

RECENSIONS

David Jay Bercuson, editor, *Canada and the Burden of Unity*. Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1977, pp. 192, \$6.95 paper, \$12.95 cloth.

The burden of unity is the burden borne by the hinterlands of Canada in political and economic union with central, or metropolitan Canada. That burden of the Canadian hinterlands, the four provinces of the Maritimes and the four between Ontario and the Pacific has perhaps never been analyzed and stated with such vigor and coherence as in these eight essays by scholars all from those two regions. This book, for it is more than a collection of essays, is not a history or a restatement of grievance; it is a sober and weighty demonstration of enacted and repeated facts, the subordination of Maritime and Western resources, enterprise and aspiration to the political power, economic interests, and popular complacency of metropolitan Canada.

How weighty the compilation of subordination is may be instanced from any essay, but for brevity is noted only in Bercuson's incisive statement of the inevitability of the burden, Paul Phillips' analysis of the unreality, given the replacement of national policy by continental integration under the so-called multinationals, of metropolitan attempts to offset the weight of its own policies by concession and subsidy and Ernest Forbes' acute dissection of the events which replaced tolerable transport rates by the imposition in the policy of 'Symmetry' of a system of rates evolved under circumstances not local to the Maritimes.

In the demonstration of the concentration and weight of metropolitan dominance and exploitation, the tone is not one of recrimination. It is, to repeat, one of cool demonstration. Moreover, the aim of the writers is to seek and set out, means of alleviation. The bedrock reasons for Maritime and Western alienation having been set out, the effort is to find ways to alternate, remedy and remove. This is in fact a sterner task and the suggestions, such as Carman Miller's proposal, after excellent historical analysis, for at long last restoration of "Greater Nova Scotia" if appealing seem less likely to be effective than well tried central domination. In the effort, however, T.W. Acheson's support for the tried, if any ineffective, policies of offset, transfer and subsidization are the only such support of the well meant efforts to make the weight of central Canadian confederation tolerable. Most striking is T.D. Regeher's remarkable re-survey of Manitoba's railway policy, 1901 to 1911 and its success by promoting competition in a region in monopoly, in giving the West at least a transport system it could live with. If such statecraft is to succeed in today's condition, Alberta, it would seem, must carry the ball.

Since the authors are not separatists, they cannot indulge in the analyses of Messrs. Lévesque and Morin. They are therefore constrained to work within the limits of the federal state, its political anatomy and physiology and its antiquated and crumbling constitution. David Smith rehearses how the West,

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finding the one hope, given the political domination of populous Ontario and Quebec, sitting securely on the sanctified heritage of George Brown, of rep. by pop., that the West and the Maritimes might hold a balance of votes in the ruling party, or even in Parliament by means of a third party (the Progressives), turned to political alienation in voting consistently for the perpetual opposition, the Conservative party. Only a fundamental revision of the constitution, with a powerful Upper House representing provincial, or regional rights, could alter this. And that is not possible, given the fact that central Canada would not likely agree, and more important, the fundamental "populist", or rep. by pop. nature of the Canadian political mentality.

So Colin Howell is quite right to seek for a "meaningful federalism", one which allows expression of legitimate local interests and concerns. He does not, alas, elaborate, but the book has led us to the door.

Such is its purpose and its value. Its larger meaning is that Canada is now in 1864, the year of decision for Confederation. Either Canada by a supreme effort — a coalition government — finds means to reconcile Québec and liberate the Maritimes and the West, or we are all in serious trouble. The means to do so begins to emerge, but the crunch will have to harden to break up the old convictions and release the new possibilities.

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William Ophuls, *Ecology and the Politics of Scarcity*, San Francisco, W.H. Freeman and Company, 1977, cloth \$12.95, paper \$6.95, pp. 303.

The book consists of two parts. The essential message of Part I is that the ecosystems constituting our biosphere have natural limits which insure their ability to continue performing naturally designed functions. Interventions in these complex systems by man for purposes of production must be such that they "strike a balance between production and protection". This can only be done by maintaining an attitude of respect toward the natural biospheric laws of *limitation*, an attitude which has not of late characterized man's use of the environment. Hence, like all other living populations, we must level off and attempt to achieve a steady state in recognition of our rapidly approaching "limits to growth". However, any reasonable palliatives to ecological scarcity, such as the author's plea for an immediate transition to a steady state society,