STANLEY B. RYERSON. — *Unequal Union : Confederation and The Roots of Conflict in the Canadas, 1815-1873.* Toronto : Progress Books, 1968. viii, 477 pp.

In a series of essays relating to various aspects of Canadian history, Stanley Ryerson has sought to illustrate his view that "history is made by people acting, collectively and as individuals, in three intersecting areas of social being; that of the 'metabolism' of man and nature, with man gradually ... extending his mastery of natural forces, multiplying the productivity of labor, creating new technologies; that of class antagonism and conflict, rooted in social and economic contradictions, posing with mounting insistency the necessity of resolving the dilemma of social labor versus private appropriation; and ... the area of relations between national communities, the tensions and conflicts born of oppression of one people by another, and the urge to banish inequality, to break through to the 'republic of man', the world community."

The thesis that emerges is both novel and interesting, but at times it becomes intensely ideological and more than strains the evidence upon which it rests. The origins of the unequal union are traced back to England's more advanced state of capitalist development at the time of the conquest. When England took Canada from France, "a certain imbalance was built into the colony's development, economic as well as political" (p. 418). With the advent of English-speaking settlers a second national community developed, but it was an unequal dualism weighted from the outset in favour of the English. While they enjoyed the advantages of a close association with imperial power and English investment capital, the French Canadians "not only suffered the direct consequences and side-effects of the defeat of the French metropolis, but [also] labored under the handicap of that semi-feudal underdevelopment which was the heritage of the French *ancien régime*" (p. 419). In addition, British colonial rule engendered social and economic inequality within both ethnic communities. Ryerson contends that the British imperial system was favourable to one group of colonial capitalists, the merchants and landlords, but was opposed to native industrial capitalism and retarded industrial growth. The reform movements that developed in British North America are seen as "the political expression of the contradiction between an expanding native capitalist industry and the restrictive bonds of merchant-colonial rule" (p. 42). At the same time, the reform movements were also class movements striving for the economic, political, and social democratization of society. The Canadian rebellions were bourgeois-democratic revolutions seeking to establish twin people's republics. The Lower Canadian revolution was also an attempt by the French-Canadian nation to attain its independence. "The defeat of the rising of 1837-38 was a defeat of a combined effort to establish 'from below' the independent union of the Canadas. The twin Republics were still-born. Colonialism, triumphing over the *indépendan-*

tistes, reimposed the unequal union of the Conquest" (p. 435). Although the rebellions failed, they made a significant contribution towards the attainment of responsible government by exerting "intense pressure" on the Colonial Office and its representatives.

In Ryerson's judgment the real significance of responsible government is that it gave the spokesmen of the emergent capitalist class political control of the home market and local resources. It freed native capitalism from the restraints colonial rule had imposed. Only after responsible government was won "did there take place the political regrouping that signalized the consolidation of power in the hands of the new business élite : first, in the Liberal-Conservative merger of 1854, and a decade later in the Macdonald-Brown coalition" (p. 281). With the business élite in power, Confederation followed as a natural sequel to the achievement of responsible government. Confederation took place when it did "because of two main pressures. One came from the growth of a native capitalist industry, with railway transport as its backbone, and expansion of the home market as the prime motive for creating a unified and autonomous state. The other sprang from an imperial strategy that required unification not only in order to preserve the colonies from United States absorption, but also to strengthen a link of Empire reaching to the Pacific and hence to the approaches to Asia" (p. 309).

The new business elite is regarded as the major force in determining the nature of Canadian federalism. The main features of the British North America Act — central unitary federalism, limitations on pure democracy, perpetuation of the monarchical principle, and protection of property — were all designed to serve and protect the interests of the Anglo-Canadian capitalist class that was its architect. Confederation perpetuated the unequal union by its centralized federalism. The French-Canadian nation was deceived. It was "given to understand" that it was "entering into a partnership based on the principle of equality" (pp. 375-6), but it was denied the state structure necessary for it to function as a nation.

Applying his thesis to the future, Ryerson sees the possibility of national unity, but it would require "an approach that transcended the exploitive individualism of private-business society, to encompass the radical democratization on which alone national equality would be achieved... Such a social equality, realistically understood, could only mean the overcoming of class rule : ending the class cleavage based on private, minority ownership of the modern large-scale tools of labor" (p. 422). If national equality is to be achieved, the Canadian state must be restructured to permit French Canada to function as a nation. This may mean the separation of Quebec, possibly followed by a new federation. In the past the two nations united to resist domination by British imperialism and the unfinished business of independence offers a basis for continuing union. "As against the U. S. neocolonialist take-over, there can and must be a united effort of the Canadas" (pp. 434-5).

