French and British in North America: Offerings to Clio, Some of Them only Half-Burned

A CURIOUS IRONY HAS EMERGED OVER the past generation in the historiography of early Canada and America. For early Canada, what was always a focus of great historical enterprise, which tended to attract the very best and most creative historical minds, is now a field of very little interest to young historians and graduate students. By contrast early American history, once considered a seriously neglected field, has in the last 30 years attracted an inordinately large share of the very best minds. These are scholars who have chosen history as a proper sphere to develop and display their imaginative talents and remarkable energy. The enthusiasm which characterized the students of Marcel Trudel and William Eccles, both now retired, and Guy Frégault who died in 1977, has not been transmitted to a third generation of scholars. Instead they have been attracted, for the most part, to post-Confederation Canada and especially the 20th century. In early American historiography this is simply not the case. The old giants, such as Lawrence Henry Gipson, Lawrence Harper, Perry Miller, Merrill Jensen, Richard B. Morris, Curtiss P. Nettels and Carl Bridenbaugh have been fruitful beyond their wildest dreams. The next generation, composed of such scholars as Bernard Bailyn, Jack Greene, Edmund Morgan, Alice Hanson Jones, Lawrence Leder, Jackson Turner Main, Douglas C. North and Jacob M. Price helped give birth to an even more ambitious body of historians devoted to early American history and civilization.

Today the best known scholar in early Canadian history is not strictly an historian. Bruce Trigger, an anthropologist by training, whose earliest publications were on Nubia under the pharaohs, calls himself an ethnohistorian. When in 1981 the *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* published a series of articles called "The New History. The 1980s and Beyond", the only Canadian scholar mentioned was Trigger. Bernard S. Cohn, Professor of Anthropology and History at the University of Chicago, called Trigger's work on the Hurons "among the most complete and sophisticated ethnohistorical accounts of a North American people".[1]

Perhaps of all the social sciences, anthropology will most influence the historical writing of the next generation. Trigger has already had a powerful influence in changing our understanding of pre-contact and the early history of the northeastern tribes of North America. His *Huron Farmers of the North* (New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969), *The Children of Aataentsic: A History of the Huron People to 1660* (2 vols., Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1976), his editing of *Northeast*, Vol. 15 of *Handbook of the*

1 B.S. Cohn, "Anthropology and History in the 1980s: Towards a Rapprochement", *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, XII (Autumn 1981), p. 234.

North American Indian (Washington, Smithsonian Institution, 1978) are merely the most accessible of his many publications. With *Natives and Newcomers. Canada's "Heroic Age" Reconsidered* (Kingston & Montreal, McGill Queen's University Press, 1985) he continues to blaze a highly successful revisionist trail through the pre-1663 period of Canadian and American history. It is true that this book has irritated some, of whom the most important, W.J. Eccles, has dismissed it as pretentious.[2] Through his studies Trigger has helped historians to look at the world through the eyes of the indigenous peoples. He has successfully questioned the usefulness of scholarship which fails to take account of pre-contact Indian history in explaining later events. He has helped make sense of the often confusing archaeological data by knitting it, where appropriate, into a theory of development. Still he is quite right to remind his readers that though historians are more interested in native history and culture than they once were, their focus remains overwhelmingly on the Europeans and their descendants who came to dominate so much of native life, almost to the point of extinguishing it.

Trigger's task in *Natives and Newcomers* is to show how our accepted view of native peoples originated, and how from current research a more accurate and useful understanding of their history can be achieved. He reminds us in his initial chapter "The Indian Image in Canadian History" that the depiction of Indians as brutal savages was largely a product of 19th-century American nationalism. Successive American administrations sanctioned military campaigns first to drive tribes westward and then to force the remnants onto reservations. As hunters and farmers, Indians were criticized for making poor use of the land they occupied. Such comments ignored the real difficulties of their ancient culture which was under extreme pressure from an expanding American population. Whereas there had earlier been "little evidence of racial prejudice against the Indians" (p. 14), the disputes over land, the principal form of wealth, transformed settler attitudes toward the Indians. By siding largely with the imperial authorities once the War of Independence broke out, the Indians made themselves the enemies of the patriots. Darwinianism later gave Americans an "acceptable rationale for racist interpretations of human behaviour" (p. 16), and native Americans could be confined to the refuse heap of history by failing to withstand biologically the impact of European civilization. Still, with the development of anthropology they became worthy of analysis and study. Their cultures, languages, physical characteristics and prehistory were examined. From the 1870s ethnologists began to mount extensive field trips among surviving tribes, not to study the survivors but to collect what remained of the folk memories of old men. Nevertheless their contact with such native peoples undermined many of the false calumnies which had been heaped upon the Indians. The most widely read historian of the century, Francis Parkman, who

2 *William and Mary Quarterly*, XLIII (July 1986), pp. 480-3. For Francis Jenning's review see *Canadian Historical Review*, LXVIII (June 1986), p. 249.

held the Indian in contempt, contributed far more to the hostile attitude toward Indians than anything the ethnologists wrote.

Parkman's impact in English Canada, though very great, was not without serious challenge. Indian experience in Canada was demonstrably different from that in the USA. There was little initial dispute over land, as so many of the tribes formerly occupying the St. Lawrence lowland were exterminated early by epidemics or scattered in inter-tribal wars. The fur trade, not land, determined the nature of European contact before 1815, while few Indians were displaced by any pre-Confederation settlement. Rather than producing a single, simple stereotype, commentators in Canada authored a great variety of views of the natives: the noble savage free of European vices (Lescarbot); contemptible (Champlain); immoral, indolent, improvident, warlike, arrogant, treacherous, but also brave, hardy, faithful, generous, gentle, intelligent (Charlevoix); possessing well developed concepts of property, but having their friendship betrayed by Europeans (William Smith); a primitive race doomed to extinction (Garneau); and a less evolved race following for centuries a degrading way of life (Groulx). As Trigger concludes, "No serious attempt was made to explain the condition of the Indian in the 19th-century as a product of 300 years of colonial history" (p. 36).

