historiographical "Innis revolution" resulted from it, Ramsay Cook has asserted: "The necessary starting point for any clear understanding of contemporary English-Canadian historians is Harold Adams Innis."¹ No one, however, would argue that the late work of Innis — which while having interested the historian Marshall McLuhan, has generally been regarded as irrelevant to Canadian studies — has had any such influence. Yet, while contemporary historians of Canada may certainly be understood in terms of Innis, he (most notably in the last decade of his life) cannot fully be understood without some reference to them. The "late work" is more closely related to Canadian studies than is commonly supposed.

In his last years Innis studied ideas and material commodities both in relation to each other and in relation to the various media by which they were communicated. "A medium of communication," he wrote with respect to ideas, "has an important influence upon the dissemination of knowledge over space and time and it becomes necessary to study its characteristics in order to appraise its influence in its cultural setting."² Depending upon setting — whether cultural, geographic, economic or historic — he treated all media as possessing either a "bias of space" or a "bias of time," terms which were relative, not absolute. Thus rivers, canals, oceans, roads, railways and related media, which enabled central governments to extend control over territories Innis termed "empires," reflected a bias of space. Among media reflecting a bias of time were institutions with qualities which enabled them to endure over long periods of time, and with interests which were either localized or non-territorial. Here, for example, he had in mind the priesthoods of ancient Egypt, the satrapies of Persia, the provinces of Rome and the Christian church. Such institutions were sustained by power which might be related to regional interest or to monopoly control of some form of learning, such as literacy, or of some commodity, such as papyrus. Sometimes in their own interests these institutions served the central governments of empire; and sometimes for the same reason, they opposed them. And central governments,

in their interest in maintaining control over space, sometimes protected and used these institutions, and sometimes tried to limit or destroy them. But these relationships were shaped by control, or lack of control, of media of communication.

Quite apart from these institutions, material media had a formative influence upon their ideal content. Information mediated by clay tablets, for example, was limited in ways that did not obtain when it was mediated by newspapers. Beyond this, material media, according to Innis, had a formative influence upon concepts themselves, such as those of space and time, which were of peculiar interest to him.

Because of this interest in the ideal in relation to the material, Innis's late work also reflects an interest in idealist philosophers, like Plato and Kant, and in writers of universal history, like Hegel and Marx, who shared the same interest. But he cannot be said to have belonged to any of their schools. He differed from Hegel and Marx, for example, in that he regarded "progress" as a superstition of the mind and struggled against his own determinism. And while, like these other students of universal history, he was concerned with the way the universe was regarded by physicists, he was primarily interested in the modern, post-Einstein physics of relativity, rather than the mechanical, Newtonian physics of the nineteenth century. It was perhaps partly for this reason that he seems to have been uninterested in the epistemology of Kant, who taught that objects of experience invariably enter consciousness in the forms of space and time, intuitions prior to all forms of conceptual knowledge. He read with interest the classical sociologists — Durkheim, Weber and their followers — whose notions of form were influenced by the *Critique of Pure Reason*; but he was concerned with *changing* concepts, and he sought his epistemology elsewhere. "Space and time," he wrote (citing F. M. Cornford), "and also their space-time product, fall into their places as mere mental frameworks of our constitution."³ Cornford, a classicist interested in the origin of the outmoded Euclidian concept of space, was quoting Sir Arthur Eddington, the astronomer and mathematician who held that the true foundation of natural philosophy must be epistemology. In this sort of way, Innis was interested in the changing spatial and temporal conceptual underpinnings of historical interpretation, which were also structures of the mind. Treating almost everything as media of communication, Innis included himself — who, he suggested, was biased with regard to time.

The world of the media was thus a place of complex dialectical oppositions. And in the modern world this dialectic, according to Innis, was hastening to a resolution of catastrophe. Technological innovation had upset a space-time balance in favour of space; flexible, holistic oral traditions had yielded to rigid, fragmenting written and mechanical traditions; unified learning had given way to specialized knowledge; and centralized authority threatened to overcome decentralized decision making. This bias of space, he contended, was reflected even in the present-minded, specialized concerns of contemporary scholarship.

