

broad subject into which little previous research had been done and, in spite of certain gaps, produced an excellent overview of early Highland emigration to British North America.

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**The Canadian Prairie West and the Ranching Frontier, 1874-1924.** DAVID H. BREEN. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983. 302 p. ISBN 0-8020-5548-6. \$28.95.

This book makes an important contribution to historical analysis of Western development and Canadian resource use as a whole. David Breen deals initially with the era of the open range (1874-1896), moves on into the period of mass immigration and western settlement (1896-1911), and ends with a discussion of pressure politics by cattlemen's groups in the period of drought up to the early 1920s when farmers began to abandon the semi-arid southwestern lands. Within this context, he weaves the story of the economic, social, and political development of prairie ranching around the frontier community's ability to influence federal policies over grazing resources which could affect the ranchers' ability to reach international markets.

Breen contends that the pioneers of Western Canadian ranching after 1874 were British and Eastern Canadian men, many with considerable capital, who formed a unique and somewhat elitist group which was hostile both to the American concept of the "open range" and to incursions by farmers into their domain. The group used its connections with John A. Macdonald's Tories to lobby successfully for a system of grazing leases and for control over water rights in the semi-arid areas of southern Alberta and southwest Saskatchewan, which effectively shut out farm interests from large tracts of land. The cattlemen were supported by federal officials like William Pearce who believed that the semi-arid lands were unsuitable for other agricultural purposes. They attempted to make a permanent base for the ranching industry through regulations based on more rational planning of land classification and utilization.

The close relationship between ranchers and government officials came under increasing attack during the late 1890s. Large-scale migration into the West brought pressure to open up the grazing leases, especially as dry land farming techniques developed. Farm interests, supported by Frank Oliver, Liberal M.P. for Alberta, branded the old system monopolistic and designed to serve a single interest. The policy ideal became promotion of the "diversified farm"; scientific arguments about the unsuitability of the southwest for farming were ignored. The Laurier Government slowly retreated from the older policy of closed leases and, after Oliver became Minister of the Interior in 1905, implemented a wholesale alienation of the water reservations. Breen sees this period as the high tide of settlement incursions into the ranching domain and the catalyst for speeding up the shift to smaller, more economically feasible units. Oliver's policies at Interior severely disrupted the Western cattle industry and made clear to the ranchers that they had to come to terms with larger regional political interests. They attempted to do so through their producer organizations and, particularly in Alberta, through participation in the

politics of the new province. When drought in the period after 1911 blunted farm settlement, the Borden Government finally restored a reasonable system of grazing leases to shore-up the industry and lead it to new prosperity.

Breen's book can be faulted for the inordinate amount of space he devotes to proving the unique British and Canadian attributes of the ranching community. This perhaps results from the length of time it took to convert his doctoral thesis into a book. The hypothesis was new and startling a decade ago, but is less so today. If this portion had been trimmed, more space could have been devoted to examining the question of markets and political gamesmanship. That sort of analysis would perhaps have balanced nicely with the detailed look at resource policies underlying the ranching industry and made the study more complete. These criticisms, however, do not detract from the importance of the book. Breen's extensive research draws on prime ministerial records, federal and provincial government records, manuscript sources for public officials like William Pearce, and ranchers like A.E. Cross, and on the records of producer organizations such as the Western Stock Growers Association. For those interested in natural resource studies, Breen has shown how these various sources can be tapped to gain insight into individuals like Frank Oliver whose importance has been somewhat overlooked because of the lack of personal papers. *The Canadian Prairie West and the Ranching Frontier, 1874-1924* inserts a large and important piece in the puzzle of Western development before 1930.

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**"No Fault of Their Own," Unemployment and the Canadian Welfare State, 1914-1941.** JAMES STRUTHERS. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983. x, 268 p. ISBN 0-8020-6502-3 \$12.50 pa.

*"No Fault of Their Own"* by James Struthers examines the evolution of public responsibility for the unemployed in Canada from local governments and private charities before World War I to the federal government through creation of the unemployment insurance scheme in 1940. Over the last ten years, historians have studied aspects of unemployment and poverty in different Canadian municipalities. Recent work has examined the Canadian government's attempts to measure the extent of unemployment during the interwar years. *"No Fault of Their Own"* is the first to widen that perspective by focusing on the development of federal government policy toward unemployment, especially the long bouts of joblessness prevalent during periods of severe recession.

Struthers argues that the desire to reinforce the work ethic more than humanitarian notions to relieve suffering governed the formation of federal social welfare measures. He maintains that Canadian attitudes toward unemployment and destitution derived from the British poor law principle of "less eligibility." According to this principle, the able-bodied unemployed were only entitled to a paltry amount of relief dispensed by local authorities to ensure that their condition would be less attractive than that of the lowest paid unskilled labourer. In other words, the wage from any work no matter how minimal should be preferable to a miserable life on relief. These attitudes were most evident in Canada during the long and heated