With the professionalization of Canadian history in the 20th century, the Indian was for the most part ignored by historians. Trudel concerned himself principally with the internal dynamics of the small French community of New France. Innis, even while acknowledging the central role of the Indian in the fur trade, still ignored the Indian and focused instead on the European economic interest. Only very recently have historians begun to manifest a major interest in the Indians. The works of A.J. Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1974), Carl E. Heindenreich's *Huronia: A History and Geography of the Huron Indians, 1600-1650* (Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1971), Cornelius Jaenen's *Friend and Foe: Aspects of French-Amerindian Cultural Contact in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1976) F.W. Rowe's *Extinction: The Beothuks of Newfoundland* (Toronto, McGraw-Hill, 1977), Robin Fisher's award winning *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia 1774-1890* (Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 1977), L.F.S. Upton's *Micmacs and Colonists: White-Indian Relations in the Maritimes, 1713-1867* (Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 1979), D. Francis and T. Morantz's *Partners in Furs: A History of the Fur Trade in Eastern James Bay, 1600-1870* (Kingston and Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1983) and Olive P. Dickason's, *The Myth of the savage and the Beginnings of French Colonialism in the Americas* (Edmonton, University of Alberta Press, 1984) are the best known and most influential examples of an altogether new trend. All of them demonstrate some intelligent reading of anthropological scholarship, and most have participated in conferences where

anthropologists also were performing. Many more historians, less well known, especially those who have gathered at fur trade conferences, or who have prepared well-directed M.A. theses, have been exposed to the same valuable influence. With the publication of historiographical essays by D.B. Smith in *Le Sauvage: The Native People in Quebec Historical Writing on the Heroic Period, 1534-1663* (Ottawa, National Museum of Man, 1974) and by J.W. Walker in 1971 and 1983, historians in general have little excuse not to be well informed about the recent directions and findings of historical enquiry in every period of native history in Canada's past. Finally, since Indians of interest to Canadian scholars do not conveniently confine themselves to the present political boundaries of Canada, knowledge of the best American work is essential. By far the most influential American figure, partly from his own writing and partly because of his position at the Newberry Library, is Francis Jennings. His *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1975) and *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire* (New York, Norton, 1984) are especially important. All specialists acknowledge, directly or indirectly, their debt to A.G. Bailey, the University of New Brunswick scholar whose *The Conflict of European and Algonkian Cultures, 1504-1700* (St. John, New Brunswick Museum, 1937), really marks the beginning of serious enquiry in the field.

Despite such progress, Trigger rightly complains that "most historians continue to regard native people as peripheral to the mainstream of Canadian history...the impression is still wrongly given that these first inhabitants of Canada have faded into insignificance as white settlement has progressed" (pp. 46-7). A more accurate understanding he believes will grow from the increasingly successful assertion by Indians of their rights, a process which will ultimately motivate historians to seek better "insights into social, political, and economic relations, as well as the differing cultural values, which governed the reciprocal interactions between specific groups of native peoples and European settlers" (p. 49).

His second chapter "Before History" develops a narrative of pre-contact Eastern Canada, based on the most recent insights of anthropologists and ethnologists. Typically, Trigger does not merely wade into the evidence and ask the reader to hold on tightly as the roller-coaster gathers momentum. Instead the role and achievements of archaeologist and ethnographers are very usefully outlined. Professional archaeology in Canada is just now celebrating its centenary. It was museum-oriented and was greatly influenced by the "scientific" development in the USA. Site excavations and artifact collecting were the principal methods used, while publication of syntheses was rare. This changed in the first half of the 20th century with a rapidly increasing interest in chronology and cultural change, with emphasis on external stimuli of diffusion and migration. From the 1950s increasing energy was applied to comprehending "the process of internal transformation", with emphasis on environmental and

societal developments (p. 69). Demography and social organization became important areas of investigation. Consideration of household composition, village plans, regional settlement patterns, burial customs and population pressures led to a far richer and variegated picture of Indian pre-history and culture. A *préhistoire globale*, of the sort Braudel and the *annalistes* would endorse, has emerged only recently under the label "symbolic archaeology", which attempts a broader interpretation of pre-historic communities by generalizing about native "cosmology, religious beliefs and iconography" (p. 73).

Such an introduction is a marvellous way to prepare the reader for his survey of the current views of Iroquoian prehistory. One of the more important current beliefs is that the great shift from the hunter-gatherer economy to that principally associated principally with maize occurred around AD 500, not 500 years later as formerly believed. The use of radiocarbon dating has been crucial in effecting this major reinterpretation. The northward extension of maize growing enabled populations of unprecedented size to survive and flourish. The large number of fishing, hunting and nut-gathering camp sites with their fenced food process stations represented an earlier traditional economy which was not abandoned after the introduction and spread of corn. Evidence clusters in the 14th century to such an extent that Trigger writes of "a dramatic revolution in Iroquoian life throughout most of the St. Lawrence Lowlands" (p. 91). This so-called "Middle Iroquoian" period has been studied in detail near London. It is characterized by large communities based on tribes very dependent on horticulture and associated with much land clearing and intensive planting and weeding. Villages became defended by elaborate palisades. Ritual killing of male captives also dates from this period, a practice found earlier in Mesoamerica. The cause of increased inter-tribal warfare remains uncertain. The celebrated Five Nations Iroquois confederacy could have been formed as early as 1400-1450, undermining the frequent assumption of anthropologists that it evolved as a response to European induced changes in power balances.