This late work of Innis, it is argued, related to his early studies of the railways, waterways and related staple commodities which he viewed as having patterned the economic, social and political experience of Canada. But it also contradicted in many respects, a set of ideas known in Canadian history as the "Laurentian thesis," with which the name of Innis, along with that of Donald Creighton, is often associated.⁴ And in many regards it was scarcely less contradictory of the points of view, modes of thought, and historical theories of other contemporary historians.

IN THE BEGINNING, particularly with respect to *The Fur Trade in Canada* (1930), the work of Innis coincided with the interests of other historians. There, in a concluding chapter, he treated fur in relation to other staple commodities — timber, wheat and flour — which succeeded it in the commerce of the St. Lawrence. But he also distinguished between these staples and the system, a distinction of form and content which distinguished his transportation theory from his staple theory. It was the former which related chiefly to the interest of Creighton, who by 1930 had become concerned with the commercial and political interests of Montreal merchants oriented to the St. Lawrence. While Creighton, like Innis, knew that the staple content of this river system was possessed of value, and that it shaped the economic, social and political life of communities dependent upon it, this interested him less than a centralized mercantile empire dependent upon a transportation system. "The Laurentian thesis," he later observed, "has its basis in the fact that the St. Lawrence is one great river system that leads from the Atlantic seaboard to the heart of the continent of North America,"⁵ a statement which suggests a fundamental concern with space. Innis, however, was relatively more interested in commodities. He indicated, for example, the destructive effects of European trade goods upon Indian societies, a concern indicative of an interest in time. But he was slowly coming to think of both transportation systems and commodities as media of communication, an insight which would later interest Marshall McLuhan.⁶ In the 1930's and 1940's, however, differences of interpretation between Innis and other historians were of no great consequence.

The problem emerged about 1950 with publication of *Empire and Communications*. Sometimes thought to mark the beginning of the "late work," this book was written one way by Innis and read in quite other ways by many baffled scholars. To Canadian historians it seemed mostly unrelated to their discipline and connected to the "early work" chiefly by way of his studies of the pulp and paper industry of the 1940's. In the introduction to *Empire and Communications*, however, Innis indicated that it was structurally related to *The Fur Trade in Canada* of 1930.

"It has seemed to me," he wrote,

that the subject of communications offers possibilities in that it occupies a crucial position in the organization and administration of government and in turn of empires and of Western civilization.

But I must confess at this point a bias which has led me to give particular attention to this subject. In studies of Canadian economic history, I have been influenced by a phenomenon strikingly evident in Canada . . . Briefly, North America is penetrated by three vast inlets from the Atlantic — the Mississippi, the St. Lawrence, and Hudson Bay, and the rivers of its drainage basin. . . .⁷

Thus it was waterways, not pulp and paper, which first led to communications studies; although Innis intended "to suggest that the changing character of the British Empire during the present century has been in part a result of the pulp and paper industry and its influence on public opinion. . . ."⁸

The early work of Innis has been closely identified with that of Creighton, whose view of history, concept of empire, and patterns of thought more generally, were strikingly different from those of Innis, whose modes of thought were less linearly sequential. Paper, as treated by Innis, for example, was *at once* a basic staple *and* a medium of communication. As such it seems to have unified some of his earlier thinking on the subject of staples and communications systems. Yet Creighton, in relating the early and late work perceived not a unification of interest but a shift of the same.

A shift of interest, he thought, had begun with the study of the Canadian pulp and paper industry. "But immediately beyond the manufacture of pulp and paper," he wrote, "lay the strange and different world of journalism and the newspaper; and obviously the main stage of its modern development . . . had taken place not in Canada but in Britain and the United States"; and behind the newspaper and the book, he continued, "were vestiges of earlier forms of communication. And behind the civilizations of Western Europe and America stretched a procession of older and vanished empires."⁹ This was to impose a linear concept of history upon a mind that was notoriously not that. The world of journalism and newspapers was not imagined to be "strange and different" from that of pulp and paper by Innis; he thought of them as closely related and interdependent. Moreover, while chronological sequence was not absent from his later work, he did not visualize the civilizations he studied as merely stretching back in time in the form of a procession; for he was employing the techniques of the comparative historian. From Creighton's point of view, Innis's new interests must have seemed remote from Canadian history; and from this same vantage point it was almost impossible to see that he might have been applying and testing ideas derived from Canadian history, and yet relevant to it.

