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## Approaches to Business History in Canada:

### The Historian's Approach<sup>1</sup>

I WOULD like to divide this discussion of the historians' approach to Canadian business into four sections: first an examination of some of the problems involved in the writing of business history in the Dominion and an estimate of the present state of Canadian business history; then some comment on the economic theories of Canadian development which lie behind so much of the writing in this field; next, an outline of the key works on the subject; and, finally, some suggestions for possible lines of future investigation.<sup>2</sup>

#### I

The history of Canada presents many parallels to that of the United States: it spreads over the same time span (Quebec was founded only a year after Jamestown); its peoples are similarly divided into several regional groupings; the territory is equally vast, and even more sharply separated by natural barriers. There are, in addition, some special problems which must be considered if the development of Canada is to be understood. The country did not achieve Confederation until nearly a century after the United States declared its inde-

<sup>1</sup>The writer would like to thank Dr. Richard C. Overton, Professor of American History at the University of Western Ontario, Professor J. M. S. Careless, Chairman of the Department of History, University of Toronto, and several of his other colleagues at the University of Western Ontario, especially Professors R.A. Hohner and A. M. J. Hyatt, for their kind suggestions. The writer would also like to thank the University of Toronto Press for permission to use the quotations from D. G. Creighton's *Harold Adams Innis' Portrait of a Scholar* and H. A. Innis' *The Fur Trade*, and McClelland and Stewart for permission to use the quotation from the introduction to Gilbert N. Tucker's *The Canadian Commercial Revolution*.

<sup>2</sup>This article includes a certain amount of material not in the original paper which has been included in the hope of making it more useful to the reader. Extensive footnotes have also been added. For reasons of space it has been necessary to shorten some of the longer titles in both the text and footnotes below.

Reference has been made to only a few important articles; many more will be found in *The Canadian Historical Review*, *The Canadian Historical Association Report*, and *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, as well as other journals cited under specific headings. For further bibliographical information the best source is: Carl F. Klinck (ed.) *Literary History of Canada* (Toronto, 1965); Part III: 13, Kenneth N. Windsor 'Historical Writing in Canada (to 1920)' pp. 208-50; and Part IV: 27 'Canadian History and Social Sciences since 1920', William M. Kilbourn, 'The Writing of Canadian History' pp. 496-519, and Henry B. Mayo 'Writing in the Social Sciences' pp. 519-28. Another bibliographical source is Robin W. Winks, *Recent Trends, and New Literature in Canadian History*, Publication No. 19, Service Centre for Teachers of History, of the

pendence, it received equal status with Great Britain only under the Statute of Westminster in 1931, and did not add its last province, Newfoundland, until 1949. Thus, throughout most of its history, Canada has been governed, at least to some degree, from outside centres: first Paris, then London. Indeed, it still remains part of a complex international commonwealth.

Biculturalism has added further complications. To an extent business has been a preserve of the English-Scottish-Canadians, especially as far as the major commercial enterprises have been concerned; but there has still been a considerable development of French-Canadian business endeavour, which has been rather neglected by the French historians who have tended to turn their eyes to the pre-Conquest era and the political problems of the Province of Quebec since 1759. Then too there is the question of state ownership, or state participation, in business. In a vast country with a small, widely scattered population, and little capital for developmental projects, it has been necessary from the very first for the government to play a major role in business. The idea of the crown corporation, or the nationalized enterprise, is far more readily accepted here than it has been in the United States.

These are only some of the reasons why Canadian historians are faced with as many problems as are American historians; but, and herein lies the difficulty, there are so few Canadian historians. Not only is the population of the country a tenth of that of the United States, but also, there have been comparatively even fewer centres of learning, and far smaller grants available for research. Canadian universities have certainly not specialized in setting up chairs of business history, there is no centre of studies such as that at Harvard, and business schools are interested in turning out future executives, not in probing the past. In history, as in many other fields, the University of Toronto was virtually dominant until recent years, with only slight competition from other universities such as Queen's. Here, then, is the first difficulty facing the development of business history in Canada; it is only one of the many facets of history demanding investigation, and there are few qualified historians.

This, however, is only part of the story. In a nation that has slowly divested itself of the mantle of the motherland, naturally there has been a concentration of interest on constitutional and political issues. Further, in a nation that was a colony for so long, and continues to live under the shadow of a much larger neighbour, there has naturally been a search for a separate identity. These

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American Historical Association (New York, 1959). For short biographies of Canadian business figures see W. Stewart Wallace, *The Macmillan Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (Toronto, 1963). W. T. Easterbrook and M. H. Watkins have just edited a collection of essays entitled *Approaches to Canadian Economic History* (Toronto, 1967) which includes an extensive bibliography by Easterbrook and an interesting essay by Watkins entitled "A Staple Theory of Economic Growth" which originally appeared in the *Canadian Journal of Political Science and Economics*, Vol XXIX, May, 1963, pp 141-58.

questions have turned many historians' eyes to such problems as biculturalism, northern approaches, and, fortunately for business history, the search for an economic framework into which an individual Canadian identity can be fitted. Thus, although political considerations continue to dominate Canadian historiography, economic theories have gradually assumed a more respected place. It is the consideration of these theories that will occupy the second part of this paper.