There follows a history of early Canada from Cabot's first contact in 1497 to the 1650s, in outline a familiar enough story to most of us. What makes Trigger's account so interesting and useful is the way he has modified the usual account by viewing that epoch from the vantage point of the Iroquois. To do this he employs the latest findings of both archaeology and anthropology, as well as the occasional new details thrown up by historians. Here the work of David Quinn's *North America from Earliest Discovery to First Settlements: The Norse Voyages to 1612* (New York, Harper & Row, 1977) from English sources and Selma Barkham's work from Basque sources for the strait of Belle Isle are prominent. His interpretation also involves an elaborate critique of the work of ethnologists, who, striving to describe as fully as possible the native culture before the first European contacts, believed that, except in limited ways, native cultures in eastern North America remained fundamentally unaltered by such

contact, at least until the mid-17th century. Instead Trigger, following recent evidence, explains much of what happened to Indian tribes in this protohistoric epoch as a scramble for power erected on the new basis of European commodities, or as a quest for survival in the face of devastating European diseases.

What are some of the more important conclusions of such revisionism? American natives had no idea that other important lands lay beyond the ocean. They were enormously impressed with the first sightings of Europeans in their great ships, rich clothes and white skins. Impressive also was the abundant supply of metals in many forms and of glass beads to which they ascribed supernatural power. Fear was inspired by the diseases to which the Europeans were immune, but which killed the Indians in every village through which the foreigners passed. Added fear and loathing evolved from the frequent European habit of kidnapping. In Canada the earliest and most prolonged contacts between natives and Europeans was centred on a trade in pelts and deerskins, as well as in fish in exchange for a rapidly more sophisticated range of European manufactured goods. As fur trapping increased less time could be devoted to fishing, hunting or horticulture, and the Micmacs, as an example, began to trade for European foodstuffs. Inter-tribal warfare occurred in many places to establish control of the trade routes for European goods, and for the role of middlemen in such trade. The wars between the Micmacs and Abenakis between 1607 and 1615, for instance, concerned the supply of European goods to the Indians of New England. In the St. Lawrence valley, no place was initially more important than Tadoussac where by the end of the 16th century furs from as far away as Maine and the Ottawa Valley were being traded with Europeans. Yet within a few years these St. Lawrence Iroquoians, living between the future site of Quebec city and Lake Ontario, had disappeared. This Trigger calls "the most important historical event in eastern Canada following Cartier's visits" (p. 144). Trigger now believes that the warfare probably ended before European contact, leaving only small tribes in the Montreal-Quebec vicinity. The rest were dispersed partly by Mohawk raiding parties. European goods reached Ontario far earlier than was generally believed until very recently. The year 1580 was usually the earliest date advanced. Evidence now exists for even earlier dating of small amounts of such traceable material. Archaeologists have worked out the routes of much of this early trade as well as those of the first half of the 17th century. It entered Ontario at its earliest via the Hudson, Delaware and Susquehanna rivers. The evidence is usually found not in habitation sites but in graves, indicating the great value attached to such European goods.

One of the great movements of Indian peoples occurred in the 16th century, when the southern Hurons abandoned the fertile lowlands north of Lake Ontario and joined the Attignawantans in Simcoe County, a dense settlement of perhaps 20,000 in little more than 2,100 square kilometers. There this Huron confederacy survived until 1649. Disputing the explanation that this was done to

avoid attacks from the more powerful Five Nations Iroquois, Trigger finds no evidence for martial or organizational Iroquois superiority. His explanation for the migration involves the Huron decision to position themselves strategically near the trade routes by which European commodities reached Southern Ontario. When the Iroquois severed the St. Lawrence route, the main route shifted to the Ottawa River, Lake Nipissing and Georgian Bay. Trigger also believes that the social and political order represented by the Huron confederacy was not an ancient institution, but "a product of a recent period of instability and major changes" (p. 159). Equally interesting is the history of the Petuns, who settled south of Nottawasaga Bay to exploit the rich beaver grounds in the swamps at the headwaters of the Grand River. There were European reports of fierce warfare between them and the Hurons, and certainly they were never admitted to the Huron confederacy. Yet they played an important role in exchanging European goods with the so-called Neutrals, who in turn traded with the Eries, the Susquehannas and perhaps the Senecas. In this way it is possible to conclude that the first appearance of European trade goods added to the inter-tribal rivalry, from which emerged new Indian political alignments. Trigger concludes that only from much more archaeological field work can the reconstruction of Huron and Iroquois society be attempted. Further guessing by ethnographers is not a useful undertaking.

Chapter Four "Traders and Colonizers, 1600-1632" and Chapter Five "Plagues and Preachers, 1632-1663" round out his narrative. Traditional approaches call the first period the era of Champlain: the second begins with the arrival of the Jesuits and lasts until Louis XIV transformed the whole area into a centrally administered royal province. Earlier historians wrote of the Indians as part of this expansion of Europe. Ethnologists, by contrast, extracted what was available in the written records left by Europeans to reconstruct pre-contact Indian society. Only with the development of ethnohistory would European written records be used to study native American history in itself. Ethnohistory, according to Trigger, was a creation of A.G. Bailey, for whom the response of native peoples to European influences was the most interesting subject. This was important because, as anthropologists have found, few tribal societies preserve for long accurate and detailed knowledge of their past history in their oral traditions.

Some of the best work on the nature of Indian trade deals not with the Iroquois or Hurons, but with the tribes reached by the Hudson Bay Company, the Crees and Assiniboines. The simple role of middlemen, which writers traditionally assigned to Indians in the fur trade, was merely one important function performed by the natives. Evidence shows that they were demanding traders, influenced, as were the Europeans, by market factors. Competition between Europeans offered opportunities which natives were quick to seize. There is no evidence before the mid-1630s that the tribes felt inferior to the Europeans, whose goods they eagerly sought. Their early belief in the

supernatural powers of white men quickly gave way to a mixture of respect and contempt, based on the great difficulties Europeans had in learning Indian languages and managing canoes and snowshoes, and on "their greed...and the cruel way they treated one another" (p. 225). They feared the rapid spread of European induced epidemic diseases in 1634, which killed first large numbers of Montagnais and Algonkins in the lower St. Lawrence, and then spread into the Ottawa Valley and thence to the Huron villages. This was but the first of such infections throughout the eastern woodland Indians which reduced the Micmacs, Hurons, Petuns and Neutrals to between half and one-third their former numbers. Yet, as Trigger so convincingly illustrates (p. 231-42), native demography in the early 17th century is fraught with difficulties, leaving ethnohistorians to argue among themselves about their estimates.