The idea that the late work was in an entirely new field of "communications," however, did not result from the thought of Creighton. Up until the publication

of *Empire and Communications* it was generally assumed that "transportation" was "communications." Indeed, some four years after the death of Innis, J. M. S. Careless referred to the early work of both Innis and Creighton as studies of "essentially great systems of continent wide communications."¹⁰ Early reviewers of *Empire and Communications* would not allow the word to retain this meaning. "'COMMUNICATIONS' in Professor Innis' title," observed V. Gordon Childe in the *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, "means not 'means of transport' — a rather hackneyed theme — but 'communication of ideas'."¹¹ And Arthur Maheux, in the *Canadian Historical Review*, reached a similar conclusion. Observing that the book's purpose was to suggest the significance of communication to modern civilization, to which end it analyzed a continual conflict between the oral tradition and the written word, he added: "Consequently the term 'communications' in this book does not mean such physical avenues of communications as roads and rivers, which have been considered by other writers as the chief sources of civilization."¹²

In view of the fact that Chapter One of the book deals with the river culture of the Nile, and Chapter Two with civilization in relation to the Tigris and Euphrates, Maheux reached an astonishing conclusion. The point to be noted is that either being ignorant of, or having forgotten, the context of the early work and Innis's own assertion of its continuing relevance, neither Maheux nor Childe could understand the text before them. Waterways and roads were central to the thesis of *Empire and Communication*. Being the means whereby other media of communication — clay tablets, papyrus rolls, newspapers, and such — were transmitted over space, they imposed patterns upon the *spatial* dissemination of ideas.

The meaning of the word "communications," however, was now beginning to shift; and with this shift there emerged a conviction that Innis had moved from the fields of economics and history into a new and essentially different field of "communications." This idea, coupled with the notion that Innis was an author of the Laurentian thesis, then began to inform historiographical thought. "If Innis was the first to present a documented study of the 'Laurentian thesis,'" wrote Ramsay Cook, "Creighton first made it intelligible."¹³ "Innis' most important work," he also observed, "was in the field of economic history. His later work in the nebulous field of communications may some day be judged his greatest achievement; but for historians of Canada his early studies . . . will always remain the most prominent monument in the Innis [historiographical] revolution."¹⁴ The "field of communications," however, was not nebulous; it had become completely befogged.

In recent years some of this fog has lifted. Noting that as early as 1934 (which is to say long before the pulp and paper studies) Innis was "outlining the relationship between public opinion, politics and the mechanization of words in

newspapers and radio," Leslie A. Pal has concluded that "many of Innis's substantive ideas on communications were forming in the 1930's."¹⁵ He saw no relationship, however, between these ideas and ideas related to transportation and staples, a parallel which has been partly perceived by Carl Berger. Innis, wrote the latter, "looked on technologies of communication in much the same way as he had looked on the staple. Technologies of communication — whether they be stone tablets, newspapers or radios — influenced societies, institutions and cultures in the same way that the exploitation of certain economic staples shaped them."¹⁶

But, in contrast to Pal, Berger did not regard *any* of the early work as being studies in communications. Because of this he thought he discerned "an inner logic in the development of Innis's thought from the economics of the staples trades to his communications studies."¹⁷ No such linear development ever took place. And the mode of thought relating the early work to that which followed it was not *logical*; it was *analogical*, as Berger's own discussion of the treatment of staples and other media suggests.

Certainly it is analogy, and not logic or any other linear form of thinking, that relates *Empire and Communications* to the studies of transportation and staples which preceded it. "The Nile," began Innis, "with its irregularities of overflow, demanded a co-ordination of effort. The river created the black land which could only be exploited with a universally accepted discipline and a common good will of the inhabitants. The Nile acted as a principle of order and centralization, necessitated collective work, created solidarity, imposed organizations upon the people, and cemented them in society."¹⁸ Reading this passage, Maheux and others had been unable to see that Innis was again studying a river system in relation to basic staple content. The basic staple here was silt, which structured life in ancient Egypt far more radically than had fur in New France or cod in Newfoundland. Innis did not treat this basic staple merely as content. The medium was the message; and the message here was mud.