Before going further into these theses, however, it must be noted that such work as has been done in Canadian economic history, and Canadian business history, always has been divided between two themes: continentalism and nationalism. This merely reflects the economic history of the nation in which demands for reciprocity have always been met with suggestions for an imperial zollverein, or, more recently, protection of the ownership of Canadian business. The discussion goes back well over a century and can still be heard in the conflicting statements of the two wings of the party at present in power in Ottawa

As a result of these problems, what is the present state of Canadian business history? The best general evaluation is that made by Hugh G. J. Aitken in the introduction to the 1964 edition of Tucker's *Canadian Commercial Revolution*. Here is what he says:

... very few collections of Canadian business records are available to historians and very few biographies of Canadian businessmen have been written ... One could wish that one-tenth of the energies that have been lavished on the arcane details of the Canadian fur trade had been diverted to other sectors of the economy. Where, for example, is our history of trade and shipping on the Great Lakes? Where are our studies of the nineteenth-century Canadian government finance? The history of the Canadian canal system is still to be written; the beginnings of secondary manufacturing in Canada are shrouded in obscurity; our ideas of the nineteenth-century Canadian business cycle remain vague and impressionistic; and our statistics of price and output movements are spotty and unreliable. Canadian economic historians have won a high reputation in Europe and North America; not least among their achievements has been the erection of an imposing edifice of generalizations on decidedly inadequate foundations<sup>3</sup>

Such charges will hardly please certain Canadian historical circles, but they do point up the fact that some theories have been accepted with very little re-examination. One of them, however, the Laurentian thesis, does provide a good starting point for an investigation of Canadian business history.

<sup>3</sup>Tucker, Gilbert N., *The Canadian Commercial Revolution* (Toronto, 1964) p. xv.

## II

Any survey of Canadian business history must begin with Adam Shortt (1859-1931), the first major historian to devote considerable time to business problems. His career, like that of so many later Canadian business historians, exemplifies the extent to which business history has normally been a part-time interest in this country. Shortt began his career as a philosopher, transferred to political science, moved to the civil service, and finally became Chairman of the Board of Historical Publications at the Public Archives of Canada. As well as his work on economics he wrote an excellent biography of Governor Sydenham, who arranged a union between Ontario and Quebec in 1841.<sup>4</sup> His most important work was his joint editorship of the monumental *Canada and its Provinces*,<sup>5</sup> which contained the first extended survey of Canadian business development. In the years following the appearance of this survey (most of the volumes were published just before World War I), the questions posed by the environmental theories of Frederick Jackson Turner began to make a serious impression north of the 49th parallel. Canadian historians had to answer the question of how far Canada, geographically a North American nation, was affected by the same environmental factors that had conditioned the development of the United States. Surprisingly the Turner thesis never found many outright supporters in this country. Walter N. Sage of the University of British Columbia was the most outstanding proponent.<sup>6</sup> The majority of Canadian historians, such as A. R. M. Lower of Queen's, pointed out that there were complicating factors in Canadian development, particularly the British connection, which meant that the Turner thesis required considerable modification before it could be applied to a Canadian setting.<sup>7</sup> A few historians, however, did apply it to particular phases of Canadian history.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Shortt, Adam, *Lord Sydenham, "Makers of Canada Series,"* (Toronto, 1908)

<sup>5</sup>Shortt, Adam and Sir Arthur G. Doughty, *Canada and its Provinces*, (23 vols., Toronto, 1913-17). Volume 23 contains the general index, bibliography and chronology.

<sup>6</sup>See particularly his two articles in the *Canadian Historical Association Report: Geographical and Cultural aspects of the Five Canadas*, 1928, pp. 28-34, and "Some Aspects of the Frontier in Canadian History," 1937, pp. 67-72. These were republished as a pamphlet *Canada from Sea to Sea* by the University of Toronto Press in 1940.

<sup>7</sup>There are several interesting articles on this theme in the *Reports of the Canadian Historical Association*. See particularly, A. R. M. Lower, "Some Neglected Aspects of Canadian History," 1929, pp. 65-71, and "The Origins of Democracy in Canada," 1930, pp. 65-70. Also, John I. McDougall, "The Frontier School and Canadian History," 1929, pp. 121-25, which provides a strong attack against the use of the thesis in Canada. Two more recent discussions are in the *Canadian Historical Review*: Morris Zaslow, "The Frontier in Recent Historiography," 1948, pp. 153-67 and J. M. S. Careless, in "Frontierism, Metropolitanism and Canadian History," 1954, pp. 1-21. The latter article is discussed below.

<sup>8</sup>For example A. L. Burt, "The Frontier in the History of New France," *Canadian Historical Association Report*, 1940, pp. 93-99. and Fred Landon, *Western Ontario and the American Frontier*, (Toronto, 1941).

Then, in the mid-1920's, came a reaction to Turnerism that led to the prime Canadian thesis on the economic development of the country. The man responsible was not a historian, but an economist, Harold Adams Innis (1894-1952), for many years Chairman of the Department of Political Economy at Toronto. Innis added a special touch to Canadian environmentalism: a touch that has become known as the Laurentian thesis because it is based on the development of the St. Lawrence River-Great Lakes economy. His theory, evolved while he was preparing his doctoral thesis on the Canadian Pacific Railway for publication,<sup>9</sup> was, to quote his disciple and biographer Donald G. Creighton, that Canadian economic development to that date, including his own work, had

... presented what now seemed to him to be an unhistorical and artificial interpretation of Canadian national development. They [the Canadian historians] had viewed the achievement of Canadian unity, through the creation of Confederation and the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway, as an unnatural achievement, an act of men, done in defiance of geography. Innis was now firmly convinced that this idea was false. He had come to realize, as he worked on his thesis, that the Canadian Pacific Railway had simply recaptured, through the medium of rail transport, a much older Canadian economic unity which had been based on water communication. Canadians had not, as they kept insisting with senseless parrot-like iteration, been 'fighting geography'; geography had been fighting for them. 'The present dominion,' Innis wrote later, 'emerged not in spite of geography but because of it'<sup>10</sup>

