

federal government for restrictions on competition in the jewellery trade and belonged to a wholesale jewellers' combine which sought to prevent price-cutting among its members (pp. 40-41).

Not only were individual businessmen inconsistent in their own thought but they often disagreed with one another. Vivid illustrations of this appear in the two chapters dealing with labour questions. Most businessmen believed the well-being of their employees was improving and many were outraged by reports of inhuman working conditions. Manufacturers did not oppose safety regulations (provided they were also imposed on competitors) and many businessmen recognized that "high wages and good working conditions produced contented workers" (p. 69). On the other hand, the idea that they might have any responsibility for their employees' welfare shocked many businessmen. They blamed parents for child labour, they believed accidents were the consequence of the workers' negligence, they stereotyped workers as lazy and undisciplined people who would abuse shorter hours, they argued cheap labour was essential to continued operation in a highly competitive world and they almost universally opposed workingmen organizing to secure for themselves a living wage. This last point, observes the author, is "the glaring contradiction in business thought about competition and its consequences" (p. 140) and reveals the businessmen's failure to consider the possibility of labour and capital working together.

The most provocative chapter is plainly titled, "Success." It gives many examples indicating the "success ethic" had "little or nothing to do with making money [but] everything to do with the cultivation of moral character" (p. 32). Condemning such vices as speculation (in most cases), greed, extravagance and the desire to get rich quick, as undercutting "the bases of economic success — hard work and plain living," (p. 32) business spokesmen stressed the importance of industry, integrity and frugality. But, were business editors and businessmen preaching, so to speak, to the converted, or were they circulating these maxims for success as propaganda to secure a favourable image or to inspire employees? The evidence in this, and in other chapters, points to the latter purpose as being more likely but the question cannot be completely answered.

Bliss is fully aware that business thought did not necessarily reflect business reality. His self-conscious anticipation of criticism from those hostile to business, especially in the academic community, suggests he may not have resolved to his own satisfaction the complex problem of the sincerity of businessmen. Nevertheless, by focusing on the similarities in their ideas, he has paradoxically highlighted the differences in their thoughts. He has convincingly shown the folly of categorizing all businessmen either as heroes or as plutocrats. If this volume is representative, the Canadian Social History series will be an exciting and significant contribution to the study of Canadian history.

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TERRY COPP. — *The Anatomy of Poverty: The Condition of the Working Class in Montreal 1897-1929*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974.

The Anatomy of Poverty is an important book which deserves the attention of all those who are interested in the evolution of society in Quebec. Terry Copp has produced a thought-provoking study of the working class in Montreal in the early years of the 20th century, but the book has a wider significance. He ack-

nowledges that his approach was influenced by the Faucher-Lamontagne thesis which insists on the unique importance of geographic factors in understanding the economic development of Quebec in the 19th and 20th centuries. As a result the author poses many new questions, and his interpretation strongly challenges the traditional reliance on cultural factors in explaining why Quebec is not *comme les autres*. His ideas and techniques can well be used to study many aspects of Quebec society.

The chapter on education is a good illustration of the author's approach. It is a widely held and seldom challenged view that the standard of education of French Canadians was low because it was in the hands of the religious orders. Copp does not deny that schools in the Catholic School Commission compared unfavourably with those in the Protestant Commission, but in seeking the causes he examines the all-important question of educational financing. He shows that because of inequalities in the system of distributing the school tax between the Protestant and Catholic Commissions, the Protestants received almost as much money as the Catholics in spite of the fact that non-Catholics made up less than a quarter of the population. The Montreal Catholic School Commission had less money available for the construction of schools, for equipment, books and teachers salaries, and were often unable to provide enough places for school age children. Whatever the philosophical differences in Protestant and Catholic education, the Protestant School Commissioners would have been unable to maintain their standards had their grants been allocated in direct proportion to the Catholic and non-Catholic populations.