Writing one year after the death of Innis, McLuhan had observed: "If one were asked to state briefly the basic change which occurred in the thought of Innis in his last decade it could be said that he shifted his attention from the trade-routes of the external world to the trade-routes of the mind."¹⁹ There was truth in this simplification. Innis had indeed turned to consider different sorts of media, numbered among which was words. And words, like rivers — as in the instance of the word "communications" — may change their content. But he remained interested in the external world, particularly as it related to the ideological and material structures of empire. And it was here that his "late work" related most closely to that of other Canadian scholars.

For if during his lifetime these scholars tended to be bewildered by, or uninterested in, "communications theory," some shared his interest in written and un-

written traditions, at least insofar as they related to the British, American and Canadian constitutions; and many shared his concern for the changing forms of empire, at least insofar as they related to the British and Canadian empires. Indeed, in this latter regard, Canadian history was then concerned with little else. Yet if early critics of the "late work" tended to be blind to the context of the "early work," they were no less blind to this wider imperial context of which they, themselves, were a part.

DURING INNIS'S LIFETIME, the dominant, non-republican concepts of empire entertained in Canada were those of constitutional historians concerned to trace contemporary forms of government within the British empire from earlier forms. Taking many of their key ideas from unwritten conventions of parliamentary government and from explanations for the imperial breakdown that had attended the American revolution, these scholars were most markedly influenced by the political theory and rhetoric that had attended the mid-nineteenth century triumph of the Canadian "Baldwinite" reform movement, the leaders of which had derived many ideas from Irish Whigs, or "Volunteers" as they termed themselves, who had dominated a theoretically independent parliament existing in Dublin in the last two decades of the eighteenth century. As eighteenth-century mercantile forms of empire yielded to nineteenth-century pressures for *laissez-faire*, these Canadian reformers sought to apply their Whig ideas, a shifting complex of which became attached to their party slogan: "Responsible Government and the Voluntary Principle."²⁰ By the twentieth century the early Whig background had been lost sight of; but "responsible government," the idea of which was then thought to have originated in the 1820's and 30's, had come to be accepted as a concept of political science, and indeed of constitutional law. Thus in *Baldwin, Lafontaine, Hincks: Responsible Government*, which was published in 1907, Stephen Leacock observed that in his own day Robert Baldwin had frequently been derided as a "man of one idea." "Time has shown," he said, "that this one idea of Robert Baldwin, — the conception of responsible government, — has proved the cornerstone of the British imperial system."²¹ The term "responsible government," however, remained imprecise; for while it signified the right of colonial legislatures to the practice of ministerial responsibility after the model of unwritten conventions prevailing at Westminster, it was also used to denote what was necessarily implied by this practice, namely complete colonial autonomy. And it was in this latter sense that "responsible government" was perceived to lie at the heart of the new association of sovereign states that was emerging from older imperial structures. Thus it became a matter of concern to imperially-oriented scholars to establish that this

form of autonomy was complementary to, rather than contradictory of, imperial unity.

It was within this context that Chester Martin published *Empire and Commonwealth: Studies in Governance and Self-Governance in Canada* in 1929. The development of the eighteenth-century empire into the modern commonwealth, Martin argued, was due to the achievement of "responsible government" which prevented the empire from being further shattered by the legislative structure of the old mercantile system. Martin, however, was less interested in this than in the continuity of political ideas and attitudes from the eighteenth century, which he took to be the very cement of empire. As William Kilbourn has put it: "He hearkened back with 'a melancholy interest' and longing to the undivided North America of the mid-eighteenth century, when Benjamin Franklin called the British Empire the greatest political structure that human wisdom and freedom had ever yet erected, and dared to predict 'that the foundations of [its] future grandeur and stability . . . lie in America'."²² This was a nostalgic view of empire; but the point to be noticed is that it was *idealist*.

