

On Choosing a Textbook: Recent Canadian History Surveys and Readers

THE 1990S HAVE SEEN A BOOM in the publication of new general Canadian history textbooks. Most of them are two volume sets, covering the periods before and after Confederation, and are accompanied by selections of essays designed to encourage student discussion of major themes in Canadian history. Despite, or perhaps because of, the greater choice available, as teachers planning courses we have become crankier and more demanding in choosing textbooks. The price of books continues to rise and we are concerned about the costs we ask students to incur. At universities with copyright agreements many teachers are putting together their own selections of essays and documents, which have the combined virtue of being cheap and perfectly suited to the interests of the individual lecturer. However, those of us who have undertaken to produce our own texts know that it is also time-consuming work and must usually be done well in advance of the term. In this essay we offer our thoughts about how we choose textbooks, how we use them in the classroom (and outside it) and how we feel some of the new texts stand up to our needs.

The development of a survey course in Canadian history tends to be an idiosyncratic process, weighted towards the interests and outlook of the instructor. Feminists will emphasize the role of women in history, regional historians will choose regional examples, social historians will concentrate on social developments, and old fogies will cling to nation-building political and economic developments. Whatever our intellectual and political inclinations, however, most of us feel an obligation to cover a great deal of ground. We regularly lament the lack of background in every aspect of Canadian history students bring to the classroom and attempt to design courses that will provide good coverage of the major themes. Students often lack even a rudimentary understanding of political and economic institutions, and addressing this problem often requires substantial time and effort. We also hope to introduce students to some of the conventions, approaches and methodologies in the discipline. Good textbooks make this job much easier. Survey texts are perhaps most commonly used as background reading to supplement lectures, although we also expect them to serve as general reference books and as a starting point for students' research essays. We use published essay collections for tutorials and, to some extent, as the basis for written work by students.

These concerns provide us with a basic shopping list. We look for textbooks that are cheap, lively enough to generate student interest, well-illustrated and meticulously documented. As well, we expect them to provide substantial bibliographic resources and have a general interpretive framework we can live with. There is, we believe, a further important consideration, based on what we regard as our responsibility in teaching history to university students. Many, perhaps most, students come to university considering history to be a collection of established "facts" about the past to be memorized. As teachers we do, of course, wish to broaden their knowledge of generally accepted ideas about the past, but we also wish to encourage critical

thinking and to create some awareness of the process by which historians attempt to understand the past. Many students still want an authoritative text — a book which gives the story of Canada, in black and white, and includes everything you need to know. In our experience students are generally unhappy if a general survey text is not assigned. As teachers we have been willing to offer students the comfort of an assigned text, but we also want to shake their faith that what is printed in books is necessarily true or complete. Therefore our preference is for those texts which convey less certainty, but instead offer a wider idea of how history is researched and written, and introduce students to variable interpretations of the past which, despite their differences, can be supported with acceptable evidence.

In this essay we consider 16 books in four publishers' sets and one single volume survey text: the Copp Clark two volume *History of the Canadian Peoples* with accompanying readers; *Origins* and *Destinies* and readers from Harcourt Brace; the Oxford University Press two volume set *The Peoples of Canada* with readers; *Colonies* and *Nation* plus readers from McGraw-Hill Ryerson; and the single volume *The Structure of Canadian History* from Prentice Hall Allyn and Bacon Canada. Each of the survey texts is well written, with frequent sub-headings, and illustrated with good black and white pictures and maps. Each of the collections of readings provides a broad spectrum of recent scholarship on varied topics. We are sure each of these sets of books is currently in use in some university class. However, we also presume that most teachers will have chosen those texts which reflect most closely their viewpoint on the present state of Canadian historical scholarship and on the teaching of Canadian history.

This is a subject that has come under considerable, and sometimes quite acrimonious, debate in recent years. Up to about 30 years ago, there was little question of what central unifying theme would be presented in a textbook on Canadian history. This was the story of the building of the Canadian nation from "sea to shining sea". This was an approach which, to the exclusion of much else, emphasized political and economic developments in central Canada and focussed on the actions of elite white males — politicians, businessman, railway builders. During the last three decades a major transformation has taken place in the study of Canadian history, with the emphasis of most scholarship shifting to what we collectively refer to as "social history". Research has most often concentrated on areas such as regional history, aboriginal history, women's history, explorations of ethnicity, working-class life and politics, aspects of cultural history and like subjects.

