

**The People's Clearance: Highland Emigration to British North America, 1770-1815.** J.M. BUMSTED. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press; Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1982. xvii, 305 p. ISBN 0-8875-1270 \$25.00.

Most histories of British and Irish emigration to Canada have begun at the port of departure in the United Kingdom; little attention has been paid to the society which produced the emigrants. As a result the deep cultural and historical differences which characterize the various districts of Scotland, England, and Ireland have generally been ignored and their relevance to emigration and to settlement in Canada have been neglected. National surveys of emigration over long periods do not reveal the varied backgrounds and changing experiences of successive waves of emigrants.

In *The People's Clearance*, J.M. Bumsted set out to correct this deficiency by examining emigration from the Scottish Highlands to British North America between 1770 and 1815. Bumsted has gone back beyond Greenock and other ports of embarkation to explore the society which produced the emigrants as well as the nature and circumstances of their departure. His study begins with a brief review of the modernization of the Highland economy in the late eighteenth century; he argues that the Highlanders refused both to adapt to improved agriculture and to accept employment instead as labourers. Against the wishes of the landlords, the clansmen chose to emigrate in order to preserve traditional life in a new setting. While Bumsted's attention to specifically Highland emigration over a limited period provides a valuable insight into the movement, he offers no detailed exploration of the Scottish townships which experienced heavy emigration.

Bumsted's investigation of a regional group over a limited time reveals a major distinction between early emigration and the exodus of the nineteenth century. He makes use of Scottish estate papers, religious archives, and government records to document how landlords feared and opposed emigration. *The People's Clearance* proves beyond a shadow of doubt that the clansmen voluntarily emigrated between 1770 and 1815 and completely demolishes the popular myth of forced emigrations. The author is careful to point out that his conclusions apply only to the years before 1815; after that time a complete about-face in landlord attitudes towards emigration changed the character of the departures. This interpretation of the circumstances of early Highland emigration reveals the importance of understanding the European context of emigration and gives an indication of the wealth of material of Canadian interest available in European archives.

Unfortunately Bumsted does not use this rich resource to best advantage. Scottish estate papers offer the historian the possibility of analysing social and economic change at the local level: rent rolls, agricultural surveys, and correspondence provide excellent descriptions of individual Scottish communities. Bumsted might have used the estate records of Clanranald and MacLeod of Dunvegan to survey the course of economic and social development in Arasaig and in Skye before and during the emigration years. Instead, he has only used these collections for brief reviews of events leading up to the emigrations. Lacking a close analysis of selected communities, *The People's Clearance* relies on general surveys of the Highland economy and on the observations of contemporary observers to explain the causes of emigration from the Highlands. The result is a misreading of the economic factor behind the departures and a muddy presentation of the cultural motives for the movement.

Bumsted denies that the eviction of tenants in order to establish sheep farms contributed to Highland emigration before 1810 (p. 29), and he gives little attention to the economic pressures which threatened the tenants' position throughout his forty-year period. By contrast, this reviewer's work on Highland emigration to Glengarry County, Upper Canada, from 1770 to 1815, points to a definite relationship between sheep farming and emigration. The first clearances to make way for sheep farms occurred in Glengarry and Knoydart, Inverness-shire in the early 1780s; major emigrations followed over the next three decades. Large-scale sheep farming threatened the clansmen's prosperity in several ways. Southern graziers could offer double or quadruple rents — amounts which traditional tenant farmers found difficult to match. Sheep farms left the former tenants with less land to work and caused greater competition for the remaining mixed farms and lower profits for traditional agriculture. The future clearly threatened to bring more sheep farms, more evictions, and a diminishing share of the economic pie for the tenant farmer. The growing financial pressure on the clansmen, particularly from the spread of sheep farming across the Highlands, was one of the two major causes of emigration from Glengarry and Knoydart before 1815 and, I suspect, from other Highland districts as well. Bumsted's failure to emphasize this pressure and his denial of a causal relationship between sheep farming and emigration stems from his neglect of local case studies.

Similarly, detailed local studies would have provided a more convincing exposition of the cultural motives for Highland emigration. The book's treatment of emigration as an attempt to preserve a traditional way of life lacks definition. Bumsted's survey deals rather superficially with the emigrants themselves and focuses instead on landlords, social commentators, and organizers of the departures. A closer investigation of the emigrant communities would have revealed the tenants' fervent belief in their right to clan lands and their desire to live with Gaelic-speaking kin. These essential values of traditional life were threatened by the economic changes of the late nineteenth-century, and hence provided the other major motive for the clansmen's emigration.

While *The People's Clearance* suffers from the general nature of the author's inquiry, it also falls below scholarly expectations in several specific instances. Reference is made to a scandal in which Father Alexander Macdonell, later Bishop of Kingston, was involved in 1802-3; one account of the affair is quoted uncritically. Since Bumsted provides no analysis of the reputed scandal or its consequences, its inclusion seems intended to titillate rather than to inform. Secondly, the nineteen passenger lists which make up some 20 per cent of the book are imperfectly transcribed. For example Bumsted's list VII, naming emigrants on the *British Queen* in 1790, deviates in six cases from the original list at the Public Archives of Canada (RG4, Records of the Civil and Provincial Secretary, A1, vol. 48, pp. 15874-75). Archivists should therefore caution genealogists about these lists when recommending the volume.

*The People's Clearance* deserves to be read for its many perceptive observations on emigration from the Scottish Highlands. The book represents an early step in the reexamination of Highland emigration which is valuable more for its treatment of landlords and organizers than for its account of the emigrants. Bumsted took on a

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