To others the Commonwealth of Nations seemed little more than the ideological husk of an empire in the last stages of decline. Such was the view of Donald Creighton whose "Laurentian thesis" was informed by a concept of empire that was *materialist*. Empire, Creighton contended, was dependent upon mercantile systems, upon centralized governments and upon prescriptive statutes, rather than parliamentary traditions. Such was the "commercial empire of the St. Lawrence," an extension of which became the Dominion of Canada after 1867 but which first existed as an integral part of the British mercantile empire. Because of the struggle for "responsible government" within the colonies and the triumph of the free trade movement in Britain, the larger mercantile structure collapsed by the 1850's; but out of its wreckage emerged the expanded empire of the St. Lawrence known as the Dominion of Canada.²³

Of critical importance to any understanding of Creighton is the fact that this new empire very closely resembled the old which, in most respects, served as its model. As envisaged in 1867, for example, provinces were to relate to the new federal government as colonies had once related to the imperial government at London. The rights to appoint and instruct lieutenant-governors to the provinces, to disallow provincial legislation, to make laws binding upon the provinces and so forth were given to the central government; and the imperial model was departed from only to strengthen that government. Thus representatives to the federal parliament were to be elected and appointed from the provinces, as they had not been from the colonies; the powers of provincial governments were specifically defined, as had never been the case with respect to colonial governments; and this whole federal structure was now entrenched in an imperial statute, the *British North America Act*. And, from an economic point of view,

this structure, like the old, was underpinned by a mercantile system, the so-called "National Policy" of 1878 which was really three inter-related policies of trans-continental railway building, settlement of the western hinterland tapped by this communications system, and a protective tariff policy calculated to unite that staple producing region with its eastern manufacturing metropolis. The Conservatives, observed Creighton with respect to these policies, "had found their answers to the riddle of national unity; and for the next half-dozen years they plunged into a wild career of economic and political nationalism."²⁴

The basic structures of the old empire and the new dominion indeed had much in common; and everything Creighton has written may be viewed as a defence of these forms, or as counter-attacks upon their many enemies. Thus he assailed the *laissez-faire* doctrines of Adam Smith and the other classical economists, which relaxed the tariff structure of the old empire,²⁵ even as he assailed the legal doctrine of the justices of the privy council which loosened the language of the written Canadian constitution to very nearly the same effect.²⁶

Thus Creighton wrote as much from within a tradition as did Martin; for if the latter hearkened back to the Whig tradition of "Baldwinite" reform, the former did the same with regard to a Tory tradition of those loyal to a concept of the old united empire. In conflict with each other since the eighteenth century, these two traditions had also been in conflict with a third which derived its ideology and conceptual models from the American republic that emerged from the imperial breakdown that so concerned the other two. Essentially oral, all three traditions structured political attitudes, interpretations of past history, and one's understanding of contemporary actuality. The resilience of these traditions to fundamental change, and to contradictory or incompatible evidence of a written nature, is illustrated by *Foundations of Canadian Nationhood*, which was published by Chester Martin in 1955 after he had considered the "Laurentian thesis." In this last major work, as Kilbourn has observed, Martin "went so far as to dismiss economic factors such as 'western oil, Quebec iron, the St. Lawrence Seaway, prolific industrial expansion' as 'the more specious aspects of nationhood'."²⁷

THESE CONFLICTING TRADITIONS, with their varying concepts of empire, afford a context against which *Empire and Communications* and other late work may be usefully understood. Innis differed from the Whig school of Martin in that he regarded "the struggle for responsible government" as "essentially a struggle for jobs for the native born,"²⁸ and more especially by not treating economic factors as specious aspects of either empire or "nationhood." But because of his mistrust of written constitutions, and because of a related regard

for the principles of *laissez-faire*, he seems to have been more fundamentally opposed to the Tory tradition of Creighton.

The economist W. T. Easterbrook once remarked that Innis "remained throughout [his career] a disciple of Adam Smith and no name appears more frequently in his observations on economics past and present."²⁹ Like Smith, Innis was hostile to monopolies of power; but, beyond this, he was opposed to the means whereby such power was entrenched and structures of government made resistant to change that necessarily attended shifts in the balance of political power. It was not statutory prescription, he contended, but the flexible traditions of the common law that enabled the British constitution to adapt itself to such change in the nineteenth century;³⁰ and it was in like fashion that he reflected upon the federal structure of Canada. "The British North America Act," he wrote, "had produced its own group of idolators and much has been done to interpret the views and sayings of the fathers of confederation in a substantial body of patristic literature. But though interpretations of decisions of the Privy Council have been subjected to intensive study and complaints have been made about their inconsistency, inconsistencies have implied flexibility and have offset the dangers of rigidity characteristic of written constitutions."³¹ Canada, he thought, was dangerously centralized. "Freedom in Canada," he wrote, "rests on the tenuous support of the Privy Council and on continued struggle between provinces and the Dominion. . . . The lack of unity which has preserved Canadian unity threatens to disappear."³² Views of this sort were completely contradictory of the constitutional theory that informed the "Laurentian thesis."