The end of the epidemics, the establishment of a mission station among the Hurons, and the subsequent conversion of a large minority of them to Christianity, split the traditional society and exposed them to complete annihilation at the hands of the Iroquois. Trigger, unlike Gibbon who ascribed the decline and fall of the Roman Empire to the weakening of society by Christianity, considers religion as only one of the factors, which so swiftly destroyed the Huron and temporarily shattered the trading network upon which the economy of New France had principally rested. He looks also to the source of Iroquois ambitions. Initially such aggression might have been inspired by the crisis of depopulation occasioned by the epidemics, for the tribes wished to enhance their numbers by capturing women and children and so raise a new generation of warriors of mixed blood. In this the Iroquois were very successful. Indeed they were also so successful in making captives of Huron warriors and adopting them into their tribes, that the whole foreign policy and to some extent the domestic structure of the Five Nations Confederacy had to adjust. By the early 1650s they had "dispersed their most populous neighbours" (p. 273), in perhaps their most successful series of campaigns. The French capacity to protect the Hurons and other friendly tribes proved to be utterly hollow. If the centres of Montréal, Québec and Trois-Rivières were not themselves in immediate danger, not even their immediate hinterlands could be adequately secured. Jesuit attempts to Christianize the Iroquois were largely an attempt to minister to Christian Huron captives. Most Iroquosis "felt under no pressure to convert" (p. 291). Unlike the Hurons, who had become tied exclusively to the French trading network, thereby laying themselves open to the Jesuit system of rewards and punishments to encourage conversion, the Iroquois traded as well with the English and the Dutch. The pro-French or peace party among the Iroquois tended to support the Jesuits, even though they did not themselves submit to baptism. At first only a small band of Iroquois were baptized and in the 1690s settled at Caughnawaga, near Montréal. Yet the very Iroquois success contained the seeds of their ultimate undoing. In response, troops were sent from France, and the military balance began to shift against them. The Iroquois

were outflanked by the French, partly as a result of their extraordinary explorations and the ambitions for America which followed. Fur and the trade in European goods moved principally through Montreal and Quebec, and easily overtook the quantities shipped through Albany. Thereafter the Iroquois tried to play the part of neutrals between the English and French, a policy as disastrous to them as it was, in a different context, to the Acadians elsewhere.

The book would have been well ended here; but as a final chapter Trigger attempted to raise a new question, rarely advisable in a conclusion. The question was: Who founded New France? His answer is a polemic. His new heroes to replace the priests and administrators who hitherto have dominated the accounts of 17th-century Canada, are the traders and their employees, for the major role they played "in forging productive working relations between Europeans and native people" (p. 341). Such men found that the key to trading profitably lay partly in the study of Indian ways. This led them to adopt native conventions and to enter native alliances. In contrast to this sympathetic approach to natives, priests and officials tried to impose their authority on Indians, a policy which utterly failed, and in the case of the Hurons, cost them a very high cultural price. The difficulty for scholars, who use documents as their principal sources for their histories, is that the most literate, in this case the priests and *functionnaires* of New France, leave fuller, better argued and more engaging evidence in the form of their letters, reports and maps than do the traders with their account books.

As Trigger was writing his third chapter, happily entitled "Sixteenth-Century Ontario" some overeager Ontario politicians, supported by some historians who should have known better, were urging the sceptical citizens of that province to celebrate their bicentenary in 1984. A combination of ignorance and myopia by both public men and academics was exceedingly painful to observe. Franco-Ontarians at least knew that Ontario's history pre-dated the arrival of some Loyalists. For ethnohistorians, the publicly-funded celebrations that year were merely a further, if unusually prominent, example of the failure of many Canadians to acknowledge their history beyond its European parameters.

Historians and students of the French regime in Canadian history should welcome the two books prepared under the direction of André Vachon, *Dreams of Empire. Canada Before 1700* (Ottawa, Public Archives of Canada, 1982) and *Taking Root. Canada from 1700 to 1760* (Ottawa, Public Archives of Canada, 1985). These two volumes were issued to accompany two impressive exhibitions at the Public Archives of Canada. The exhibitions and books reproduce manuscripts, maps, drawings, paintings and portraits both from the PAC's own collections and those of foreign institutions. These are the first two volumes in a new PAC collection called *Records of Our History*. They contain some 457 items, including seals and medals from more than 60 institutions. Written in French and translated into English, the brief commentaries and introductions are of considerable interest. Not perhaps since the appearance of Trudel's *The*

Beginnings of New France 1524-1663 (Toronto, 1973) has the unilingual anglophone student had the opportunity of reading the distilled views of scholars, from the French vantage point, on some of the earliest phases of Canadian history. The subject is broader than Canada's current borders, for the French empire in America before 1760 included the entire Mississippi valley to New Orleans, the Ohio, Michigan and Illinois territory. Nor are the Acadians of Atlantic Canada ignored. The Indians are treated briefly though sympathetically. The emphasis is on the European debt to the native Americans. "In the fields of transportation, dwellings, clothing, cooking, medicine, as well as hunting, fishing, and war the Whites borrowed more from the Indians than is generally believed" (*Dreams of Empire*, p. 157). Or "the Indians had a way of life of their own, an original civilization, from which the French population in particular benefited as it established itself permanently in Canada" (*Taking Root*, p. 88).