Spurred on by this theme Innis began his great studies of the fur trade and the cod fisheries which developed the Laurentian theme. His idea, basically, was that Canada had developed in response to the British need for staples rather than in reaction to American expansionism. The economic axis of the country, as he saw it, did not stretch north-south, but rather along the St. Lawrence and the Great Lakes, spreading on to the western hinterlands on one side and across the Atlantic to Europe on the other. Along this backbone he visualized the evolution of a Canadian economic system that was both transcontinental and transoceanic at the same time.<sup>11</sup>

His first staple industry was, of course, the fur trade, which led the explorer and trader up the St. Lawrence and Great Lakes, across the wilderness of northern Ontario, and on to the Great Plains and the far northern waters. Innis expounded this thesis in his *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian*

<sup>9</sup>Innis, Harold A. *A History of the Canadian Pacific Railway*, (London, 1923)

<sup>10</sup>Creighton, D. G., *Harold Adams Innis, Portrait of a Scholar*, (Toronto, 1957) pp 57-8

<sup>11</sup>Creighton, *Innis*, p 105

*Economic History* (New Haven, 1930). He then continued his work with an investigation of the eastern fisheries, paying particular attention to the factors which bound the economy of the St. Lawrence to England. A decade later this research resulted in *The Cod Fisheries: The History of an International Economy* (New Haven, 1940). Innis's energy and diligence were phenomenal; he consulted vast numbers of documents in archives on both sides of the ocean, though unfortunately the Hudson's Bay Company records were closed to him. Also, like Francis Parkman in an earlier period, he travelled many of the fur traders' routes, partly in his own canoe. His style, unfortunately, did not resemble Parkman's. His books are undoubtedly among the most difficult to read in Canadian historical writings, the despair of the conscientious student. Footnotes and statistics clog the text, and even Creighton admits that he often did not indicate clearly the steps which had led him from his detailed evidence to the sweeping generalizations of his conclusion.<sup>12</sup> Possibly for this reason some of his conclusions have never been sufficiently contested. Professor Aitken's statement on the foundations of Canadian economic theses may well be specifically applied to much of Innis's grand conclusion in the long run. Take for example the following statement from the *Fur Trade*:

By 1821 the Northwest Company had built up an organization which extended from the Atlantic to the Pacific. The foundations of the present Dominion of Canada had been securely laid. The boundaries of the trade were changed slightly in later periods but primarily the territory over which the Northwest Company had organized its trade was the territory which later became the Dominion. The work of the French traders and explorers and of the English who built upon the foundations laid down by them was complete. . . . The Northwest Company was the forerunner of confederation and it was built on the work of the French *voyageur*, the contributions of the Indian, . . . and the organizing ability of the Anglo-American merchants.<sup>13</sup>

These statements raise certain questions. Had international treaties laying down boundaries really been so unimportant? Were the foundations really so secure? Certainly neither the Colonial Office nor Sir John A. Macdonald was convinced. These problems cannot, however, be considered here.

Innis's work was amplified and carried on by Creighton, the most magnificent stylist of all Canadian historical writers, in his first book, *The Commercial Empire of the St. Lawrence, 1760-1850* (Toronto, 1937), which was reissued in 1956 with exactly the same text, but without the word *Commercial* in the title. Creighton's theme, as he restated it in his new preface, was that the

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>13</sup>Innis, H. A., *The Fur Trade*, (Toronto, 1962), p. 262

central point of his interpretation of Canadian history was the idea of an east-west transcontinental system based both politically and commercially on the St. Lawrence.<sup>14</sup> The work is an examination of the trade in the various Canadian staples: fur, timber, potash, wheat, up to the time of the decline of the old British commercial system in the late 1840's

More recently the Laurentian thesis has been considerably changed by J. M. S. Careless, Creighton's successor as Chairman of the History Department at Toronto. His suggested revision appeared not in a book, but in an article in the *Canadian Historical Review* in 1954.<sup>15</sup> Entitled "Frontierism, Metropolitanism, and Canadian History" this short discussion must be considered as one of the most significant contributions to Canadian historical writing. In it Careless first examines the various schools of Canadian historiography, including the works of the supporters of Turner and of the Laurentian thesis. He then points out that the second group had actually turned the frontier thesis backward and substituted in its place a metropolitan focus for Canadian history centred upon London, England, and the cities of the St. Lawrence system. After noting that we should be careful not to substitute a metropolitan determinism for a frontier one, Careless concludes that for Canada the study of the role of the metropolis might well lead to a more satisfactory explanation of our development than could be obtained by merely borrowing the frontier concept from the United States.

With Careless's work we come to the end of the theories of Canadian economic development that have received major consideration by the historians. Little has been done to amplify his thesis to date.

### III

Let us now turn to an examination of the individual works that have been specifically written on various aspects of Canadian business history. Following the above discussion of the theories of Canadian economic development these may be classified under several headings: first, general works and those which discuss some particular theme; secondly, monographs dealing with phases of Canadian business development which might be said to amplify the Laurentian thesis; thirdly, works which are more aligned to Canadian-American relations (these are far fewer in number), and, finally, discussions of other staples, histories of individual companies, and biographies of individual entrepreneurs, none of which really falls into the other categories. Such a classification, of course, is arbitrary; many of the works discussed might well be placed elsewhere, but the arrangement does have the advantage of pointing up some of

<sup>14</sup>Creighton, D. G., *The Empire of the St. Lawrence* (Toronto, 1956) p. iii

<sup>15</sup>Careless, J. M. S., "Frontierism, Metropolitanism and Canadian History," *Canadian Historical Review*, XXXV (1954), pp. 1-21.

the major contributions to Canadian business history, and also of demonstrating the extent to which Canadian research has followed certain lines.

