

Bilson's generally static interpretation contrasts with Rosenberg's conclusions for the United States (largely based on New York City) where "the cholera years" saw dramatic shifts in professional and public responses. To some extent the differences in the response of each country appear to result from different patterns of visitation and severity of the epidemics as well as from the less abundant Canadian medical professional sources. However, Bilson's framework, unfortunately, also tends to mask changes that may have occurred between 1832 and 1871; by devoting the bulk of his discussion to the first two years and to a detailed, sometimes tedious, narrative of cholera in many diverse places, Bilson reduces the possibilities for longer-term, in-depth comparisons of the response to cholera in the large urban context, such as Montreal or Toronto. *A Darkened House* nonetheless is a valuable contribution to Canadian medical and social history. As the author notes, this interdisciplinary field remains to be cultivated. The present work indicates the potential richness of such research.

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DESMOND MORTON with TERRY COPP. — *Working People: An Illustrated History of Canadian Labour*. Ottawa: Deneau & Greenberg, 1980. Pp. 317.

Books and articles on Canadian working-class history are no longer as scarce as they were ten or twenty years ago. *Labour/Le Travailleur*, founded in 1976, now publishes biannually, and each year an increasing number of theses and monographs on working-class institutions, culture and politics are turned out. Produced at this stage in the development of the historiography and based substantially upon the writings and research of other labour historians, Desmond Morton's *Working People* is as much a comment on the present state of the discipline as it is a contribution to the field itself. Against a colourful backdrop of Canadian political history, Morton traces the evolution of local and national labour movements from the days of the staple industries to the world of the white-collar worker of the late 1970s and links the various stages together with brief but factual accounts of every major and a great number of minor labour disputes which have accompanied the growth of industry and commerce in this country. The book explores the hardships and insecurity of working-class life, the international roots of trade unionism, the political struggle for favourable legislation, the internecine divisions within the labour movement and the changing attitudes of government and management towards workers and workers towards themselves. Although the study is primarily concerned with the organizers and organizations of the working class, Morton avoids the cold detachment of the institutional approach of earlier labour historians such as Harold Logan and R. H. Coats as well as the revolutionary rhetoric of Marxists Charles Lipton and Jack Scott. Morton puts to good use the best work of the new social and labour historians but, as would be expected from Des Morton, the book is more than simply a summary of all that has gone before. The author adds a few twists of his own to popular interpretations and draws on personal observation and analysis for much of the commentary on the post-World War II years.

A conspicuous feature of *Working People* is Morton's different handling of the book's numerous and various heroes. In the Introduction to the study the

author states: "What is needed is a view of Canadian labour history that struggles to bring together the old institutional approach and the new awareness of region and localism, and that respects both the radical and the pragmatist." (pp. xvii-xviii) Morton adequately fulfils the first objective but falls slightly short of the second promise. Although the book is unabashedly sympathetic to all labour organizers, it is the mainstream pragmatists, Canadian or American, who in almost every instance receive more favourable treatment. In the late nineteenth century, socialism is seen as a "minor middle-class fad among some Canadians" (p. 64) which "seemed to cultivate its own political impotence" (p. 93). Sam Gompers, the feisty president of the American Federation of Labor, "flirted with radicalism in his youth but soon developed a clear-eyed philosophy of unionism" (p. 58). Although Gompers's American Federation of Labor and the more idealistic Knights of Labor were both guilty at various times of strike-breaking, "the Knights, with their feeble finances and their official commitment to avoiding strikes, were more often the villains" (p. 59). It is the same story in the twentieth century. In the midst of the Great Depression, the "traditional unions, for the most part, recognized their limits, devoted their resources to maintaining their own members in good standing, and avoided quixotic temptations" while the organizing efforts of the Communists, in "the great majority of cases ... failed, leaving a heritage of violence, martyrdom, and misery" (p. 144). Morton's treatment of the Communists in particular reveals his partisanship for social-democratic values and stands in striking contrast to the work of Irving Abella.

The book contains a few other curious nuances which detract slightly from an otherwise excellent effort. Morton suggests that the metis leader, Louis Riel, executed the Orangeman, Thomas Scott, in 1870 because he had a year earlier attempted to organize his fellow road workers to collect their overdue pay. Morton says sarcastically of Scott: "Perhaps his eventual punishment was a fitting end for Canadian workers who protest too much" (p. 9). The portrayal of Scott as a labour martyr and Riel as a union-basher will raise a few eyebrows. Riel, it should be remembered, also received the death penalty for his protests. Morton rejects outright, as do a number of other historians, the Robert Babcock thesis that Americans controlled Canadian unions but goes further than most when he suggests that the Berlin Convention of 1902 which witnessed the expulsion of national unions from the Trades and Labour Congress was "in itself ... hardly significant" (p. 75). Eugene Forsey maintains that 1902 was a "watershed" and Irving Abella contends that it was a "major turning point" in Canadian labour history. Although Morton had access to the most recent work of Gregory Kealey and Bryan Palmer, he contributes little to a discussion of the feasibility of workers' control in either the nineteenth or twentieth century.

The book's wide range of topics and general survey approach suggest that it will be put to best use as a reference text and should be particularly well-received by the students at the Labour College of Canada and other interested trade unionists and university students who have been in need of such a study for several years. The book has a thorough index, useful bibliographic notes and a spectacular collection of photographs and illustrations.

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