The focus of *Dreams of Empire* is on the explorations, contact with Indians and Inuit and early settlement. The great energy of both French explorers and settlers was initially unmatched by support from the French crown. Indeed, inadequate support from the metropolitan authorities is a major explanation for the ultimate failure of the French imperial dream in America. In 1699 d'Iberville wanted the king to support a colony "strong enough to resist those of England" (*Dreams of Empire*, p. 105); otherwise the English would drive all other nations from the continent in less than a century. The failure of the dream was not for want of information by the metropolitan authorities. Unlike the English administrations and parliamentarians, who remained congenitally ignorant of the rest of the world outside England despite their growing empire, the French government was regularly bombarded with reports, with excellent maps, and with detailed accounts from civil, military and religious authorities in Canada. After 1660, Canada was never subjected to a period of "salutary neglect" of the sort which historians describe for the English colonies from about 1690 to the 1740s.

In *Taking Root* Vachon begins to speak of the inevitable collapse of the French American empire. Typically he contrasts the rapidly growing populations of the English colonies with the small populations of New Orleans, Canada and Acadia. In fact the French were until the late 1750s able rather easily to defend their territorial interests in America, except the most exposed in Acadia. When Hudson Bay and Newfoundland were given up to 1713, the explanation is found in French military weakness in Europe, not in any Canadian failure. After Phips' failure to take Quebec in 1690, the English never again penetrated the St. Lawrence, whose navigation they came to fear greatly, until 1759. By contrast Port-Royal was taken in 1613, 1629, 1690 and finally held for the English in 1710. Even then the English did not rush to fortify and settle Nova Scotia, as they did in Georgia in the 1730s to protect South Carolina against the Spanish in Cuba and Florida. The building of Louisbourg and the general fortification of

Cape Breton after 1720 brought no significant response from London or from New England. Only with the attack on Canso in 1744 did a new, more confident policy emerge from the English side. This led first to the capture of Louisbourg in 1745, and after its return to the French authorities in 1749 the building of Halifax and the colonization of Nova Scotia with non-French settlers. The expulsion of the Acadians was perhaps the most important indication of a new aggressive British policy, and that decision, as Vachon reminds us, was taken not in London or Boston, but by local commanders in Nova Scotia.

If one looks at the French dream of American empire through British eyes — and if I have a serious criticism of the exhibitions it is only that far too little of this particular viewpoint is exposed — it was unclear how it was to be stemmed. The energy of the French in America overawed the English authorities, who really felt themselves hemmed in east of the Appalachians. Contemporaries were perfectly aware that the outcome of the rivalry between France and Britain in America would be decided on European battlefields. France had a population three times larger than England and Wales. France was far richer and had a far more extensive overseas commerce. On the whole her ships were better built and better designed and her maps and charts better executed than those of Britain. Her influence among European and Middle East powers was far greater than that of Great Britain. If from 1713 it was clear that Britain was a great power, it was not clear until 1758-59 that she could defend the realm against French invasion and carry the war successfully against her principal rival. The inevitability of English hegemony is simply a myth perpetuated by French historians, and those who read only French documents.

The most interesting parts of the exhibitions relate to the French society created along the St. Lawrence valley. As Vachon writes, "The Canadian *habitants* were proud and in no way resembled "peasants". Freedom-loving, they were brave, strong and hardy; if they excelled in fighting from ambush, they also had all that was needed to succeed as *coureurs des bois*" (*Dreams of Empire*, p. 306). The fear they generated in the hearts of English settlers is legendary. So highly were they regarded as militiamen, it is arguable that the failure of the British to enlist the *habitants'* support during the American War of Independence cost them the loss of the thirteen colonies. "On the whole", Vachon adds, "the Canadian *habitants* enjoyed, according to observers of the period, a standard of living that was superior to that of the peasants of France" (*Taking Root*, p. 234). Their survival, especially the survival of the returned Acadians, is one of the enduring dramas of North American history; and these volumes are fitting monuments to that remarkable fact.

On a much slighter topic is M.A. MacDonald's *Fortune and La Tour: The Civil War in Acadie* (Toronto & London, Methuen, 1983). Civil war is a large idea for this small subject, for Mrs. MacDonald's book is really about the two families who feuded for the domination of a lightly settled part of the New World. Charles de la Tour, with his base at the mouth of the St. John's river, and

Charles d'Aulnay de Charnisay at Port-Royal used all their resources between 1640 and 1645 to establish hegemony over the Bay of Fundy. It was too little regarded by the French and too close to the settlements of New England to be left alone entirely. It is the author's thesis that if these two "feudal lords" (p. 142) had mended their quarrel instead of trying to destroy each other, they would have been strong enough to resist English incursions into this outpost. United and with a strong line of communications to the French court, they could have ensured enough official French support to keep Acadia for the French crown.

The thesis is untenable. Colonial officials were always rivalling one another, as were courtiers at home. In doing so they frequently put their enterprises and projects, and on occasion even the very nation at risk. A large number of additional favourable circumstances would have had to occur subsequently for Acadia to have survived as a French province. Had the author studied French colonial policy in general at this time, and the direction it took under Louis XIV, she would have realized that Acadia seemed destined to be the most neglected of the king's dominions. In 17th century terms, it was beyond support.

If her thesis does not withstand scrutiny, her story is well told. So few are the manuscripts available, she has frequently had to imagine what La Tour and his rival were thinking and doing. It is not the sort of history which will be memorable. This battle of petty barons, hardly a civil war, interrupted colonization in the region for a decade. La Tour's connections with the French court, initially so excellent, deteriorated to the point where he was obliged to hire men and ships in Boston in a fruitless attempt to regain Port-Royal. The two petty chieftains glared across the Bay of Fundy at each other, raiding, pillaging and murdering. The story ends oddly. La Tour's wife died in captivity after vainly defending her husband's fort in his absence, while he married his rival's widow after the victor inadvertently drowned. Their fruitful marriage helped populate the region and, if the author is to be believed, from them most Acadians are descended (p. 198). Her account is fortified by the discovery in France of a few new documents, the most important of which was La Tour's marriage contract. For an adequate historical context, this book should be read with John Reid's *Acadia, Maine and New Scotland: Marginal Colonies in the Seventeenth Century* (Toronto, 1981) close to hand.