A debate on this has arisen, based on the conviction of some Canadian historians that the move to social history has gone too far, that political and constitutional history is not being taught at all, or only in a cursory manner, and that this is happening in a time when Canada is facing a serious constitutional crisis. Such considerations led a number of Canadian historians to break with the Canadian Historical Association.¹ The neglect of political history is also the theme of an essay published in 1991 by Michael Bliss, "Privatizing the Mind: The Sundering of Canadian History, The Sundering of Canada". Bliss claims he is not calling for a renewal of "nationalist history", or for ignoring social history, but rejects the "privatization" of history by

1 See Kenneth White, "Making History", *Saturday Night* (May 1997), pp. 17-18.

over-emphasis on the “private and personal”.²

In replying to this, Gregory Kealey strongly defends the importance of class and regional studies in examining Canada’s past, asserting “we need more social history, not less”. In another reply, Linda Kealey, Ruth Pierson, Joan Sangster and Veronica Strong-Boag denied frequent claims that women’s history is “engulfing the profession”, arguing that it remains subject to “marginalization and denigration” in many Canadian history departments, and that in current constitutional debates it is understanding of “regional, native, and women’s histories” that the public most lacks.³ On these issues we, the reviewers, generally concur with the points made in each of these replies, especially concerning the value of a strong emphasis on social history. We support an approach to Canadian history which attempts to overcome the fictitious divide between public and private. Whether this can result in a unifying vision of Canada’s multiple “identities” is more than we can say. However, we reject the idea, which seems implicit in the argument of Michael Bliss, that social history is naturally less interesting or relevant to “the non-university audience of literate Canadians” than was the older “nationalist” history. The specialized articles in academic journals may well lack appeal to a broader public, but not because of their emphasis on social history. Social history, in itself, should surely be more interesting than studies concentrating on political and constitutional issues alone.

The authors and editors of all of the books under review profess to share a commitment to introduce readers to the new social history in their survey texts, while continuing some coverage of political and economic events, and in varying degrees have made efforts to do so. The question, it seems to us, is the emphasis the writer or editor places on central nation-building as compared to the new history, or, perhaps more accurately, how well the new history is integrated with the old. The reviewers prefer those texts which seem most thoroughly and effectively to integrate the newer social history, and our ranking of the books turns mainly upon this. We also prefer those works which are least authoritative in tone. While students need a text as a resource containing “facts” on which most historians agree, we think it important that they learn there is often uncertainty about interpretations of the past. And it further seems to us that those books with fewer concessions to the newer approach to history also tend to be more authoritative in their style.

From this perspective, the top marks for survey texts go to Margaret Conrad, Alvin Finkel, and Cornelius Jaenen, *History of the Canadian Peoples: Beginnings to 1867*, Volume I (Toronto, Copp Clark, 1993), and Alvin Finkel and Margaret Conrad, with Veronica Strong-Boag, *History of the Canadian Peoples: 1867 to the Present*, Volume II (Toronto, Copp Clark, 1993). These books meet our basic criteria that survey texts must serve as basic reference tools and have bibliographic suggestions. They are indexed, well-documented, and include a list of further readings at the end

2 Michael Bliss, “Privatizing the Mind: The Sundering of Canadian History, The Sundering of Canada”, *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 26, 4 (Winter 1991-92), pp. 5-17.

3 Gregory Kealey, “Class in English-Canadian Historical Writing: Neither Privatizing, Nor Sundering”; Linda Kealey, Ruth Pierson, Joan Sangster, Veronica Strong-Boag, “Teaching Canadian History in the 1990s: Whose ‘National History’ Are we Lamenting?” *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 27, 2 (Summer 1992), pp. 123-31.

of each chapter. Each volume is divided into 14 chapters and four sections, and each section begins with a brief time line. There are numerous maps and good black and white illustrations throughout the text, and frequent use of boxed sections on specific topics. The visual presentation is lively. The text is divided into short sections headed by subtitles, and varying print fonts and sizes are used. The writing style is good, with points being made clearly and succinctly.