Copp points out that only 23 per cent of children enrolled in grade 1 in the Catholic schools continued to complete grade 4, as compared with 76 per cent in the Protestant schools. He related this to the over-all question of poverty. In examining the real incomes of the working class, he shows that in the majority of cases it was impossible for a single wage earner to support a family with even a minimum of comfort and decency. It was necessary for a second and preferably a third wage earner to contribute to the family income if they were to survive the vicissitudes of the Montreal economy. Most children of working class families left school as soon as they were able to earn two or three dollars a week. The early age of school leavers had a lot to do with economics and very little to do with class attitudes towards education.

The author examines wages of the working class in order to determine whether standards of living improved during the period under study. He accepts Statistics Canada's definition of poverty as "Any family or individual spending more than seventy per cent of total income on food, clothing and shelter" (p. 31). It is open to question whether a definition of poverty for contemporary society is a valid one for the early years of the century, as poverty is to an extent relative. This is not, however, the main thrust of the author's investigation. He applies the 70 per cent criterion to the known hourly wage rates and to a family budget which is based on three separate budgets worked out by the Family Welfare Association, the Federal Department of Labour and the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees, and demonstrates that the working class experienced little improvement in their position between 1896 and 1929.

The usual explanation for the over representation of French Canadians in the lowest income groups is that they lacked education and special skills. Copp points out that for a number of reasons the economy of Montreal depended on a plentiful supply of unskilled labour. He refers to a study done in 1940,¹ which

¹ L. C. MARSH, *Canadians In and Out of Work*, McGill Social Research Series #9, 1940, p. 182.

showed that in the early 1930s most skilled jobs in Montreal were held by British-born immigrants. This practice of importing skilled labour goes back to the mid-19th century: skilled workers were brought from England for the construction of the Victoria Bridge, and at a later date, most of the skilled workers in the rolling mills and the glass industry came from the United States. When it could be seen at a glance that most of the available jobs required neither education nor special skills, it was unlikely that working class families would make the very real sacrifices necessary to keep children in school once they could find employment.

Most of the research for this study is based on often neglected official reports. The reports make it clear that municipal and provincial authorities were aware of the seriousness of conditions in housing, public health, welfare and employment, but were reluctant to take decisive action. The author has avoided using impressionistic accounts which usually are a prominent feature of studies of this kind. The absence of reliable sources for crime and prostitution, both of which are often directly related to poverty, has led to the omission of both topics which is unfortunate.

For the reader who is looking for the betterment of the working class, *The Anatomy of Poverty* is a depressing book. In only one area does the author note a marked improvement, whereas in the vitally important field of housing conditions actually deteriorated. Demonstrable improvements were made in public health. Contaminated drinking water and impure milk were dangerous regardless of wealth, creed or ethnic origin, but the upper classes articulated their dissatisfaction and exerted pressure on the authorities to institute the necessary reforms. In conclusion it should be said that the situation in Montreal is contrasted with that of other North American cities, and this broadening of the context enhances the value of the book.

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S.M. TROFIMENKOFF, ed. — *The Twenties in Western Canada*. Ottawa: History Division, National Museum of Man (Mercury Series, History Division Paper No. 1), 1972.

Unfortunately the ten articles in this anthology do not coalesce to give the reader an over-all impression of the shape of the 1920s in Western Canada. Each article in this collection is narrowly focused, the result of primary research by graduate students or scholars who at the time of writing were assistant professors. Despite their limited scope most are useful contributions to scholarship. David Bercuson's reinterpretation of the One Big Union as "a flight of fancy that sapped the strength of western radicalism" will perhaps attract the most attention for its importance to Canadian labour history in general. It has since been reprinted in the *Journal of Canadian Studies* (May 1974). *Should our journals be reprinting published articles?* Ian Macpherson on Western co-operatives in the 1920s (which were not co-operating), Laurie Ricou on the changing image of man and prairie in Western fiction, John Thompson on the defeat of prohibition in Manitoba, and Patricia Roy on the Oriental question in British Columbia all solidly illuminate their subjects, adding new dimensions to our knowledge of the West in that decade. William Calderwood's study of reactions to the Ku Klux Klan in Saskatchewan is interesting, but would have been made more convincing with hard data on the Klan's strength. Foster Griezic's account of T.A. Crerar's political career and Thomas Flanagan's of voting patterns in Alberta elections are extended footnotes