The father of Canadian business history, as noted before, was Adam Shortt.<sup>16</sup> The 23-volume collection *Canada and its Provinces*, which he edited jointly with Sir Arthur Doughty in 1913-17,<sup>17</sup> still stands as the one great survey of Canadian life. Not content with merely preparing a history of the political evolution of the nation—which is basically all that is attempted in the new 17-volume Centennial Series now making its appearance<sup>18</sup>—Shortt and Doughty designed a work that embraced all aspects of Canadian growth. Specific sections were devoted to business, and volumes 9 and 10 deal with nothing but post-Confederation industrial development. Shortt himself contributed the sections on banking. Some of the essays in *Canada and its Provinces* are now outdated, but the collection will always form an invaluable reference for business historians, as well as for students of all other phases of Canadian history. In 1926 Shortt also edited a two-volume set of documents on currency, exchange and finance during the French Régime.<sup>19</sup>

Innis made many other contributions to Canadian business history, among them his *Problems of Staple Production in Canada* (Toronto, 1933) and the two-volume *Select Documents in Canadian History* (Toronto 1929-33) which he edited with Lower. A few other particularly important studies of specific aspects of Canadian economic development should be noted at this point. They have a dual interest, for the careers of the historians involved again demonstrate the fact that Canada has never developed a special discipline of business historians. One of the most valuable of these is the 1938 *History of Transportation in Canada* (Toronto, 1938) by G. P. de T. Glazebrook, who has divided his career between the History Department of the University of Toronto and the Canadian Department of External Affairs. He has also written the basic survey of Canadian external relations.<sup>20</sup> Another is the already mentioned *The Canadian Commercial Revolution 1845-51* (New Haven, 1936) by the late Gilbert N. Tucker who wrote in addition the history of the naval service in Canada.<sup>21</sup> Mention should also be made of D. C. Masters' *The Reciprocity Treaty*

<sup>16</sup>For a biography see W. A. Mackintosh, 'Adam Shortt, 1859-1931,' *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, 1938, pp. 164-76.

<sup>17</sup>See note 5.

<sup>18</sup>This series, edited by W. I. Morton and D. G. Creighton and published in Toronto by McClelland and Stewart, began to make its appearance in 1963; six volumes have appeared to date.

<sup>19</sup>Shortt, Adam (ed.), *Documents Relating to Canadian Currency, Exchange and Finance during the French Period* (2 vols., Ottawa, 1925-26). Yet another contribution was his *Documents Relating to Currency and Finance in Nova Scotia 1675-1758* (Ottawa, 1933).

<sup>20</sup>Glazebrook, G. P. de T., *A History of Canadian External Relations*, (Toronto, 1950).

<sup>21</sup>Tucker, Gilbert N. *The Naval Service of Canada, its Official History* (2 vols., Ottawa, 1952).



of 1854 (London, 1937); this author has written on an amazing variety of historical subjects. In spite of such basic works, a satisfactory one-volume survey of Canadian economic history was a long time in making its appearance; we cannot be said to have had such a necessary handbook for the student before the appearance of W. T. Easterbrook's and H. G. J. Aitken's *Canadian Economic History* (Toronto, 1956).

In the second category, works dealing with topics related to the Laurentian thesis, there is an unusually rich amount of material. This can be discussed under the three headings of the fur trade, transportation and communications, and finance. Beginning with the fur trade, Innis contributed a biography of Peter Pond, one of the more murderous early traders.<sup>22</sup> Other major biographies connected with the fur trade are Arthur S. Morton's *Sir George Simpson* (Toronto, 1944), the life of the greatest of the Hudson's Bay Company governors, a recent biography of Lord Selkirk by John Gray, the President of Macmillan's of Canada,<sup>23</sup> and Marjorie E. Campbell's study of William McGillivray in *McGillivray, Lord of the Northwest* (Toronto, 1962). Unfortunately there is no full biography of the latter's uncle, Simon McTavish, the Montreal merchant who for many years before his death in 1804 was the key figure of the Northwest Company. There is, however, a short study, along with other interesting papers in *The Peddlars from Quebec* (Toronto, 1954) by W. Stewart Wallace, Librarian Emeritus of the University of Toronto and dean of Canadian historians.

In the field of corporation history the Hudson's Bay Company has been the subject of more studies than any other Canadian—and I suspect American—organization. Many are little more than romances, but a fair number are quite important.<sup>24</sup> Among the best is *The Honourable Company: A History of the Hudson's Bay Company* (Indianapolis, 1936) by Douglas MacKay, who for several years was the editor of the official magazine of the company, *The Beaver*,<sup>25</sup> which is itself a valuable source of information on the history of both the company and the Canadian North. More recent is a study of the political activities of the organization by John S. Galbraith, *The Hudson's Bay Company as an Imperial Factor 1821-1869* (Toronto, 1957). The official history is *The*

<sup>22</sup>Innis, Harold A. *Peter Pond, Fur Trader and Adventurer* (Toronto, 1930)

<sup>23</sup>Gray, John M., *Lord Selkirk of Red River* (Toronto, 1963)

<sup>24</sup>Among the most frequently encountered earlier works are: Beckles Willson, *The Great Company (1661-1871)* (2 vols., London, 1900); George Bryce, *The Remarkable History of the Hudson's Bay Company* (Toronto, 1900), and Agnes C. Laut, *The Conquest of the Great North-West* (2 vols., Toronto, 1908), and *The 'Adventurers of England' on Hudson Bay, A Chronicle of the Fur Trade in the North* (Toronto, 1914). Arthur S. Morton, *A History of the Canadian West to 1870-71* (London, 1939) provides a general history of the region under the company.

<sup>25</sup>*The Beaver* is a quarterly which was first published in 1920

*History of the Hudson's Bay Company 1670-1870* (2 vols., London, 1958-9) by Edwin E. Rich, the company archivist.<sup>26</sup> In addition to these secondary sources many documents are now available in the series published by the Hudson's Bay Record Society.<sup>27</sup> There is also a history of its rival, *The North West Company* (Toronto, 1957), by Marjorie E. Campbell.