The coverage is quite broad, as is appropriate for a survey text. "Beginnings", the first section of Volume I, includes chapters on pre-contact First Nations, Europe, and the "discovery" period. Section two, "France in America", has chapters on the emergence of New France (1663-1715), colonial society (1715-60), and war and conquest (1713-74). Section three, "Origins of British North America", covers settlement to 1800, Atlantic colonies (1784-1850s), the Canadas (society, 1791-1850), Canadas (politics, 1800-1850s), the West (1763-1850s), and society at mid-century. The final section, "Industrializing Canada", has chapters on economic developments and the coming of Confederation. Volume II begins with a chapter briefly repeating coverage of Confederation, and has four sections covering four chronological periods, 1867-96, 1896-1919, 1920-60, 1960 to the present. Each section has three chapters, one each on the economy, politics and social history.

The introduction, repeated in both volumes, lays emphasis on the "new social history", stating that "most academic histories written before 1970 either ignored, or treated unsympathetically, women, people of colour, and issues relating to private life" (p. xv). History is "contested terrain" and "its events must be analyzed from a variety of perspectives" (p. xv), those of women, the poor, minorities and other groups, as well as the political and social elite. Drawing on other disciplines and "new theoretical perspectives", by "focusing on issues such as class, race, ethnicity and gender...historians have revolutionized the past" (p. xvi). In their attempt to integrate this new work with the earlier history, the authors promise, political history will not be left out. "Indeed, we make an effort to show the impact on ordinary Canadians of decisions made by elites both inside and outside Canadian geographical boundaries" (p. xvii). Another aspect of the introduction which we like is that it tries to convey some idea to students of how historians develop their interpretations of the past, and how much this is liable to be affected by the "region, ethnicity, social class, gender, and political perspective of the historian" in the present.

In a separate box, sub-titled "What's in a name?", within the introduction, the authors briefly discuss changes in the "words used to describe Canadians" (p. xvii) brought about by new political consciousness on the part of groups such as women or First Nations people. It is useful to have this at the beginning of the book, since this is a concern shared by many of our students. It also provides an example of a technique used effectively throughout the two volumes, where such "side-bars" interrupt the flow of the narrative, but help the reader understand an aspect of what is being discussed.

In the *History of the Canadian Peoples* the integration of social and political history along the lines outlined in the introduction is generally carried out well. The use of "side-bar" boxes, as described above, to give concrete examples from private life, or touch on specific narrower topics is also very effective. The effective and judicious use of this technique reinforces the concept of the diversity of experience in our history, without implying that the book is a comprehensive description of all that

is important about the Canadian past. It reveals that there is a wider store of historical evidence from which such examples are drawn. The concept of history as “contested terrain” both for people in the past and for historians of the present is conveyed further by another feature of these books. This is the inclusion, at the end of each chapter, of a brief section outlining an “historiographical debate”.

These survey texts are supplemented by the collections of readings edited by Chad Gaffield: *The Invention of Canada: Readings in Pre-Confederation History* (Toronto, Copp Clark, 1994) and *Constructing Modern Canada: Readings in Post-Confederation History* (Toronto, Copp Clark, 1994). We would prefer that the readings chosen were more closely related to the historical themes and controversies raised in the texts. Nonetheless, these are good collections, each book divided into four sections with titles identical to section headings in the *Peoples* texts. There is relatively good coverage, with 24 articles in *Invention* and 23 in *Constructing* dealing with political, economic, and social history themes. The balance of regional, gender, First Nations, labour and other subjects included seems fairly good. The introductions to each book are explicitly post-modernist, taking as their unifying themes explanations of the terms “invention” and “constructing” as used in the titles. However, while many of the articles show the influence of post-modernist thinking, they are clearly written and solidly based in historical evidence.

The surveys written by R. Douglas Francis, Richard Jones, and Donald B. Smith, *Origins: Canadian History to Confederation* (Toronto, Harcourt Brace, 1996, 3rd edition) and *Destinies: Canadian History Since Confederation* (Toronto, Harcourt Brace, 1996, 3rd edition) have been used by both of us for several classes. *Origins* and *Destinies* have only a brief preface, stating the authors’ intentions to incorporate “new historical research, the social as well as political and economic accounts of our past” (p.vii). While social history is not neglected in *Origins* and *Destinies*, political history is the predominant organizing theme; relatively little attention is given to gender and family, or to popular culture. On the other hand, these are popular texts with students. They have brief and succinct chapters, excellent and well varied black and white illustrations, good maps, timelines at the beginning of sections and a generally straightforward chronological organization.

