

the explorers, fur traders and travellers who passed through the Valley more heroic and romantic figures than those who worked and prospered there. A whole chapter is dedicated to "Traveller's Tales" where one diary quote follows on the other until the whole thing begins to wear a bit thin. Sir George Simpson is easily the hero of the whole piece although he contributed very little to the development of the region. Legget seems to forget that all those Valley towns were founded by interesting people whose citizens created their own unique and exciting history. Only the Wrights of Hull and the Hamiltons of Hawkesbury are mentioned in any detail and once again Legget had neglected to consult the best primary and secondary sources concerning either family.

Finally it should be noted that the book contains many excellent photographs which add much to its fine design. It is, however, poorly footnoted with the use of a cumbersome page and line system. As well the last chapter contains a highways and byways touring guide to the Ottawa River which, while useful in itself, may be resented by some in a fifteen dollar hard-cover book.

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MAURICE YEATES. — *A Main Street: Windsor to Quebec City*. Macmillan of Canada in association with the Ministry of State for Urban Affairs and Information Canada, 1975.

Professor Maurice Yeates in this study of the St. Lawrence-Lower Lakes region, from 1961 to 1971, asserts in his ultimate sentence that the axis "... is the key to the nation." Though Donald Creighton might quibble with the tense, he should be quite pleased with the sentence, both on account of the rediscovery of the Laurentian Thesis and for the apparent resurrection of the Empire whose loss he lately laments. "The idea of the St. Lawrence, as the inspiration and basis of a transcontinental, east-west system, both commercial and political in character" lives on, it seems.

Professor Yeates, however, provides little consolation for the legion of Creighton critics. Incredulity at the concluding sentence of *Main Street* could only be compounded upon discovering that it is also the *a priori* assumption of the book. The "domination of the urban areas between Windsor and Quebec City over the Canadian economy" seems to be taken as given. A primary purpose of the monograph is merely "to document" the "extent" of domination. Critics of the Laurentian Thesis would no doubt be even further enraged at Professor Yeates' somewhat gratuitous observation that "dominance of one area over another is not to be feared as long as society recognizes its existence, agrees that it is necessary, and accepts as morally justified the methods by which it is achieved."

The historian, then, however cautious he might be in making judgments on the highly technical specifics of the book, can nevertheless be highly suspicious of a work that justifies dominance in general, assumes a dominance in particular, and finally, in exhaustive analysis after exhaustive analysis, does indeed document such dominance. Logicians have a not very flattering phrase to describe such a process. To go on to generate "forecasts" on the basis of such a happy conjuncture of "theory" and "fact" is equally suspect, no matter how accurate the data, how sound the methodology, or how cautious and circumspect the researcher. To say the least, the forecasts in the penultimate chapter do not flow from "all the

cumulated evidence based on the past and the present.” The necessary dominance of the system is an historically debatable premise, and, even if true, is a dominance that many Canadians quite clearly have found unacceptable in the past and continue to do so in the present. The presence of a great, bloated conurbation between Windsor and Quebec City may, of itself, be as symptomatic of failure as of success. A cadaver, after all, admits dissection more readily than a living being.

It is this dissection that forms a second major purpose of the monograph. Here Professor Yeates seems to be on more comfortable ground, and executes his task with zeal and apparent relish, though it is hard to abandon the nagging suspicion that the analyses are prejudiced by the assumptions, that the clinical precision of the word is more apparent than real. At any rate, this portion of the book would appear to represent the “state of the art” in its methodology and finesse. The Windsor-Quebec axis is poked, prodded, measured, graphed, mapped, traced, tabled, inputted and outputted in a manner to give the purist joy. Methods appear to be sophisticated and aptly used. Tables are to the point. Maps are done skillfully and clearly. All inform. The amateur can only stand in awe, though at times he may get the feeling that the cadenza has become more important than the concerto.

Even if the reader can be satisfied with what “Main Street” is, he is bound to ask at least one more question: how does it work? The evidence produced seems to demonstrate that the system has more people, with more money, with more problems, using more resources and adding more value than any other part of Canada. What made and sustains such preponderating excess is never clearly considered. Perhaps such concerns go beyond the reasonable province of the geographer, perhaps they go beyond the “macro” nature of the work, perhaps they are externalities that do not admit of hard analysis, or perhaps they are not important. If so, then the forecasts and conclusions are not unreasonable. Otherwise, they are presumptions, and given that the work was commissioned by the Secretary of State for Urban Affairs, so too will be public policy based on them. In a sense, the monograph presumes too much and attempts to do too much. As a one-dimensional description of the particularities of an urban axis, the monograph can stand on its own. But burdened as it is with premises, forecasts, and generalizations, which are more the litany than the soul of the social sciences, it becomes a rather misshapen and tottery edifice. Half a book would have been better than one.