Ryerson's work contains a number of useful insights that have not previously been developed with such clarity, but exaggeration and the omission of significant factors detract from the value of his thesis as an interpretation of the period under consideration. His attitude towards the British connection is a case in point. He sees the connection only in negative terms : his bias prevents him from observing, or at any rate from considering, the positive side of the coin. Although he emphasizes the threat which the United States posed to the British North American colonies, he does not recognize that the British connection was vital to their independent survival. He laments the failure of the rebellions, but neglects to consider the twin republics' chances of survival if they had been established. If it is accepted that without the British connection the individual colonies would have been absorbed by the United States, much of the argument becomes theoretical.

It is repeatedly asserted that the inhibiting restrictions of colonial rule had to be eliminated before industrial development could take place, but the only solid evidence offered to support this judgment is the Navigation Acts and an act of 1768. The author is apparently unaware of the extent to which the old colonial system had been modified since the American Revolution. Moreover, in so far as the Navigation Acts created a shipping monopoly, it was one in which British colonial shipowners shared, and consequently the Acts were a stimulus to the ship-building industry in British North America. Significant industrialization was not likely to precede settlement in sufficient numbers to constitute an adequate home market; and, with the exception of Newfoundland, one could scarcely claim that Great Britain sought to retard the settlement of her North American colonies. The construction of the Rideau Canal; the guaranteed loan which permitted the completion of the Welland and the St. Lawrence canals; the influx of capital in connection with defence, the timber trade, the financing of the Grand Trunk Railway, and the expansion of the flour milling industry as a result of the preference enjoyed by Canadian flour in the British market are positive examples of the manner in which industrial development was stimulated rather than retarded as a result of the British connection. To make a distinction between merchant and industrial capital in the colonies and to attribute pro-imperial sentiments to the former and anti-imperial sentiments to the latter is perhaps consistent with some economic theories, but it ignores the evidence. Many capitalists were engaged in both mercantile and industrial enterprises; and, in any case, most of the industrial bourgeoisie did not reveal an anti-imperial bias.

The account given of the achievement of responsible government is a re-tread of the old "colony to nation" interpretation based largely on J. C. Dent and Charles Lindsey. All Reformers are heroes; some reveal themselves to be moderates and "betray" the revolution, but since they lead the way to responsible government after the failure of the rebellions they are partially

reinstated. The colonial secretaries are villains determined to impede the logical march of history. Ryerson's conviction that the rebellions were a necessary resort to violence and that they made an essential contribution towards the attainment of responsible government prevents him from seeing that the conciliatory policy of the Whigs in the 1830's (which he dismisses as insincere and insignificant) and the economic transformation of the imperial system which had been under way since the early 1820's were leading in the direction of increased colonial autonomy. Joseph Howe believed that the rebellions delayed the granting of responsible government, and Russell's references to the advice that would be given by a Papineau or a Mackenzie tend to confirm his opinion.

In repeatedly claiming that "mass popular struggle" was necessary during the 1840's for the ultimate attainment of responsible government, the author overlooks the significance of Russell's recognition, in 1840, that harmony must be maintained between the executive council and the assembly. Once this "harmony principle" became basic policy, responsible government was inevitable whenever the majority party in the assembly was determined to have it. Responsible government was delayed until 1848 because the governors, acting as their own prime ministers (and this includes Bagot), were able to construct coalition governments that were in harmony with a majority in the assembly.

Lord Durham is accused of arguing "quite clearly that responsible government must be contingent on the establishment of a British majority within the province and 'on putting down the French' — by contriving their exclusion from the exercise of power and ultimately their complete assimilation" (p. 140). The charge is basically valid, yet it seriously misrepresents Durham. He believed that French Canada was incapable of resisting the assimilative forces with which it was surrounded in North America, and that the process of assimilation would already have been well advanced if the British government had not encouraged the false hope of cultural survival. He was also convinced that a basic harmony of interests between the component parts of the constitution was essential for representative government, let alone responsible government, to function properly. To him it was obvious that such a basic harmony would be lacking while the population was composed of two separate cultural entities, each with its own set of values and objectives. It was against this background that he recommended steps be taken to accelerate the assimilation of French Canada. But, at the same time, he warned that neither equal representation (for Upper and Lower Canada in the proposed union) nor any other subterfuge should be employed to deprive the French Canadians of the share of political power to which their numbers entitled them. He believed that if representation were based on population after the union of the Canadas, the French-Canadian members would be faced by an English-speaking majority in the assembly and would recognize the futility of

attempting to maintain a separate cultural identity. (French Canada was in a slight minority by 1839. Ryerson is mistaken in stating that there was a French majority until 1851. It was at this date that the population of Upper Canada exceeded that of Lower Canada.)