Thus, as Aitken says, the fur trade has been the subject of the most detailed examination in all its phases, and new material is constantly coming out. Certainly it provides a romantic topic which has attracted many amateur historians as well as taking up a disproportionate part of the available time of the few Canadian business historians. It has also, unfortunately, spilled over into the public school textbooks. As a result, generations of Canadian students have had their interest in Canadian history killed by the stories of innumerable traders, whose names could be neither spelled nor pronounced, paddling in all directions on a vast number of rivers with equally unintelligible names.

Next to the fur trade the history of the transportation industry has received more attention than any other division of Canadian business history. Its treatment, however, has been unbalanced, for most of the historians' energy has been concentrated on the railways. The story of shipping has been largely neglected,<sup>28</sup> and there is no modern history of the canal building age.<sup>29</sup> There are only two studies of specific canals: Aitken's *The Welland Canal Company* (Cambridge, Mass., 1954) and the more romantic Robert Legget's *The Rideau Waterway* (Toronto, 1955). With regard to more recent methods of transportation, the history of *The Intercity Electric Railway Industry in Canada* (Toronto, 1966) by John F. Due of Illinois has just been published. General works on the theme of transportation include: A. W. Currie, *Economics of Canadian Transportation* (Toronto, 1959); J. C. Lessard *Transportation in Canada* (Ottawa, 1956) a valuable survey of recent developments published by

<sup>26</sup>These originally appeared as volumes 21 and 22 of the Hudson's Bay Record Society series but have now been reissued separately. Rich has also edited other works in this series and has recently published a small volume of lectures: *Montreal and The Fur Trade* (Montreal, 1966).

<sup>27</sup>There are now 25 volumes in this series (published in Toronto and London, 1938-65). The first 12 were published jointly with the Champlain Society.

<sup>28</sup>For shipping on the Great Lakes see George A. Cuthbertson, *Freshwater* (Toronto, 1931). The older William Wood, *All Afloat* (Toronto, 1915) is a general history of Canadian shipping. The lakes are covered individually in "The American Lakes Series," edited by Milo M. Quaife, of which Fred Landon's *Lake Huron* (Indianapolis, 1944) is particularly useful. *Inland Seas*, the quarterly journal of the Great Lakes Historical Society, which has been published since 1945, contains many articles on commerce and shipping.

<sup>29</sup>Two early histories of the Canadian canals are: William Kingsford, *The Canadian Canals* (Toronto, 1865) and Thomas C. Keefer, *The Canals of Canada* (Montreal, 1894). A short biography of Keefer, who was an important figure in canal and railway building as well as reciprocity, may be found in D. C. Masters, "T. C. Keefer and the Development of Canadian Transportation," *Canadian Historical Association Report* (1940) pp. 36-44.

the Royal Commission of Canada's Economic Prospects; and H. A. Innis (ed.) *Essays in Transportation in Honour of W. I. Jackman* (Toronto, 1941).

The Canadian railways, though, have been the favorite topic of transportation historians. Innis's history of the Canadian Pacific has already been mentioned; a more recent examination of the same subject is J. M. Gibbon's *Steel of Empire* (Indianapolis, 1935). The Canadian National Railways have received fine treatment in Colonel G. R. Stevens' history,<sup>30</sup> two volumes of which appeared in 1960-62; a third is under way, as well as a single-volume summary to be published as part of the "Railroads of America" series. In addition A. W. Currie has written a history, *The Grand Trunk Railway* (Toronto, 1957), discussing one of the most important predecessors of the CNR, and the construction of another predecessor is described by the engineer who was responsible: Sir Sandford Fleming *The Intercolonial* (Montreal, 1876). Railway nationalization aroused as much interest as railway construction and has left a considerable number of government committee reports and private opinions.<sup>31</sup>

The railway builders have also attracted attention; they form a particularly interesting group as their entrepreneurial activities involved so many aspects of both business and politics. There is one rather early collective survey of their activities in *The Railway Builders* (Toronto, 1915) by Oscar D. Skelton, the biographer of Prime Minister Sir Wilfrid Laurier. Skelton himself was later Undersecretary of State for External Affairs. Other older biographies are L. J. Burpee's *Sandford Fleming, Empire Builder* (London, 1915) and Walter Vaughan's *The Life and Work of Sir William Van Horne* (New York, 1920).<sup>32</sup> There are at least five accounts of Lord Strathcona's career,<sup>33</sup> though for some reason his cousin and associate Lord Mount Stephen has been neglected. With regard to recent figures there are also biographies of Sir Henry Thornton and Sir Edward Beatty, the presidents of the CNR and the CPR respectively in the 1920's and 1930's.<sup>34</sup> There is even a certain amount of autobiographical material such as the reminiscences of D. B. Hanna, the first president of the CNR.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>30</sup>Stevens, G. R. *Canadian National Railways* (Vol I, 1836-1896, Vol II, 1896-1922, Toronto, 1960-62).

<sup>31</sup>For example William H. Moore, *Railway Nationalization and the Average Citizen* (Toronto, 1917).

<sup>32</sup>Other works on leading engineering figures who did much of their work on the railways are Ludwik Kos-Rabcewicz-Zubkowski and William E. Greening, *Sir Casimir Stanislaus Gzowski: A Biography* (Toronto, 1959) and Frank N. Walker (ed.) *Daylight Through The Mountains: The Letters and Labours of Walter and Francis Shanly* (Toronto, 1957).

<sup>33</sup>The most frequently encountered of these are W. I. R. Preston *The Life and Times of Lord Strathcona* (Toronto, n.d.), Beckles Willson *Lord Strathcona* (London, 1902) and John Macnaughton, *Lord Strathcona* (London, 1926).

