

Eastern Time. Of course, other time zones receive their daily beep at other times, and brave Newfoundland gets its one half hour earlier.

While catering to Canadians' obsession with time, the NRC is also the major agent and catalyst of scientific research in the country. Begun in 1916 as an advisory council on industrial research, it first concerned itself with conservation and technology in wartime. As Eggleston notes, Canadians undertook very little pure research at that time: "Canada was probably the only country in the world (with industrial pretensions) lacking a single university where a student might enroll in a full graduate course in any branch of science."

The NRC was able to initiate and stimulate some research, notably in the briquetting of Saskatchewan lignite coal, concrete deterioration and wheat rust, but it was always strapped for funds. The drive of its Director in the 20s and 30s, Dr. Henry Marshall Tory, improved the NRC's financial situation, and led to the building of a "temple of science" on Sussex Drive in Ottawa.

The Council came into its own in World War II (see also Eggleston's 1950 book, *Scientists at War.*) Banting's work on aviation medicine; developments in radar, aircraft de-icing, wind tunnels, snow physics, nuclear medicine and fission power, and the engineering of the magnificent and lamented Orenda engine, all combined to give the NRC a solid reputation for creative genius.

Eggleston is an Ottawa journalist and has been intimate with many of the leaders of the NRC, so that the book, while by no means an official history, is a little too laudatory. It is a good source book as far as it goes, but some quotations lack footnotes, and it is irritating when the author speaks of "the unexpected gift of a large sum of private money" in 1940, but doesn't go into details, let alone indicate whether the donor wished to remain anonymous.

A more critical approach to the whole problem of industrial Research and Development in this country would have been eminently suitable. Scientists cannot bite the hand that feeds them, but it is obvious that the disgraceful state of scientific research in the country can be blamed directly on the national and provincial governments, who have neither encouraged (nor initiated) a higher level of Research & Development. We cannot rely only on the NRC and the newer councils to do all our research. The NRC, while valuable, and staffed by some brilliant people, was and is simply not an adequate response to scientific and industrial growth and change.

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Le Canada et les Suisses, 1604-1974. EMIL HENRI BOVAY. Fribourg, Suisse: Éditions universitaires, © 1976. xii, 334 p. ill. ISBN 2 8271 0113 0 (Études et Recherches d'histoire contemporaine).

Emil Henri Bovay spent two years in Canada, 1967 to 1969, as Swiss vice-consul at Toronto. In this book, he attempts to fill a lacuna which he perceived during his stay: the lack of any study of Swiss-Canadian relations. Bovay's enthusiasm is laudable, as is his ground work in locating sources both in Canada and Switzerland. His volume certainly deserves attention as a guide to Swiss sources relevant to Canadian history. One must be impressed as well by the technical quality of the book's production and particularly by the high calibre of its reproductions, some of which, coming from Swiss sources, will be new to Canadian eyes.

Despite the assiduous search for material carried out by its author and the high technical qualities of its production, as ethnic history this work is disappointing. It is discursive and anecdotal rather than analytical, presenting a parade of individuals and organizations linked by little more than the fact that they are Swiss. There is little synthesis. Early chapters constitute brief biographical sketches with some no more than two pages in length. Individuals are examined not only in isolation from each other, but from their Swiss heritage. There is no attempt to examine the Swiss context from which they came and hence no study of the process of acculturation.

The latter half of the book moves away from biography to some basic demographic work and institutional studies. There are chapters on Swiss clubs in Canada, consular and diplomatic relations, economic interchange and cultural contacts. Again, despite the promise of their subject matter, these chapters are disappointing recitations of names and dates. Chapters on demography provide only basic data on numbers and geographic location of the Swiss-born. It is indicative of the failings of this book that it lacks a general conclusion.

The study of a small and diverse group like the Swiss within the fabric of the Canadian nation would undoubtedly present problems of synthesis and continuity for the most skilled of researchers. The scattered nature and multiplicity of sources further complicates the problem. Still, such a study also offers great possibilities for the examination of the role of minorities within the Canadian community and of the adaptation of the citizens of a small and highly specialized nation to life in a vast and resource-based country like Canada.

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The Halifax Explosion December 6, 1917. Compiled and edited by GRAHAM METSON. Toronto: McGraw Hill Ryerson, 1978. 174 p. ill. ISBN 0 07 082797 2 bd. \$14.95; ISBN 0 07 082798 2 pa. \$8.95.

Graham Metson has put together an engrossing and readable account of probably the greatest disaster ever to strike Canada. His book grew out of an exhibit of photographs and documents prepared to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the tragedy. A substantial portion is given over to Archibald MacMechan's complete text of "The Halifax Disaster" which has a sharp and authoritative text and, though moving in places, does not sink into maudlin commentary. MacMechan was the Provincial Recorder of the event and as director of the record office set up to chronicle the disaster he was able to make good use of the official records.

Excellent photographs, both locally based and from the remarkable James Collection at the City of Toronto Archives, enhance the narrative. Oddly, contemporary documents reproduced in some quantity by Metson do not have quite the attraction of MacMechan's gripping account, even though they include eye witness observations, relief work telegrams, medical reports and newspaper columns. The archivist too might wish for further explanation of the work of MacMechan, more notes on the official records, the nature of the James connection for instance or greater detail on people and episodes entwined in the documents. Nevertheless, this is an appealing coverage of a disaster which so unappealingly scarred the psyche of one of Canada's major cities.

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