Each book has 20 chapters, divided into four sections. *Origins* has chapters on: pre-contact First Nations; the arrival of Europeans; four on New France; one on Acadia; two on Quebec after the conquest; Upper Canada to 1815; the Rebellion in Lower Canada; Upper Canada 1815-1840; two on the union of the Canadas; Maritimes 1815-1864; Newfoundland in 1860s; Northwest in 1860s; the Pacific Coast in 1860s; and Confederation. *Destinies’* chapters cover: Canada in 1867; East and West after Confederation; the National Policy; regionalism (1880s-90s); imperialism and nationalism (politics to 1914); industrialization; urban growth; social reform (to 1914); culture (to 1914); the Great War; the 1920s; the Depression; World War Two; Canada 1945-60; the 1960s; Aboriginals since 1945; Quebec (since 1960); English-speaking provinces (since 1960); postwar immigration; contemporary Canada.

We appreciate the frequent brief sections on controversial issues entitled “Where Historians Disagree”, which include bibliographical references, often to the companion readers. Students have mentioned these sections as particularly useful and interesting, and some have used these brief discussions as starting points for research essays. In general, these texts are good resources for students writing papers. There

are only a few notes, but the books are well indexed, each chapter ends with a good bibliography, and direct mention is made of the associated essays in the readers.

Readings in Canadian History: Pre-Confederation (Toronto, Harcourt Brace, 1994, 4th edition) and *Readings in Canadian History: Post-Confederation* (Toronto, Harcourt Brace, 1994, 4th edition), were edited by Francis and Smith, two of the survey text writers, and the fit between the texts and the readers is good. Both reviewers have found these reading collections excellent for use with student tutorial groups. Each book is organized around 15 topics, each including two or three articles on themes closely related to chapters in the texts. These books provide a good selection of recent scholarly articles, and fit in well with a teaching schedule calling for weekly tutorials over a 13-14 week term.

Students have found "Rupert's Land", Topic Thirteen of the Pre-Confederation reader, especially satisfying. The articles by Frits Pannekoek and Irene M. Spry take opposing positions on the social relationships between French-speaking Métis and English-speaking "Mixed Bloods" in the Red River area, and students in one class held heated discussions on the merits of each historian's arguments and the nature of the evidence they used. It would be too limiting to use these controversies as an organizing principle for the readers, but we do see great value in exposing students to some such historical debates.

J.M. Bumsted also prefaces his surveys, *The Peoples of Canada: A Pre-Confederation History* (Toronto, Oxford University Press, 1992) and *The Peoples of Canada: A Post-Confederation History* (Toronto, Oxford University Press, 1992), with his intention to include new social history, departing from "the traditional approach to the writing of Canadian history, with its emphasis on progressive nation-building", a "male-dominated...centralist and elitist perspective" (vol. 1, p. xi). His commitment to this approach, however, is tempered by his belief that the older approach had the merit of being more easily amenable to writing a structured narrative. He aims at "embracing new perspectives and new emphases while by no means disregarding either key events in the traditional framework or the values of traditional historiography" (vol. 1, p. xii). His books achieve a good degree of success in fulfilling his aims; they include a considerable amount of social history and treatment of many social groups and regional issues, while the main emphasis is on political history. His chapter on pre-contact First Nations is relatively brief, and his text is, in general, continuous, with few boxes or asides to break the flow of narrative. He is also fairly authoritative in style, with less attention given to historical debate or controversy. His writing style is, however, very good, and the amount of detailed historical information provided is perhaps the greatest of any of the texts under review. As a result, these books do make especially useful reference books for Canadian history, and we certainly recommend them for libraries. These books, like the other sets, are well illustrated with maps and pictures, indexed, and have notes and suggestions for further reading for each chapter.