<sup>34</sup>Marsh, D'Arcy, *The Tragedy of Henry Thornton* (Toronto, 1935) and D. H. Miller-Barstow, *Beatty of the C.P.R.* (Toronto, 1951).

<sup>35</sup>Hanna, David B. *Trains of Recollection* (Toronto, 1924).

In the field of communications very little work has been done. For example there is no satisfactory history of the newspaper press or journalism in Canada. There is, however, *Mass Media in Canada*, (Toronto, 1962) a collection of essays edited by John A. Irving subtitled "the development of communications in Canada".

Canadian financial institutions form a third link which unites the nation, but comparatively little research has been devoted to their development, even though their story would do much to clarify the advance of Toronto and Montreal. A. B. Jamieson, *Chartered Banking in Canada* (Toronto, 1953), is a standard work, and the more recent *Canadian Monetary, Banking and Financial Development* (Toronto, 1961), by R. Craig McIvor provides a balanced history of Canadian finance and does not relegate the pre-1900 period to a few pages. Another recent addition to this branch of Canadian economic history is Edward P. Neufeld (ed) *Money and Banking in Canada: Historical Documents and Commentary* (Toronto, 1964). With regard to individual banks Neufeld has also written the *Bank of Canada Operations 1935-54* (Toronto, 1955). The major work in this field is Victor Ross and A. St. I. Triggs, *A History of the Canadian Bank of Commerce* (3 vols, Toronto 1920-34), which includes the histories of the many banks the Commerce had absorbed since its establishment in 1869.<sup>36</sup> Also, at present the Bank of Montreal is sponsoring an extended history by Merrill Denison; the first volume covering the years 1817-1843 appeared last year.<sup>37</sup> Another source of banking history is *The Canadian Banker* (formerly the *Journal of the Canadian Bankers' Association*) which has appeared regularly since 1893. For trust companies and insurance companies there is almost nothing, although a few life insurance companies have prepared authorized histories.<sup>38</sup>

Business history in what might be called the field of Canadian-American relations has been far less productive of major works. Foreign ownership of Canadian industry is discussed in Hugh C. J. Aitken, *American Capital and Canadian Resources* (Cambridge, Mass., 1961) and in a collection of essays published by the Duke University - Commonwealth Studies programme, *The American Economic Impact on Canada* (Durham, N.C., 1959). Some histories of American corporations have included a chapter on "Canadian operations"; moreover, there are biographies of American captains of industry which con-

<sup>36</sup>There are some official histories of other banks which provide much useful information, for example: *The Centenary of the Bank of Montreal 1817-1917* (Montreal, 1917); *The Dominion Bank 1871-1921* (Toronto, 1922), and Joseph Schull, *100 years of Banking in Canada, A History of the Toronto-Dominion Bank* (Toronto, 1948).

<sup>37</sup>Denison, Merrill, *Canada's First Bank: A History of the Bank of Montreal*, Vol. I, (Toronto, 1966).

<sup>38</sup>For example Harris, George H. *The President's Book: The Story of the Sun Life Assurance Company of Canada* (Montreal, 1928).

tain information on Canadian industrial development John W. Jenkins' *James B. Duke* (New York, 1927), is an example, as the author discusses Duke's role in the development of Quebec power. There are also a few works which study a specific Canadian-American operation such as Carl Wiegman's *Trees to News* (Toronto, 1953), an examination of the operations of the *Chicago Tribune* through the Ontario Paper Company.

There are good surveys available on the tariff, particularly Orville McDiarmid *Commercial Policy in the Canadian Economy* (Cambridge, Mass, 1946) and John H. Dales *The Protective Tariff in Canada's Development* (Toronto, 1966), and various opinions on specialized topics; for example, the relatively large number of books on Imperial Unity which appeared in the 1880's and 1890's, written by a variety of people from an ex-governor-general to Canadian emigrants to the United States.<sup>39</sup> These could provide a basis for an interesting study, and they extend from works over a century old to former Finance Minister Walter Gordon's statements of to-day.<sup>40</sup> An early example is the group of speeches entitled *Isaac Buchanan on the Relations of the Industry of Canada with the Mother Country and the United States* (Montreal, 1864). Buchanan had these gathered by Henry J. Morgan, the first Canadian specialist on dictionaries of biography. They provide a valuable insight into the outlook of an early Hamilton merchant who was also a leading member of Parliament.

The great contribution to an understanding of Canadian-American business relations is to be found in the series which appeared between 1936 and 1945 under the editorship of J. B. Brebner and J. T. Shotwell. Entitled "The Relations of Canada and the United States" and sponsored by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the series naturally included many manuscripts concerned with matters other than Canadian business history, and others dealt only with Canadian affairs. The quality of the works included was far from even, but the importance of these volumes cannot be overestimated. Three of them have already been noted as among the most significant works in Canadian business history: Innis's *Cod Fisheries*; Creighton's *Commercial Empire of the St. Lawrence*; and Glazebrook's *History of Transportation in Canada*. Another outstanding contribution to the understanding of a Canadian staple industry was A. R. M. Lower's *The North American Assault on the Canadian Forest: A History of the Lumber Trade between Canada and the United States* (Toronto, 1936). Mention should also be made of H. Marshall, F. A. Southland and K.

<sup>39</sup>This included the question of an imperial zollverein as a counter to reciprocity of some form with the United States. Among the books written were:

The Marquis of Lorne, *Imperial Federation* (London, 1885), James Douglas, *Canadian Independence* (New York, 1894), and Colonel George T. Denison, *The Struggle for Imperial Unity* (London, 1909). The actual relationship with Britain is best covered in Douglas R. Annett, *British Preference in Canadian Commercial Policy* (Toronto, 1948).