Much more ambitious and much less satisfactory is Peter L. McCreath and John G. Leefe, *A History of Early Nova Scotia* (Tantallon, N.S., Four East Publications, 1982). The authors hoped to provide an entertaining account to "inspire further pride in our historic province" (p. 5). It is aimed at senior high school students. It is a failure. It is a superficial and very boring account. Half the chapters lack footnote references or bibliographies. It is characterized by poor organization, numerous printing errors and inadequate citations. There is little evidence of deep reading by the authors. They seem to have ignored the work of scholars found in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, the most impressive example of cooperative scholarship in recent Canadian historiog-

raphy. They seem ignorant of a number of important M.A. and Ph.D. theses on this early period of Nova Scotia history and have overlooked important studies, readily available in print, such as those by Quinn and Upton. They do not begin to satisfy Trigger's hopes for historians: their first reference to the Micmacs is as killers, and they only appear on the scene in the early 18th century. In all, there is little here that is not found in MacNutt's study of Atlantic Canada to 1857, published more than 20 years earlier. There is nothing worth noting on the economy or on the emerging society, while even the Acadians are dismissed in a few pages. With its narrative focused on international politics and military and naval deeds, it scarcely takes note of ordinary people. Even the nature of the province's strategic importance is incorrectly characterized. There is no discernible thesis, while it ties itself to no important school of historical thought. It is a sad work, inadequately conceived and poorly executed. It set out to fill a gap, but unless teachers fill out the text in a substantial way, it will provide a misleading impression of recent scholarship, and thereby an unnecessarily impoverished view of Nova Scotia's past.

The last volume to be considered here, John J. McCusker & Russell R. Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607-1789* (Chapel Hill & London, University of North Carolina Press, 1985), is also the most important. More than 25 years ago, Lawrence Harper, the celebrated historian of the English Navigation Acts, undertook the preparation of an economic history of colonial America. His book was the first volume in a multi-volume economic history of the United States. It remains the missing volume, the only one never to be written. As the years went by, and the range and variety of scholarship on colonial America multiplied, it became increasingly difficult for any scholar to contemplate such a synthesis, even as it became more necessary. Rarely did this new scholarship treat economic matters in a void. Instead it attempted to place them within the context of American colonial society as it underwent dramatic change especially in the 18th century. Scholars had to contend with the reality that the colonials by the 1770s were not only among the most literate in the world, and the most politically experienced of any people, but, head for head, were among the richest. It became clear as well that this rapidly growing wealth, as elsewhere, was increasingly unevenly distributed. The wealthiest 10 per cent were gaining an ever-increasing share of this expanding overall wealth. Moreover, the colonial economy was never isolated or wholely subsistence in nature. From the outset in the early 17th century a significant part of the economic effort was geared to the export market, directly or indirectly. The colonists were exporters of furs, fish and tobacco and eventually a range of agricultural exports not only to the British Isles and to Europe, but also to the West Indies. Inspired in part by modern economic theory and studies on the changing economy of the USA in the 20th century, historians invariably ask a series of very modern questions of 17th and 18th century sources. But their ambitions are frustrated by the absence of reliable or sufficient data.

McCusker and Menard are aware of the difficulties and warn their readers that their book aims to establish "the best *current* understanding of the colonial economy (p. 11). Their focus is on exports and population growth, by which they hope to bridge the two principal directions in which economic historians have been working. They believe — and this is controversial — that "almost all colonists were tied to overseas trade". (p. 10). They attempt to place America within the context of the Atlantic economy, while realizing that the very term "American", beyond a geographic sense, conveys rather less than might be expected. There was little psychological link between an Anglican slaveowner and planter from Virginia and a Congregationalist small farmer from Western Massachusetts, or a French-speaking Catholic Acadian of the St. John River valley in what was then greater Nova Scotia. Equally there seems little to connect an underemployed mechanic in Philadelphia with a post-Conquest *habitant* on a Richelieu valley seigneury or an impoverished Irish immigrant to Newfoundland, clinging to the great rock with little more than his wits.

The book is divided into three parts. First to be considered are such general themes as the staples approach, the frontier tradition in historical writing, the implications of England's economic policies, the general pattern of economic growth in the period and finally some general questions of trade and the colonial balance of payments. The second section looks at specific regions from Atlantic Canada and New England to the West Indies. The final section approaches the economy in a thematic way, examining such related subjects as population expansion, settlement patterns, wealth accumulation, the domestic economy, and devoting special attention to agriculture, manufacturing, the role of government and the structure of business enterprise. The book ends with an impressive bibliography of more than 1,800 items appearing up to July 1983, itself a contribution of great value.

Despite the influence of the staples theory among colonial American economic historians, few full-bodied studies have been attempted either of single commodities or of several by way of comparison. The fur trade in Canada has received most of the attention, and few American scholars have contributed significantly to this. Other candidates among the staples are fish, tobacco, rice and sugar products. Very little has been written recently on the New England fisheries, beyond a few articles by Lydon. The best work I have seen is not cited, Austin White, "The Cod Fishery of Colonial New England" (M.A. thesis, University of California-Berkeley, 1956). Tobacco has received most of the attention, and it is now very well studied. Recent work on the 19th century timber and lumber industries of New Brunswick and Canada and on the colonial supply to the West Indies has apparently had no influence on colonial American studies. The authors attempt to apply the staples theory only to the economies of the South and the West Indies.

