

upon a certain practical modicum of racial tolerance and the requirements of the fur trade economy. That society, as Brown and van Kirk well document, was never given an opportunity to flower. Unstable at best, it found itself unable to withstand the assault of "higher civilization" represented by European religion and the values of European culture, including the cult of "femininity". On this view, the arrival of settlement and civilization in the West was hardly progressive and liberating, but retrogressive and stultifying. The point seems worth considering. Over to you, central Canada.

J. M. BUMSTED,  
*University of Manitoba.*

\* \* \*

JOHN MCCALLUM. — *Unequal Beginnings: Agriculture and Economic Development in Quebec and Ontario until 1870*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980. Pp. 148.

In this monograph based on his Ph.D. dissertation, John McCallum combines traditional literature, more recent work, and a considerable body of census and trade statistics to produce a scholarly and lucid account of economic development in Quebec and Ontario from 1800 to 1870. His book provides an excellent introduction to the period and also offers a new interpretation of why the two provinces followed divergent growth paths. McCallum explains economic growth using a "modified staples thesis". He argues that good agricultural land allowed Ontario to become a successful exporter of wheat, and these exports, through linkage effects, led to more rapid industrialization and urbanization, and promoted increases in the output of other agricultural products. Quebec, on the other hand, lacked an important export staple and it was mainly for this reason that the province developed more slowly.

The focus on wheat as a staple export helps to unify what is mainly a descriptive work. It allows McCallum to relate agriculture to diverse aspects of economic growth, most notably commercial, industrial and urban development. He begins by comparing Ontario and Quebec during the period prior to 1850. He points out that whereas Ontario grew rapidly with the emergence of wheat as a staple export, Quebec languished in a prolonged agricultural crisis. From 1850 to 1870, wheat declined in relative importance in Ontario, but the province continued to advance as wheat was replaced by other cash crops. Quebec also experienced somewhat of an upswing during this period with sales of barley and oats becoming significant. Nevertheless during these two decades,

the ratio of the cash income of the average Ontario farmer to that of the Quebec farmer varied between 2.5 to one and 10 to one, and for the period as a whole the ratio would have averaged 4 or 5. That these enormous differences had profound effects on the general development of the two provinces is the central argument of the book. (p. 47)

McCallum argues that inequalities in resource endowments rather than differences in culture explain the greater reliance on cash crops in Ontario. This is an important insight and is consistent with some recent findings by Marvin McInnis and me on Quebec agriculture in 1850. I find less persuasive his argument

that industrial and urban development in each province was closely tied to the ability of its agricultural sector to export a staple product. Indeed, if one compares urban and industrial growth in the two provinces, one is struck more by the similarities than the differences. There was near equality in the level of urbanization, convergence in the degree of industrialization, and little difference in manufacturing value added. During the same period, however, agricultural cash incomes were much higher in Ontario. This leads me to be sceptical about the intra-provincial linkages from agriculture to industry on which McCallum places so much stress.

McCallum does point out significant variations in the spatial distribution of urban dwellers. In Quebec the urban population became increasingly concentrated in the metropolitan areas of Montreal and Quebec City, whereas in Ontario it was widely dispersed. This important difference calls for an explanation but I am not convinced that the staple model provides the right one. The staple model is a framework for explaining the growth of different sectors of the economy. It says little about the geographic distribution of economic activity. I think that this issue would be confronted better with a spatial model.

In the preface of his book, McCallum says: "This book is a work in economic history, but I have tried to make it readable to the non-specialist." He has succeeded admirably! I suspect, though, that some economists will be less than satisfied with the standard of economic analysis, since his discussions contain a number of analytical inconsistencies. For example in describing the difficulties faced by eastern farmers, he points to "declining yields due to continuous cropping of wheat, falling prices associated with increased western supplies, rising land prices and rents, and attacks from various destructive insects" (p. 36). Most economists would like to know why land prices and rents were rising if the marginal product of land was falling. When discussing the growth of Montreal, he says: "Relative to the cities and towns of Ontario, Montreal had abundant capital *and* abundant labour" (p. 98). In economics, abundance of one factor implies scarcity of another, yet McCallum never makes clear what that scarce factor is. Finally, his discussion of the modified staple approach in Chapter 8 is too vague to satisfy many economists.

Despite these shortcomings, I regard *Unequal Beginnings* as a significant contribution. New data are presented on urban concentration, agricultural income, and the industrial distribution of the work-force. The book also provides new insights into the role of factor endowments, comparative advantage and transportation costs. John McCallum's main contribution, however, has been to synthesize a wide body of data and literature, and present the result in an accessible and attractive package.

Frank LEWIS,  
*Queen's University.*

\* \* \*

GEOFFREY BILSON. — *A Darkened House: Cholera in Nineteenth-Century Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980. Pp. 222.

Cholera appeared in nineteenth-century Western Europe and North America as a new, mysterious, rapidly disseminating, and often fatal epidemic disease. Such