Yet the materialist-idealist conflict which we have noticed with regard to the traditions of Creighton and Martin, informed also the imperial theory of Innis. Just as he had once perceived that the shift in the material culture of Indian societies occasioned by the fur trade had destroyed those societies, so too he thought that a shift of the material culture of Europe occasioned by the industrial revolution, and the ideas this generated, constituted a threat to civilization and the empires which sustained it. It was here that he departed both from Adam Smith and from basic assumptions that sustained Creighton's concept of empire. "An interest in material goods," he wrote, "which characterized the Scottish people, represented notably in Adam Smith, has been followed by an attitude described by Samuel Butler: 'All progress is based upon a universal innate desire on the part of every organism to live beyond its income.' The concern with specialization and excess, making for more and better mousetraps, precluded the possibility of understanding a preceding civilization concerned with balance and proportion."³³

Certainly it precluded a possibility of understanding Innis whose concern for balance and proportion was at odds with what he took to be an undue materialist bias in both historical explanation and its social context. Here he stood with J. M. Keynes who, asserting "that he belonged to the first generation to throw

hedonism out the window and to escape from the Benthamite tradition," had contended that the calculus of interest was "the worm which has been gnawing at the insides of modern civilization and is responsible for its present moral decay."

It was this escape from the Benthamite calculus, based on an overvaluation of the economic criterion, according to Keynes, which had "served to protect the whole lot of us from the final *reductio ad absurdum* of Benthamism known as Marxism."³⁴

But Innis was not altogether opposed to Marx. Indeed, in defending what he termed "the living tradition, which is peculiar to the oral as against the mechanized tradition," he once remarked, "Much of this will smack of Marxian interpretation but I have tried to use the Marxian interpretation to interpret Marx. There has been no systematic pushing of the Marxist conclusion to its ultimate limit, and in pushing it to its limit, showing its limitations."³⁵ Yet in many ways the late work seems to have been an attempt at just that. It was Marx, not Innis, after all, who first taught that the fundamental and determining factor in all societies was the mode of economic production, that all important changes in the culture of a period were ultimately to be explained in terms of changes in the economic substructure. What Innis had to say about the effects of staple production in staple-producing societies was in no way contradictory of this doctrine and, in all probability, owed much to it. But in his late work he seems to have pushed this doctrine toward its limits by treating such inter-related media of communications as language, writing and printing, not only as technologies which disrupted and transformed societies at an economic level, but also as media which, by a process of mental conditioning, altered the human psyche by imposing literal mindedness and linear patterns of thought. Linear concepts of time, and related linear concepts of historical development, Innis suggested, were a product of this technological conditioning.

Innis might have pushed this Marxist doctrine yet further by proposing that what one technology had accomplished, new or other technologies might yet serve to undo or alter. But he never did; that was the work of McLuhan. Instead he insisted that written and oral traditions had to be held *in balance*. This was one of the least impressive aspects of the late work in that it boiled down to a proposal for a sort of stasis in a world in which all things were subject to change.

I have suggested that the late work may be usefully understood if referred back to its matrix, to that land of crumbling empires and of scrambled signals that was Canada. And I have suggested also that it be referred to the more immediate matrix of the mind that generated it, to a mind reflected by literary style. What Innis wrote was never drafted with the rigid precision of a written constitution; nor did it always conform to the more flexible standards of standard scholarly reporting. Indeed some of the late work has suggested to Carl Berger "a mind caught up in a kind of intellectual cyclone where everything impinged all at once

and from all directions, and where there seemed to be no place for stability and contemplation."⁸⁶ The mind of Innis might thus appear to have been simply distracted. But it is fair to remember that he had come to regard normative literary forms as so many fetters of the mind. And it must also be remembered that events and ideas do impinge all at once and from all directions in living reality as they do not, and can not, in written prose of a logical and sequentially ordered nature. It is most probably for this reason that the stylistic peculiarities of Innis bear some resemblance to the "McLuhanese" employed by the leading interpreter of the late work. Thus it well may be that these cyclonic passages reflect the steady contemplation of an unstable reality by a powerful mind breaking the mechanical shackles that constrained it.