Each book is divided into 13 chapters, with the final chapter of the first volume, "The Completion of Confederation", repeated as Chapter One of the second. The *Pre-Confederation History* has chapters on: pre-contact peoples, early explorers, 17th century colonies, New France, Atlantic region (1670-1758), British North America (1759-81), immigration (1783-1845), the economy (1783-1840), politics (1783-1840), the economy (1840-1865), politics (1840-1867), mid-Victorian society, and

Confederation. *Post-Confederation History* has chapters on: Confederation, industrialization (1885-1919), urbanization (1885-1919), rural Canada (1885-1919), politics (1885-1919), the economy (1919-45), society (1919-45), foreign relations (1919-73), economic prosperity (1946-72), politics (1945-70), suburban society (1946-72), culture (1945-72), and a final chapter on economics and politics in the 1970s and 1980s. As indicated, the treatment is shaded more heavily to politics and economics than we would prefer, but these books are well done.

Bumsted is also the editor of the companion readers, *Interpreting Canada's Past: Volume One, Pre-Confederation* (Toronto, Oxford University Press, 1993, 2nd edition) and *Interpreting Canada's Past: Volume Two, Post-Confederation* (Toronto, Oxford University Press, 1993, 2nd edition). The 34 articles in the first volume and the 32 in the second cover areas corresponding to the chapters in the survey texts fairly closely. These are good collections, with many fine pieces included. Some articles are a little older than those included in the other sets of readings, but some are very recent. There is less emphasis on social history, perhaps, in the selection of articles. In his preface Bumsted argues that the newer scholarship has "lost contact with its audience". He writes: "Historians have become increasingly specialized in vocabulary and narrow in focus, filling the pages of learned journals with articles for fellow specialists, not the average Canadian reader. I have thus attempted to select only work that addresses the larger audience of informed Canadians, of which students in our introductory courses are representative" (vol. 1, p. xiii). This is a very different approach from that of Gaffield, with his stress on post-modernism. This is, again, a matter in which the outlook of the teachers choosing one or the other set of readings will determine their preference. We believe there is some exaggeration, but also some truth, in Bumsted's view that much of recent historical writing is a little difficult for students to understand readily. Conversely, it is surely our role as teachers to attempt to challenge students in university courses to go beyond the immediate taste of the "average Canadian reader". The most popular and easily understood material is not always the best for awakening new ideas in students' minds.

The final set of survey texts, from McGraw-Hill Ryerson, is written by collections of prominent historians: David Bercuson, Kerry Abel, Donald Akenson, Peter Baskerville, J.M. Bumsted, John Reid, *Colonies: Canada to 1867* (Toronto, McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1992); and J.L. Granatstein, Irving Abella, T.W. Acheson, David Bercuson, R. Craig Brown, H. Blair Neatby, *Nation: Canada Since Confederation* (Toronto, McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1990, 3rd edition). Although each book has numerous authors, the style throughout seems that of a single authoritative voice. It would have interested readers to have some discussion in the prefaces or introductions on the process by which the books were written.

As with the other survey texts, in their prefaces the authors of these books declare their intention to integrate the new social history into their narrative. The preface to *Colonies* claims "an approach that differs from the usual" in that they pay more attention to native peoples, workers, farmers, women and family, and the various regions of Canada (pp. ix, x). *Nation's* preface points to its thematic chapters, dealing with social history issues. But while there is certainly more attention to such issues than was common in older texts, in comparison to the other texts under review we would judge *Colonies* and *Nation* make the least concessions to the new social history perspective and are perhaps the most authoritative in tone.

These texts are, nonetheless, well written, and well produced with good maps and pictures. There are somewhat more traditional portraits and photos of prominent male politicians than in the other sets, but there are still a fair number of other illustrations reflecting social themes. The text is broken up with frequent sub-headings, but there is little use of boxes or “side-bars”. There is an index for each volume, but few notes, and only brief bibliographical references at the ends of chapters. In our view, the texts would be improved by some expansion of the bibliographical information for students seeking further sources on specific topics.

Colonies has an introduction on the relevance of colonial history to the present, 11 chapters, and a conclusion on the results of Confederation. The chapters alternate thematic subjects with chronological narrative: history to 1663, colonies 1663-1763, fur trade, B.N.A. 1763-91, colonial society, B.N.A. 1791-1841, business cultures, B.N.A. 1841-64, regionalism, Confederation 1864-67, pre-Confederation society. The 13 chapters in *Nation* follow a similar pattern of alternating themes and chronological narrative: politics 1867-1890s, industrialization, Laurier years, party politics to 1914, World War One, labour radicalism, the 1920s and 1930s, immigration, the Liberal ascendancy, foreign policy, social change 1957-90, Quebec, Canada in the 1990s. In general these texts give a somewhat more traditional close look at political developments, and may be the preferred choice of teachers who take this approach. In the thematic chapters there is attention to social and economic issues, but less coverage of matters relating to gender and family, or of popular culture, than in the other books under review.