For the rest of America they employ what they call the Malthusian theory. This focuses on the internal dynamics of population growth, which was very

rapid both on the mainland and in the Indies in comparison with the British Isles in the 18th century. Such an approach reveals that for the most part economic growth was extensive and not intensive. Wealth or income, when measured by person or by household, changed very little over the period in this pre-industrial world, and the export sector, which the staple studies emphasize, contributed little to total income. It was the rapid development of an internal domestic market which kept income constant and wealth distribution stable, and encouraged the migration which extended the agricultural frontier. Their overall view is that by the 1760s and 1770s the colonial economy was in general successful and that it had grown rapidly especially since 1713, so that on the eve of the War of Independence it had generated widespread prosperity. For the West Indies, which resisted the urge to revolt in the 1770s, economic prospects were very bright, and likely to become even more attractive. Even in Canada, which also resisted the blandishments of the American patriots, the transition from French to British administration had not changed the fundamental aspects of the economy, based as it was on a combination of fur and agriculture-forestry.

The authors emphasize that colonial trade was the most important new element in the British trade picture in the 18th century. For England and Wales fully 44 per cent of all trade (imports, exports and re-exports) came from outside Europe by the period 1770-72. This was significantly higher than for either France or the Netherlands, where the proportion was about one-third. To this trade America and the West Indies contributed the lion's share. There were, of course, regular cycles of prosperity and trade depressions. Beginning with the first American depression which lasted from 1638 to 1644, they identified a further 21 such depressions up to and including 1782-89, that most severe and prolonged depression which followed of the War of Independence. Shepherd and Walton have stimulated the major innovation in research by extending the trade in commodities question to a full-blown modern analysis of the colonial balance of payments. The result is that the "traditional notion of a severe, chronic deficit for the colonies has been discarded" (p. 83). McCusker and Menard revise the Shepherd and Walton estimates, using the recent work of several historians. In 1768-72 payments were balanced at about £4.2 million, which represented between 17 and 19 per cent of annual total per capita income. This they call significant, while others call it small. The discussion of income derives in part from an even more impressive contribution to the economic history of early America. Led by Alice Hanson Jones, colonial historians have estimated per capita wealth for New England, the middle colonies and the south. McCusker and Menard refer to her achievement in employing probate inventories as a "major breakthrough" (p. 262). Overall growth was sufficiently rapid and steady to have produced a standard of living by the 1770s, in her words, "probably the highest achieved for the great bulk of the (white) population in *any* country up to that time".

When the regional economies are analysed, the authors are faced with the difficulty that British America has received uneven treatment. Whereas the economy of Quebec and the Chesapeake colonies have been well studied by historians, that of the rest, Pennsylvania perhaps excepted, has suffered from relative neglect. Inadequate treatment of the West Indies is particularly unfortunate as those islands were "indispensible to the development of the mainland colonies...as a major market for colonial exports" (p. 145), while providing imports for processing, consuming and re-exporting by mainland Americans and an important source of foreign exchange and freight earnings. If the Boston merchants excelled in the 17th century, those of "Philadelphia were the entrepreneurs par excellence of the British colonies" thereafter (p. 193). In view of the absence of detailed local studies in many regions, the authors call for new efforts to "explore interactions between population growth, the spread of settlement, migration, and market developments; that analyze wealth distribution, patterns of inheritance, and family structure; and that illuminate the dynamics of community life and the growing diversity of the rural economy" (p. 200). To avoid the economic myopia of early local studies, all of this is to be achieved by taking into account the economic developments within the Atlantic world.

Though the authors acknowledge the impressive growth of historical demography within the last 20 years, they also recognize that most such studies remain innocent of the economic sphere. Thus, such studies focus on growth from natural increase, while immigration to the colonial world, especially in the 18th century, remains a "neglected topic" (p. 219). Perhaps the reason is that except in rare cases American colonial historical demographers, Curtin and Gelanson being noted exceptions, have not used British archives, where such immigration studies would necessarily have taken them.

When the authors discuss the domestic economy, they raise at one point the question of imports, a matter which has also been neglected despite the prominence in the revolutionary era of the non-importation movement. There are the usual difficulties with available trade data: their absence or their unreliability. There are nevertheless good data for imports from England, Wales and Ireland, and for Scotland from 1764 onwards. To demonstrate the importance of America as a market for British Isles' exports, the authors use data for 1770 from England and Wales. British America imported 43 per cent of English flannel exports, 60 per cent of wrought iron, 79 per cent of linen, 59 per cent of printed linen and cotton, 66 per cent of cordage, 48 per cent of glassware and earthenware, and 32 per cent of refined sugar (p. 284). The authors do not refer, as they ought to the customs papers available for Ireland (CUST 15) or for Scotland (CUST 14). Before 1782, trade between Ireland and individual colonies is not separately distinguished in the ledgers, but in the first 85 volumes of this series, such trade appears under "Plantations" or "America" headings. It is clear that Scotland's role in the tobacco trade makes the use of trade figures

there of great importance to colonial America. Tobacco became the principal re-export for Scotland, and was crucial for the balancing of her accounts.

One of the curious areas of neglect is American agriculture, since Alice Hanson Jones's work demonstrated that the bulk of colonial wealth was held in the form of land. Production and yield figures are wholly lacking, though for crops like sugar and tobacco, it is possible to make reasonable estimates. It is arguable that the most important crop in ordinary husbandry was the production of winter fodder, chiefly in the form of hay. It would be entirely possible to estimate the magnitude of such a crop, based on estimated herd and flock sizes at different times, and the number of days annually when pastures were unusable. With information on annual shifts in weather, allowances could accordingly be made for normal, light and abundant crops. No such suggestions are forthcoming in this the shortest chapter of the entire book. The clear suggestions for new lines of research characteristic of other chapters are muted here, I suspect simply because neither author has wrestled personally with the problem. When Lawrence Harper prepared a draft chapter on colonial agriculture for his volume which never was finished, he too saw the difficulties. Determined as usual to say something enlightening, he was influenced by a number of Scandinavian studies which attempted to make production estimates from agriculture as well as the fisheries by first estimating the caloric intake of colonial Americans, and then estimating the proportion from different products likely to be produced on American farms. To this he added the export figures found in CUST 16/1 for 1768-72. Perhaps we need colonial economic historians, like James Shepherd who has practical experience of farming, to help resolve this fundamental difficulty. It is not a problem for Quebec historians, who, because the tithe there was widely collected and paid in kind, have been able to estimate the gross yield by multiplying the tithe by a factor of 26. Nothing like this body of statistics exists for Protestant colonial America.