The picture presented of Sir Charles Metcalfe is much more seriously distorted. A reading of Metcalfe's confidential despatches will reveal that he did not consider it was his mission "to reverse the distressing trend toward colonial autonomy to which Bagot had surrendered" (p. 153), but rather to hold the line and to prevent the full-scale development of responsible government. There are no grounds for asserting that Metcalfe's administration was more autocratic than Bagot's (p. 151), or that he "emulated (and outdid) Sydenham in his recourse to gangs of hired hoodlums, violence, [and] intimidation through [the] deployment of troops, as instruments in the 'electoral process'" (p. 155). To speak of the "Sydenham-Metcalfe policy of 'putting down the French' through forcible denationalization" (p. 168) is a direct contradiction of the evidence. On April 29, 1843, Metcalfe advised Stanley :

> If the French Canadians are to be ruled to their satisfaction, and who would desire to rule them otherwise, every attempt to metamorphose them systematically must be abandoned, and the attainment of that object, whether to be accomplished or not, must be left to time and the expected increase and predominance of the English over the French Population. The desired result cannot be produced by measures which rouse an indignant spirit against it. [1]

Altough he was aware that Sydenham had selected Kingston as the capital to accelerate the process of assimilation, he endorsed his council's recommendation that Montreal be made the permanent seat of government and added that it was "decidedly the fittest place." He urged Lord Stanley to permit him to heal the wounds left by the rebellions by magnanimously granting a general amnesty to those implicated in the uprisings. The credit for the repeal of the restriction on the French language should go to Metcalfe rather than to Elgin (p. 167). Metcalfe recommended repeal of the language clause in the Act of Union in 1843 and subsequently went against his instructions to authorize D. B. Papineau, as a member of his government, to introduce an address calling for repeal. It was this address which ultimately led to the recognition of French as an official language in 1847.

The real value of Ryerson's work is the extent to which he illuminates the origins of class interest and class divisions in British North America. He establishes the existence of class conflict earlier than many Canadian historians would have suspected, but he attributes more significance to it than would appear to be warranted. By his own admission, labour was still an embryonic class in 1837-38 and lacked political consciousness (p. 82). Obviously then, workingmen could not have regarded the rebellions as class warfare. Similarly, although some mercantile and industrial bourgeoisie par-

[1] Public Archives of Canada, C. O. 537, vol. 142, pp. 68-75. Metcalfe to Stanley, April 29, 1843.

ticipated in the rebellions, the majority of capitalists in both Upper and Lower Canada opposed them. Amongst the extensive list of grievances there were elements of class interest and class conflict, but they were neither strong enough nor general enough to give the reform movement dominant characteristics. Throughout the period under consideration class lines were only beginning to form and consequently events cannot be satisfactorily explained in terms of class interests or class conflict. The fact that workers constituted nearly half, and farmers over forty per cent, of those who rebelled in Upper Canada cannot be accepted as "a significant indication of the social forces that were engaged in action" (p. 131) unless it can be shown that the social composition of the militia rank and file, which readily mustered to quell the rebellion, differed radically from that of the rebel force.

Fernand Ouellet is accused of standing history on its head because he persists in seeing the *Patriote* movement as basically a conservative force rather than a progressive one (p. 427). Ouellet's "error" is attributed to his failure to note "the peculiarity of merchant's capital, its tendency to ally itself with feudal and colonialist forces in *opposition* to industrial capital." Yet, in explaining the failure of the Lower Canadian rebellions, Ryerson admits that "a French-Canadian industrial bourgeoisie of any substance" had not developed (p. 83). The English-speaking industrialists, with a few notable exceptions, vigorously opposed the Patriote movement. Among the French Canadians the leaders of the Patriote movement were a recognized elite. Their position was based upon a nationalistic defence of traditional values, laws, and institutions. They could play the role of political democrats since they spoke for the majority in Lower Canada, but they showed little inclination to encourage a social revolution that could deprive them of their power and status. It was no accident that they failed to organize a mass struggle in the countryside for the abolition of seigneurial tenure. There were exceptions, but for the majority the ideal society was an agrarian one and large-scale economic enterprise was an undesirable English objective.