To a considerable extent the companion readers published by McGraw-Hill Ryerson complement the texts well by their emphasis on social history themes. These collections are: Carol Wilton, ed., *Change and Continuity, A Reader on Pre-Confederation Canada* (Toronto, McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1992); and Ian McKay, ed., *The Challenge of Modernity, A Reader on Post-Confederation Canada* (Toronto, McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1992). These we think are excellent collections, with a good emphasis on topics such as gender, First Nations, class, regional history, and popular culture. The Wilton book includes 48 articles, divided into 16 topics. It has more selections than any of the other collections, although by no means the greatest page length, since many are short. Approximately one third of the pieces are from primary documents, such as letters or diaries. This is, in our view, a good feature of the book. The remaining articles are representative of much of the best recent scholarship on the chosen topics. McKay’s post-Confederation collection has nine topics and 27 pieces, again including some primary document material along with examples of excellent recent scholarship. In general, the reviewers think these collections to be our first choice among the readers.

However, although overall we like his selection better than the other post-Confederation collections, like Gaffield, McKay has tended towards selecting pieces more heavily influenced by post-modernist thinking. The issue of the response to such articles by students has been touched on in dealing with the Gaffield and Bumsted collections, and one reviewer has found the question has arisen in teaching classes with regard to one article in particular in McKay’s book. This is “The Idea of Chinatown: The Power of Place and Institutional Practice in the Making of a Racial Category” by Kay J. Anderson. Many students have found this article difficult to understand, wanting to read a description of historic conditions in Vancouver’s

Chinatown rather than an account of the social construction of the idea of “Chinatown”. The question, however, is how much the popularity of a piece with students is the most important criterion. If the students immediately like an essay, it certainly helps elevate their interest in the topic. But it is also a valuable learning experience to grapple with ideas which are difficult to understand. On balance, we would prefer to err on the side of challenging our students to accept, or at least to consider, new ideas.

The single volume text, *The Structure of Canadian History* (Scarborough, Ontario, Prentice Hall Allyn and Bacon Canada, 1997, 5th edition), by J.L. Finlay and D.N. Sprague, now in its fifth edition, cannot easily be compared to the multi-volume sets discussed above. This is the most explicitly political of the books under consideration. The authors claim “[t]he ‘structure’ on which we focus is the story of the distribution of power: who held it, how, and for what purposes, because in our view the study of history must pay careful attention to society’s rulers”. This particular bias is especially evident in the much larger part of the book which deals with the post-Confederation period, especially the final four chapters which deal exclusively with constitutional reform. There are valuable dimensions to this political orientation, and many instructors may find the fact that this book contains the full text of both the British North America Act and the Constitution Act of 1982 very useful. Many of the statistical tables in Appendix 1 are also valuable.

The most novel feature of this book is its attention to the World Wide Web. The authors advise their readers that they will be constantly revising the text, and that newly revised chapters will be made available monthly on their web site <http://home.cc.umanitoba.ca/~sprague>. Each chapter and an introductory note, “More Elsewhere”, include lists of relevant web links.

As Atlantic Canadian historians it is fitting we give specific attention to the coverage of the region in these texts and readers. *Acadiensis* has been following developments on this question since 1975 when D.A. Muise wrote the first review essay on the subject. A second, by W.G. Godfrey, was published in 1980; a third, by John Reid, in 1987.⁴ Collectively these essays suggest that historians are providing better coverage of Atlantic Canadian history, and the history of the region is being more effectively integrated into survey texts and readers.