So much that is good about the book is beggared by much that is foolish and superficial, especially in the first chapter. Professor Yeates’ apologies for alienating physical geographers and frustrating “those with a more historical range of interests”, in his “cursory glance at their domains”, does not provide an adequate corrective for his insensitivity toward other dimensions of the system under study. Why add half-baked gingerbread if only to apologize for it? A few examples are revealing. “The climate of an area is the product of many features, such as rainfall, temperature, amount of sunlight, and so forth.” “The second feature [of early Canadian settlement] was the mechanism of colonization through the seigneurial system, which attempted to superimpose the French hierarchical social structure through land ownership in the New World.” “The second event [accelerating the opening of Interlake Ontario] was the aristocrat-led leftist (in those days!) revolution in the Thirteen Colonies....” If such domains are to be treated at all they demand more than to be “stuck on.” Still, there is perhaps little need to become over-heated on the subject. As Creighton said in the closing pages of *The Empire*:

Above all, the river remained, the river which cared not whether it was valued or neglected, the river which would outlast all the ships that sailed upon

it and survive all the schemes which it could possibly inspire.

And to give Creighton the last word as well as the first seems only just, for among the missing in the bibliography of *Main Street* are both the author of the Laurentian Thesis and his great work.

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JÉAN-CLAUDE MARSAN. — *Montréal en évolution*. Montréal, Fides, 1974.

Dans l'éventail des études consacrées aux villes et aux villes canadiennes en particulier, voilà un livre intéressant qui se propose d'étudier la ville physique comme produit social. L'auteur donne, d'entrée de jeu, ses intentions: il veut étudier «l'évolution de l'architecture et de l'environnement urbain montréalais» et ainsi «tenter de cerner l'évolution de cet organisme économique, social, culturel qu'est la ville par l'intermédiaire de ses manifestations matérielles, visibles et tangibles», tout en ne négligeant pas de «discerner et analyser les forces et les influences qui sont à l'origine des mutations dans les formes de l'agglomération urbaine et dans les expressions architecturales» (p. 9). Jean-Claude Marsan résume lui-même ses intentions: «cet ouvrage constitue une histoire générale de l'architecture et de l'environnement montréalais envisagés comme un tout indivisible» (p. 12).

Voilà assurément un lourde tâche et, compte tenu de l'état de l'historiographie montréalaise, périlleuse. Disons tout de suite que le défi est relevé élégamment, mais non sans laisser le lecteur sur sa faim. Pour aborder son sujet, l'auteur utilise trois larges coupures chronologiques, en plus d'une mise en situation qui occupe les deux premiers chapitres. Il distingue donc trois périodes: celle de la «ville frontière», correspondant aux années 1642-1840; le Montréal victorien, allant de 1840 à la première guerre mondiale; et enfin, la ville du vingtième siècle.

L'ouvrage étant une synthèse, il repose massivement sur des sources dites de seconde main, surtout pour les premières parties. Il est évident qu'il ne saurait être question ici d'en faire grief à l'auteur; toutefois, nous devons souligner le danger qu'il y a d'utiliser sans trop de critique, les travaux de certains historiens anciens, surtout ceux qui se sont intéressés au régime français. En effet, comme l'ont souligné des spécialistes<sup>1</sup>, on a eu tendance à n'utiliser pour le régime français que des sources officielles, reflétant beaucoup plus la réalité telle qu'elle devrait être, que la réalité vécue. En plus, les préoccupations des historiens étaient assez éloignées de celles d'une histoire sociale dont l'auteur de *Montréal en évolution* a besoin pour situer ses données dans une perspective historique. Précisons que Jean-Claude Marsan est diplômé d'architecture et urbaniste de formation, ce qui lui permet d'apporter une vision architecturale de la ville et des modèles conceptuels auxquels les historiens ne sont généralement pas habitués; mais nous y reviendrons plus loin. Pour conclure sur la question des sources, la connaissance de l'histoire de Montréal que démontre l'auteur est impressionnante, surtout si l'on considère l'épaisseur du temps qu'il remue.

<sup>1</sup> Louise DECHÊSNE, «L'évolution du régime seigneurial au Canada. Le cas de Montréal aux XVII<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles», *Recherches sociographiques*, XII, 2 (1971): 142-183; Jean BLAIN, «Économie et société en Nouvelle-France: le cheminement historiographique dans la première moitié du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle», *Revue d'Histoire de l'Amérique française*, 26, n<sup>o</sup> 1 (juin 1972): 3-31.