In the chapter on the role of government in the colonial economies, there is no reference to provincial taxation. It was at a low level compared to that obtained in Great Britain and Ireland. Yet in some colonies the size of the provincial budget was larger by far than the affairs of any merchant house. The cumulative effect could be impressive. The equivalent of £2.4 million sterling were raised in Massachusetts, for instance, between 1692 and 1770, almost all of which was recycled within its own provincial economy. The principal beneficiaries of provincial spending were the political, military and mercantile elite, who were also the principal taxpayers. Like the British government which paid the colonials bounties for raising certain crops or manufacturing certain products such as indigo, refined sugar and naval stores, the provincial governments attempted in a small way to direct their colonial economies. In the 1730s it was the policy of Massachusetts to pay bounties for the production of hemp and flax, and in the 1760s for locally-grown wheat and locally-milled flour. Such examples could be multiplied, but they are not considered by the authors.

The final chapter deals with the impact on the colonial economy of the War of Independence and the economic elements in the revolutionary movement which preceded it. As this is the subject of a forthcoming book, Ronald Hoffman, John J. McCusker & Russell R. Menard, eds. *The Economy of Early America: The Revolutionary Period, 1763-1789* (Charlottesville, University of Virginia Press), the matter is treated only by way of overview. Contrary to some historians, McCusker and Menard argue that economic developments were "central to the Revolution" (p. 351). They have been much influenced by Egnal and Ernst who believe that a sense of the economy was an integral element in the politics of the revolutionary movement. They are not impressed with the fact that the Declaration of Independence was almost bereft of economic concerns, while the economic effect of the war from the vantage point of the 1780s was quite conservative.

Much of the argument among historians has centred upon the impact of the Navigation Acts upon the American mainland economy. Their impact upon the West Indies, or other parts of British North America which did not revolt has, by contrast, never been of much interest to historians, and remains unconsidered here. The central thesis which sees the 1760s and the 1770s as a golden age leads them quite rightly to dispute the conclusions of earlier historians who, wrongly believing that in the 1770s Americans were on the edge of insolvency, lamented the imperial economic embrace. They see a positive value to the Navigation Acts; colonial planters and merchants "took advantage of every opportunity *within* the empire to enrich themselves. They were largely successful in doing so" (p. 50). What provoked the constitutional crisis, the authors believe, was a new attempt by Whitehall after 1763 to regulate the American colonies in a manner which implied a real decline in American influence over imperial policy. Clearly exaggerating, they attribute to the patriot leadership of the 1770s Franklin's vision of a republic that could "protect American commerce, encourage American agriculture, develop American industry, promote the settlement of western lands, and, eventually, take Great Britain's place at the center of the Atlantic economy" (p. 357). This was wildly unrealistic in the period of the War of Independence and remained so for long afterwards. Britain remained America's greatest trading partner, and the Empire its greatest market for long after 1783. British capital likewise was directed to investments in America, usually in preference to investments within the Empire, while immigrants from the British Isles continued to dominate after 1783 the racial character of the newly arrived in America. In general, the quality and range of interest in economic history declines markedly between 1776 and about 1790. The field has largely been dominated first by military historians and then by historians of the constitution. The call sounded here to bring an end to this unnecessary neglect deserves to be heeded.

This is an enormously important book. Its scholarship is very impressive. Its suggestions for further research are invariably provoking in a thoroughly useful

way. Its understanding of current scholarship is extremely valuable. New approaches, of course, depend only partly on new points of view. In economic history they require new series of data. A few such unconsidered sources, from my own experience, can be found in British, French and American archives. In France, for instance, the archives of *Départements* which have outlets to the sea hold extensive collections of papers relating to privateers (*Les prises de mer par les corsaires*). As all such archives are organized in the same manner it is easy to locate the appropriate series. The research will uncover thousands of original documents or their French translations, found on board American and other British prize vessels for all the Anglo-French wars of the 18th century. Among British sources there is much on the economic ties between Americans and the British military and naval authorities whom they supplied. Such details are often found either in the Audit Office Papers, or in the actual bill books of such bodies as the Navy Board. The detail available from such sources is often very impressive. There are at least three volumes of CUST 34 relating to America before 1776, which I cannot ever remember seeing used, while the rest of the collection contains perhaps the fullest body of mercantile correspondence I have seen anywhere for Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, though much of it begins only in the 1780s. There are also the Audit Office papers, providing information about those who applied to the Loyalist compensation commission. Such collections have rarely been used by economic historians, though they contain very detailed statements, of the personal assets and liabilities of more than 2,000 American claimants. Among documents in the USA itself, I have always been struck by how little use economic historians make of land papers. Most colonies had land registry offices where conveyances, mortgages and other legal transactions were recorded at least for part of the 18th century. Often these are found at the town, township or county level, but they largely remain the domain of the antiquarian and genealogist. The moment has come to tackle some of these important sources, guided in part by some of the provocative questions McCusker and Menard have wisely suggested. Our debt to them is very great.

With such activity underway and such bright research prospects anticipated among historians of the colonial era in American history, it is to be hoped that some of this will spill over into early Canadian history, and once again attract many young scholars of the first rank.

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