This progress seems to be continuing. Writing in 1987, Reid commented on the increased attention to the region, but deplored the absence of discussion of the histories of the Acadians and Newfoundland. In many of the recent crop of texts and readers this omission has been addressed. However, these new texts continue to cover the history of the Atlantic region more thoroughly for the pre-Confederation period than for the later period. This is perhaps understandable in texts dealing with the general Canadian experience, since Atlantic Canada, by most standards, such as political or economic power, population, and share in Canada’s wealth, moved more

4 D.A. Muise, “The Atlantic Region in Recent Canadian National Histories”, *Acadiensis*, IV, 2 (Spring 1975), p. 125; W.G. Godfrey, “Canadian History Textbooks and the Maritimes”, *Acadiensis*, X, 1 (Autumn 1980), pp. 131-35; John G. Reid, “Towards the Elusive Synthesis: The Atlantic Provinces in Recent General Treatments of Canadian History”, *Acadiensis*, XVI, 2 (Spring 1987), pp. 107-21.

to the periphery of Canadian national life as time went on. However, Atlantic Canadians cannot but see the process by which this occurred as of great significance. When we look at the Canadian experience as teachers or students we see it from an Atlantic regional perspective, not from the viewpoint of those from Ottawa, Toronto, Quebec or Vancouver. Therefore, the more coverage a text gives to the Atlantic region, the better it is from our point of view. On this there has been some general improvement, but we would always like more.

In their introductions and prefaces, all of these texts promise greater attention to regional interests, and, in varying degrees, fulfil these promises. Conrad and Finkel, in their preface to *History of the Canadian Peoples* write: "We attempt not only to discuss topics relevant to the 'peripheral' regions of the nation but also to introduce regional perspectives on national developments, along with time frames that reflect the larger Canadian experience" (vol. 1, p. xix). As with social history topics, their approach to doing this tends to be more integrative, rather than providing separate chapters, although there is a separate chapter in volume one on the pre-Confederation Atlantic colonies. We think they do a fairly good job with this integrative approach, although coverage of the Atlantic Canadian perspective declines the closer we approach the present, which is true of all the texts. The authors of *Origins* and *Destinies* promise less in their brief preface: "Throughout the two volumes, we have reviewed regional developments while keeping Canada as a whole the focal point of the study" (vol. 1, p. vii). Separate chapters or sections are devoted to Atlantic Canada, with much briefer coverage being given in the second volume, particularly in 20th century history. Bumsted, in *The Peoples of Canada*, follows a similar pattern, with perhaps even less coverage of Atlantic Canadian developments in the post-Confederation volume. The authors of *Colonies* and *Nation* take Canadian regionalism as a major theme, again particularly in the first volume, which emphasizes regional issues in its Introduction and Conclusion. There is much less coverage of Atlantic Canada in the second volume, and even in the first volume the regional perspectives of French Quebec versus Anglo Ontario, and the West versus Central Canada are given greater emphasis than is that of Atlantic Canada, in our reading of the text. In summary, in terms of Atlantic Canadian coverage and regional perspective we would rank these books in the order we have discussed them.

As regards the readers, presumably the only measure is the proportion of the articles which deal with Atlantic Canadian topics. In Gaffield's collections of readings, four out of 24 articles in *The Invention of Canada*, and three out of 23 in *Constructing Modern Canada*, deal with Atlantic Canada. The proportions in the Francis and Smith collections, *Readings in Canadian History*, are seven out of 29 in the pre-Confederation volume and four out of 37 in volume two. In Bumsted's *Interpreting Canada's Past* there are seven articles on Atlantic Canada out of 34 in volume one, and six out of 32 in volume two. Wilton's *Change and Continuity* has ten Atlantic region selections out of a total of 48, while McKay's *Challenge of Modernity* has five out of 27.

Arithmetically, therefore, the Pre-Confederation rankings on Atlantic coverage are: Francis and Smith (one quarter), Bumsted (one fifth), Wilton (one fifth), and Gaffield (one sixth). The Post-Confederation rankings are: Bumsted (one fifth), McKay (one fifth), Gaffield (one eighth), and Francis and Smith (one ninth). Thus, in the collections as in the survey texts, it can be seen that in more recent years less

history of national significance appears to have occurred in the Atlantic region.