<sup>40</sup>Gordon, the Hon. Walter I. *A Choice for Canada, Independence or Colonial Status* (Toronto, 1966).

W. Taylor's *Canadian-American Industry: A Study in International Investment* (Toronto, 1936), William J. Wilgus' *The Railway Interrelations of the United States and Canada* (Toronto, 1937), and H. A. Innis (ed.) *Labour in Canadian American Relations* (Toronto, 1937).

Finally, a few works should be noted which do not fall easily into any of the above categories. Included here might be the examinations of two other staple industries of Canada, wheat and mining, which have hardly received their just due. For the wheat trade there are two studies of importance: G. E. Britnell, *The Wheat Economy* (Toronto, 1939), and Vernon C. Fowke, *Canadian Agricultural Policy: The Historical Pattern* (Toronto, 1946). There is also a biography of the family which developed Marquis wheat in Elsie M. Pomeroy's *William Saunders and his Five Sons* (Toronto, 1956). For agricultural history Robert L. Jones's *History of Agriculture in Ontario 1613-1880* (Toronto, 1946), and William G. Phillips *The Agricultural Implement Industry in Canada: A Study of Competition* (Toronto, 1956) should be noted.

In the field of mining G. B. Longworth has written *Out of the Earth: The Mineral Industry in Canada* (Toronto, 1954) and Donat M. Le Bourdais *Metals and Man; the Story of Canadian Mining* (Toronto, 1957). Le Bourdais—who has produced several works in this field—has also written the story of nickel in *Sudbury Basin: The Story of Nickel* (Toronto, 1953), a topic also examined by O. W. Main in *The Canadian Nickel Industry* (Toronto, 1955). There is also an older short history of petroleum: Victor Ross, *Petroleum in Canada* (Toronto, 1917). There is virtually nothing on individual mining corporations. Leslie Roberts' *Noranda* (Toronto, 1956) is an exception. It may be taken as an example of one of the better type of company histories which have been written by professional writers in recent years. The most prolific exponent of this field is Merrill Denison, whom we have already mentioned in connection with the history of the Bank of Montreal. In recent years he has also written: *Harvest Triumphant: The Story of Massey Harris* (Toronto, 1948); and *The Barley and the Stream, the Story of Molson's Brewery* (Toronto, 1955). Few professional historians flourishing today have written in the field of corporation history, but William Kilbourn is an exception; his *The Elements Combined* (Toronto, 1960) a history of the Steel Company of Canada, is a model of both scholarly research and lucid style.

Mention must also be made of the various publicly-owned corporations that have played such an important role in Canadian development. On the federal level there is a new book on the corporations generally, Charles A. Ashley and R. G. H. Smalls, *Canadian Crown Corporations* (Toronto, 1965); but there is very little on the individual companies, though Ashley has also written *The First Twenty-Five Years* (Toronto, 1963), the story of the Trans-Canada Airways, now Air Canada. There is also a biography of the man who

was responsible for the creation of so many of these corporations by Leslie Roberts: *C D., The Life and Times of Clarence Decatur Howe* (Toronto, 1957). In the provincial field the Ontario Hydro has been the subject of a vast amount of discussion, particularly at the time when it was first created because of the efforts of Sir Adam Beck. The most recent history is Merrill Denison, *The People's Power; the History of the Ontario Hydro* (Toronto, 1960). Among the more frequently seen of the earlier works are: R. P. Bolton, *An Expensive Experiment* (New York, 1913); E. B. Biggar, *Hydro-Electric Development in Ontario* (Toronto, 1920); James Mavor, *Niagara in Politics* (New York, 1925); and *The Hydro-Electric Power Commission of Ontario, Its Origins Administration & Achievements*, (Toronto, 1928). In addition, W. R. Plewman has written a biography of Sir Adam in *Adam Beck and The Ontario Hydro* (Toronto, 1947), and a retired official, Edward M. Ashworth, has left his reminiscences in *Toronto Hydro Recollections* (Toronto, 1955). The development of hydroelectric power in Quebec, which has followed quite a different course, has been written up by John H. Dales in *Hydroelectricity and Industrial Development: Quebec 1898-1940* (Cambridge, Mass., 1957)

#### IV

As one can see, Canadian business history is still in its infancy even if its origins reach back quite far into the past. It is not yet possible to effect a separation of business history from economic history because so much remains to be done in both fields. The day when sufficient information is available so that business history can be studied as part of the entrepreneurial process is far in the future

If this is the present state of business history, what is the future of the field in Canada? Professor Aitken's list of unexplored aspects of Canadian economic history provides an outline of how much is waiting to be done; certainly any graduate student looking for a topic will have a wide area of selection. In addition, although there is a scarcity of documentary sources, those collections that exist have hardly been fully examined. The William Hamilton Merritt Papers in the Ontario Archives and the Public Archives of Canada are a typical example. Merritt was one of our most important early entrepreneurs, promoter of both canal building and reciprocity as well as an influential member of Parliament for three decades before his death in 1862. Yet, in spite of the availability of both his papers and those of many of his contemporaries, the only biography of him is that prepared by his son in 1875.<sup>41</sup>

Thus both topics and documents await examination, but it remains problematical how many Canadian historians will turn their attention to business history in the near future. Political and constitutional problems remain as

<sup>41</sup>Merritt, J. P. *Biography of The Hon W. H. Merritt, M.P.* (St Catharines, 1875).

popular as ever, and there is no shortage of figures in those fields for whom it would be relatively easy to prepare a biography. Biculturalism and separatist problems from Quebec are also continuing sources for argument. Further, even with the growth of graduate schools, there is no evidence that there will be a surfeit of competent Canadian historians in the next few years. In view of these circumstances can we expect any breakthrough in business history in Canada in the near future? There are two possibilities that appear to hold particular promise.