In two chapters, "Make the Railroads First" and "Prelude to an Industrial Revolution," an excellent account is given of the tremendous industrial expansion which occurred in the 1850's, the emergence of a new capitalist elite, and the links which developed between business and political leaders. But the assertion that Confederation occurred when it did because of a combination of pressure from expanding native capitalist industry and the imperial government (p. 319) is open to challenge. Undoubtedly industrial development was an important factor, but to make it one of the two primary causes of Confederation is to exaggerate the cohesiveness, unanimity of purpose, and influence of the industrial bourgeoisie. It was political deadlock in the Canadas that led to the great coalition of 1864, and the origins of deadlock were primarily social and only secondarily economic. Ryerson's failure to consider the claim of Brown and the Grits that Upper Canada was suffering

from French-Canadian domination is astonishing. The real significance of the great coalition may have been that it united "the two key sections of Anglo-Canadian business" (p. 345); but such was not Brown's interpretation, as his letters to his wife reveal. If Brown and Macdonald were "the dynamic political chieftains" of the Anglo-Canadian business community, and if pressure from that community was a primary cause of Confederation, Brown's preference for a federal union of the Canadas and Macdonald's efforts to maintain the legislative union are difficult to understand. Macdonald was willing to accept Confederation from 1858 on, but he did almost nothing to promote it until June 17, 1864. Not all industrialists were in favour of Confederation. A significant number (possibly a majority) in the maritimes were opposed to it. One important source of capitalistic support, the Grand Trunk Railway, can be attributed to financial difficulties rather than dynamic, expansive potential. It is perhaps significant that private enterprise did not build the Intercolonial Railway. After Confederation many of the challenges to Macdonald's centralism originated in conflicting capitalist interests.

Little attempt is made throughout the book to examine the values of the society with which it is concerned. It is noted, in passing, that English-speaking Canada's "historic memories, culture, [and] tradition stemmed mainly from the British Isles" (p. 415), but the implications of this heritage are virtually ignored. W. L. Morton's thesis that "the moral core of Canadian nationhood is found in the fact that Canada is a monarchy and in the nature of monarchical allegiance" is criticized as "idealist metaphysic" (p. 425). Yet the repeated success of appeals to loyalty throughout the nineteenth century in Canada cannot be explained without the values implicit in such concepts. The reform movements enjoyed mass popular support, but among English-speaking Canadians they lost that support when a republic became the objective. The moderates did not "betray" the reform cause; they represented a majority in the movement. Similarly, in considering French Canada, Ryerson fails to account for the great influence which the Roman Catholic Church was able to exert. He does not appreciate the basic conservatism of French-Canadian society which was rooted in a devotion to traditional values, laws, and institutions. Neither French nor English societies believed that reform achieved by revolution from below was inherently better than reform from above. When Etienne Parent urged that the *Patriotes* "give thought as to whether the state of affairs is so intolerable that, to end it, we must *risk all*" (p. 67), he was expressing the view of a majority of French Canadians. Even Papineau hoped to the end that his objectives would be conceded from above without resort to violence.

Nineteenth century British North Americans were a religious, church-going people; and the concepts of monarchy, limited democracy, and the sanctity of property represented values that were upheld not just by the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches but by all denominations. When

these values were written into the British North America Act, they were held not only by a capitalist élite, but by the vast majority of Canadians. They would not be seriously challenged until a general consciousness of conflicting class interests developed. The founding of the *Ontario Workingman* in the 1870's undoubtedly indicated increasing class consciousness, but one would like to know more of the paper's history and the size of its circulation. Did the concept of class become a determining force in Canadian history during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, or, as the relatively slow development of the trade union movement would suggest, was this to be delayed until the twentieth century ? An effort to write three dimensional history deserves applause, but when one of the dimensions is exaggerated, distortion is the result.

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H. J. Dyos (ed.). — ***The Study of Urban History.*** **London : Edward Arnold, 1968. xxii, 400 pp.**

The town has always been a proper, even traditional, area of study for historians and until recently no one questioned their ability to analyse adequately the significance of towns in the development of society. After all, urban history was viewed as history writ small, an integral part of the historical discipline. Major historians — Bloch, Pirenne, Febvre, Asa Briggs, Bridenbaugh, Kirkland — when writing about the town did not find it necessary to develop new techniques (apart, perhaps, from a casual recognition by French historians of the relevance of demographic and geographical studies to their work), and there was nothing to suggest that urban studies would upset any historical apple-carts. Clio in the town was neither challenged nor disturbed.

Now all this has dramatically changed and historians are slowly becoming aware that a spectre is haunting them — the spectre of "urban history", a branch of history which, unlike other sub-disciplines of the historians' craft, the history of medicine for example, is much too germane to central historical problems to be shrugged off and ignored. Courses in urban history have sprung up in universities everywhere, and inter-disciplinary departments, such as M.I.T. and Harvard's Joint Centre for Urban Studies, University of Wisconsin's (Milwaukee) Department of Urban Affairs, and University College's (London) Centre for Urban Studies, are fast becoming indices of progressive academic commitment. It is indicative of modern trends that when Vassar recently decided to move from a classical curriculum towards a more dynamic and "relevant" educational programme it should fasten upon a multi-disciplinary Institute for the Study of Man and his Environment. There has been such an avalanche of studies in urban history over the past few years that specialised publications such as the *Urban History Group Newsletter* (started in 1954 and