On more recent history in particular, Bumsted's collection has a higher proportion of articles on Atlantic Canada than the selections of the other editors except McKay, and McKay's Atlantic selections are mostly concentrated on the 1920s. Bumsted also ranks high in the Pre-Confederation coverage of the region. He seems somewhat ashamed of this, however, because in his books he has given new, more general titles to most regional studies. For example, Judith Fingard's "The Relief of the Unemployed Poor in Saint John, Halifax, and St. John's, 1815-1860" is retitled "Urban Poverty in Colonial British North America", while Ian McKay's "Among the Fisherfolk: J.F.B. Livesay and the Invention of Peggy's Cove" becomes "The Rise of Tourism". This is also done with central Canadian or Western Canadian topics, with the intention, presumably, of emphasizing the nation-wide relevance of the collection. The effect is perhaps a little misleading. An example from one region is, of course, an integral part of the Canadian experience, but it is not necessarily representative of what the course of development was elsewhere in the country.

As we have indicated, we think all these texts and reading collections are well written and well produced books, and our judgement of their value in the classroom is based on our own approach and interests. From this perspective, our order of preference of the survey texts is: first, the Conrad-Finkel *History of the Canadian Peoples*; second, *Origins and Destinies* by Francis, Jones and Smith; third, Bumsted's *The Peoples of Canada*; fourth, *Colonies and Nation* by Bercuson et al. and Granatstein et al. It is readily apparent that instructors who wish a heavier emphasis on political and economic history or a more authoritative tone in the writing might reverse our rankings. On the collections of readings, we liked best the Wilton and McKay books, *Change and Continuity* and *Challenge of Modernity*; second the Francis and Smith set, *Readings in Canadian History*; third the *Invention and Construction* set edited by Gaffield; and fourth Bumsted's set, *Interpreting Canada's Past*. However, as we have indicated, this is not how these collections would rank if chosen simply for Atlantic Canadian content.

Finlay and Sprague's one volume text, *The Structure of Canadian History*, contains no chapters devoted entirely to the history of Atlantic Canada, and even in the chapters on the early history, much more attention is focussed on events outside the Atlantic region than within it. However, most of the chapters (at least those prior to the 1930s) do provide brief discussion of events in Atlantic Canada, and some of these are very well contextualized within the continental framework. For example, the very brief discussion of the deportation of the Acadians in 1755 (pp. 67-68) effectively explains the deportation in the context of the struggle between Britain and France for control of North America. Even in the fifth edition, however, Finlay and Sprague have failed to address Reid's criticism that they ignored the Atlantic region in the modern period.

There are no recent collections of primary documents on Canadian history under review here, although we understand some are scheduled for publication in the near future. In a survey course, we would argue that, as well as a general text and readings on specific topics, students should be introduced, if possible, to some primary documents. This is in line with our feeling that it is important to give students an idea of the processes and methodology of "doing history". For this reason, both reviewers

liked the format of an earlier book, *Emerging Identities*,⁵ which combined documents from the past with historiographic debate on an historical question. It had twenty themes, ranging from “The Meeting of Two Worlds: Who Benefitted from Indian-French Contact?” to “The Challenge of Canadian Diversity, 1960s-1980s: Emerging Identities or Portent of Deconfederation?” This book would be somewhat out of date today, and, in any case, there is the problem that the themes chosen would never be likely to conform to the topics any individual lecturer would wish to explore in a course.

As we have heard, one publisher intends bringing out a Canadian history set with a two volume survey text, two corresponding readers, and a two volume set of primary documents. This might, in some ways, fit our ideal printed resources for teaching a course. One serious problem remains the cost. At perhaps \$35.00 per volume, a student would have to spend \$210 for all six, which seems far too much to ask. We could be very happy with some kind of reasonably priced one volume history “work book” which would combine narrative overview with primary documents, historiography on the theme, and specific case studies, with sufficient themes to fit well into the number of weeks in a course. But our satisfaction with this would also only be guaranteed if the themes chosen fitted well with our own outlook and specific interests.

Perhaps producers of university text-books might take up the challenge to provide us exactly what we want, but we then expect many of our colleagues will want something quite different, and this no doubt would be true of our judgements on the books we have reviewed. Somewhere we read that in the reform of public school education in 19th century France the state’s aim was to ensure that at any hour of the day each school-child throughout France was looking at the same passage in the same textbook. This seems an extremely repellent notion, so perhaps our final word should be to welcome the diversity of outlook among the well produced text-books currently available to university teachers of Canadian history.

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5 Paul W. Bennett, Cornelius J. Jaenen, *Emerging Identities: Selected Problems and Interpretations in Canadian History* (Toronto, Prentice Hall, 1986).