In this latter regard the work of both Innis and McLuhan may yet have important effects upon the writing of history. Writing, Innis observed, "implied a decline in the power of expression and the creation of grooves which determined the channels of thought of readers and later writers."⁸⁷ Understood in terms of itself, and not judged by way of preconceived thought patterns, the prose of Innis and McLuhan might well serve to jolt Canadian historical thought from the historiographical grooves to which it has been long habituated.

NOTES

- ¹ Ramsay Cook, "La Survivance English-Canadian Style," *The Maple Leaf Forever* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1971), p. 144.
- ² H. A. Innis, "The Bias of Communication," *The Bias of Communication* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1951), p. 33.
- ³ H. A. Innis, "The Problem of Space," *The Bias of Communication*, p. 92; F. M. Cornford, "The Invention of Space," *Essays in Honour of Gilbert Murray* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1926).
- ⁴ Cook, *op. cit.*
- ⁵ D. G. Creighton, "The Decline and Fall of the Empire of the St. Lawrence," *Towards the Discovery of Canada* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1972), p. 160.
- ⁶ McLuhan treats commodities as media in *Understanding Media: The Extension of Man* (New York: Signet, 1962).
- ⁷ H. A. Innis, *Empire and Communications*, rev. ed. (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1972), p. 5.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 6.
- ⁹ D. G. Creighton, *Harold Adams Innis: Portrait of a Scholar* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1957), p. 112.
- ¹⁰ J. M. S. Careless, "Frontierism, Metropolitanism and Canadian History," *Canadian Historical Review*, 25 (1954), 14.
- ¹¹ *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, 17 (1951), 98.
- ¹² *Canadian Historical Review*, 31 (1950).

- 13 Cook, *op. cit.*, p. 154.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 144.
- 15 Leslie A. Pal, "Scholarship and the Later Innis," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 12 (1977), 42.
- 16 Carl Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History: Aspects of English-Canadian Historical Writing* (Toronto: Oxford, 1976), p. 188.
- 17 *Ibid.*
- 18 *Empire and Communications*, p. 12.
- 19 Marshall McLuhan, "The Later Innis," *Queen's Quarterly*, 60 (1953), 385.
- 20 G. H. Patterson, "Whiggery, Nationality and the Upper Canadian Reform Tradition," *Canadian Historical Review*, 56 (1975); "An Enduring Canadian Myth: Responsible Government and the Family Compact," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 12 (1977).
- 21 Stephen Leacock, *Baldwin, Lafontaine, Hincks, Responsible Government* (Toronto: Morang, 1907), p. ix.
- 22 W. M. Kilbourn, "The Writing of Canadian History," in C. F. Klinck, ed., *Literary History of Canada* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1965), p. 499.
- 23 D. G. Creighton, *The Commercial Empire of the St. Lawrence* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1937); *Dominion of the North* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1944).
- 24 *Dominion of the North*, p. 346.
- 25 *Ibid.*, pp. 223-24; "The Victorians and the Empire," *Towards the Discovery of Canada*.
- 26 *Dominion of the North*, pp. 378-80; pp. 466-67.
- 27 W. M. Kilbourn, *op. cit.*, p. 500.
- 28 H. A. Innis, "Great Britain, the United States and Canada," *Changing Concepts of Time* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1952), pp. 115-16.
- 29 W. T. Easterbrook, "Innis and Economics," *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, 19 (1953), 291.
- 30 H. A. Innis, "Roman Law and the British Empire," *Changing Concepts of Time*, p. 49.
- 31 "Great Britain, the United States and Canada," p. 120.
- 32 H. A. Innis, "Political Economy in the Modern State," *Political Economy in the Modern State* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1946), pp. 132-33.
- 33 H. A. Innis, "Industrialism and Cultural Values," *The Bias of Communication*, pp. 139-40.
- 34 H. A. Innis, "A Plea for Time," *The Bias of Communication*, pp. 79-80.
- 35 H. A. Innis, "A Critical Review," *ibid.*, p. 190.
- 36 Carl Berger, *op. cit.*, p. 190.
- 37 H. A. Innis, "Minerva's Owl," *The Bias of Communication*, p. 11.