The first of these lies in the field of biography. Thanks to the generous bequest of the late James Nicholson of Toronto, ample funds are available for the publication of a multi-volume *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* which will appear in both English and French under the auspices of the universities of Toronto and Laval.<sup>42</sup> The very compilation of this dictionary itself is bound to result in a vast increase in our knowledge of the careers of all the major Canadian entrepreneurs; but an allied project promises even more salutary results. This is a plan for a series of biographies of leading Canadian figures of secondary rank, which will be prepared by the same authors who write articles on the same individuals in the *Dictionary*. The selection will include business figures, and Alan Wilson of Trent University, one of the editors of the series, is particularly interested in this field; he himself has written an excellent biography of John Northway of Toronto, a leading clothing and general merchant who died in 1926.<sup>43</sup> It can be further hoped that these biographies will stimulate interest in the corporations controlled by the individuals selected and the field of business history expanded accordingly.

The second possibility for the expansion of business history in the near future lies in the suggestion of Professor Careless that we examine the role of the metropolis in order to arrive at a better understanding of our separate development. With the continuing search for a Canadian identity it is probable that more emphasis will be placed on this theme in the years to come, and an understanding of the role of the metropolis will certainly add greatly to our knowledge of Canadian business history. The field is a fascinating one that has been virtually unexplored. It may seem that Toronto and Montreal would dominate such an investigation, but no real attempt has yet been made to understand the significance of such centres as Halifax, Winnipeg, or Vancouver, let alone more recent rivals such as Edmonton. Their interaction with each other

<sup>42</sup>The first volume containing biographies of those figures who died from 1000 to 1700 appeared in 1966 under the editorship of the late George W. Brown.

<sup>43</sup>Wilson, G. Alan, *John Northway, a Blue Serge Canadian* (Toronto, 1965). Wilson's ideas on the need for biographies of secondary Canadian figures may be found in "Forgotten Men of Canadian History," *Canadian Historical Association Report*, 1965, pp. 71-86. An interesting collection of biographies of Canadian entrepreneurs is Peter C. Newman, *Flame of Power* (Toronto, 1959).



is not understood, nor their relations with contiguous metropolitan areas south of the border.

In conclusion I would like to suggest the type of materials that are available for one such study, using Toronto as an example. In spite of the importance of the city there is no authoritative history of Toronto, let alone a history of the business establishment; the same may be said for Montreal.<sup>44</sup> Beginning with the secondary sources, we have a considerable amount of work on Toronto. The late Percy J. Robinson wrote a *History of Toronto under the French Régime* (Toronto, 1933), which provides much information about the French and Indian trade from 1615 to 1793. For the period from the founding of the modern metropolis by Governor Simcoe in 1793 until its incorporation as a city in 1834, Edith G. Firth of the Toronto Public Libraries has prepared two volumes of documents with excellent introductions and sections on commerce.<sup>45</sup> For the last years of the nineteenth century D. C. Masters' *The Rise of Toronto 1850-1890* (Toronto, 1947) provides a survey of the city's growth. This work is particularly important because Masters suggests the application of the metropolitan thesis of Norman S. B. Gras as a yardstick in studying Canadian metropolitan development. Gras, an early graduate of this university who did most of his work at the Harvard Business School, believed that towns pass through certain definite stages in their growth to metropolitan status; he based this argument on the study of London, England, and brought it forward in his *Introduction to Economic History* (New York, 1922).

With regard to what might be called semi-secondary material, the most scholarly picture of the early city was provided by Canon Henry Scadding in his *Toronto of Old*; a sort of historical guide book, based on both extensive research and personal reminiscences, which appeared in 1873 and has been a mine of all later writers on early Toronto. There is also an authorless *History of Toronto and the County of York*, dating from 1885, which includes short histories of every major business then existing in the city. The information it contains, some of it going back a half a century, is quite accurate to the extent that it can be checked against other sources. Finally the six volume *Landmarks of Toronto*, published by John Ross Robertson of the *Toronto Telegram* in 1894-1914, is another, though less accurate, source of information. Beyond these printed works, however, there are the extensive manuscript collections of the Ontario Archives, the City Archives, the Library of the University of Toronto, and, above all, the Toronto Public Libraries.

<sup>44</sup>The most extensive history of Toronto is Jesse E. Middleton *The Municipality of Toronto, A History* (3 vols. Toronto, 1923). The most enjoyable history of Montreal is Stephen Leacock, *Montreal Seaport and City* (Toronto, 1948). Professor Gerald Tulchinsky of Queen's is now examining the entrepreneurial development of Montreal in the 1850's.

<sup>45</sup>Firth, Edith G., *The Town of York*; Vol. I, 1793-1815 (Toronto, 1962) and Vol. II, 1815-1834 (Toronto, 1966).

Using these data a historian could prepare a commercial history of Toronto which might well answer many important questions; how the city became independent of Montreal, why it rose to dominate Ontario, what its trade connections were with both the St. Lawrence cities and with New York State, how British policies, or later those of Ottawa, channeled its growth, and to what extent it dominates Canadian commerce and finance today.

In summary, then, Canadian business history is still an undeveloped field. In the past, business historians have tended to concentrate their researches on a few staple industries, and on an examination of the development of communications. Many of their theories will have to be re-examined, and almost all aspects of Canadian business history require further investigation. In our search for a national identity, however, economic development holds out interesting possibilities. By exploring new paths, particularly along the lines of the metropolitan thesis suggested by Careless, we may arrive at a different economic interpretation for the evolution of the nation; one that will possibly be less nationalistic, but more realistic, than that of the Laurentian school.