

The Geography of Centralization

David Frank

Volume 20, Number 2, Autumn 1991

URI: https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/acad20_2re03

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

The Department of History of the University of New Brunswick

ISSN

0044-5851 (print)

1712-7432 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this document

Frank, D. (1991). The Geography of Centralization. *Acadiensis*, 20(2), 190–206.

the most innovative literature, within Canada and beyond, would suggest that it is time to step outside the modernization framework. The Maritime literature, alone, indicates that modernization theory may not be applicable to a region where it was never simply a matter of a self-sufficient, independent, homogeneous, peasant society being transformed into a market-oriented, specialized, urban dominated, highly stratified, capitalist agricultural society. If rural history proves to be as fruitful and stimulating over the next five years as it has been in the past five years, we will see more innovative approaches and new topics being explored as we attempt to understand our rural past.

CATHARINE ANNE WILSON

The Geography of Centralization

FOR CANADIANS THERE has always been a kind of redemption in geography. As Carl Berger has observed, the early poets of the Dominion were often fearful of the themes that might divide Canadians and took inspiration instead from the surrounding physical geography. The tradition was carried on into the 20th century, not least among the artists who painted the Canadian landscape with little reference to its inhabitants. By the 1950s modernist poets were likely to draw striking contrasts, as Irving Layton did in his ironic "Colony to Nation": "A dull people,/but the rivers of this country/are wide and beautiful,/A dull people/enamoured of childish games,/but food is easily come by/ and plentiful".¹

Historians have also looked to the certainties of geography. Since the days of Harold Innis students have been boldly instructed in the natural origins of the Canadian state, best summarized in the most quoted sentence of *The Fur Trade in Canada*: "The present Dominion emerged not in spite of geography but because of it".² Few people were prepared to listen to heretics such as Frank Underhill, who not only claimed that, in the Canadian case, history and geography were often opposed to each other, but also warned that much of the nation-building rhetoric favoured by historians spoke for the narrow interests of a governing class and at the expense of the hinterlands and underclasses of Canadian history. Until recently, most historians distrusted the realities of class and region and scarcely recognized those of ethnicity and gender. It was believed that these sectional identities could play little part in the construction of a Canadian identity. At best they advanced local interests of little relevance to the future of

1 Carl Berger, "The True North Strong and Free", in Peter Russell, ed., *Nationalism in Canada* (Toronto, 1966), pp. 3-26; F.R. Scott and A.J.M. Smith, eds., *The Blasted Pine* (Toronto, 1967), p. 3.

2 Harold Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada* ([1930], Toronto, 1962), p. 393.

Canada; at worst they undermined the fragile loyalties which accounted for the survival of the Canadian state. The significance of class and regional loyalties did receive recognition in the work of some early professional historians, notably that of Arthur Lower and W. L. Morton, but it remained for Maurice Careless to explicitly endorse the themes of social and spatial differentiation as legitimate undertakings for historical study.³

Canadian geographers by and large have been less concerned with constructing justifications for the Canadian state. Although geography has often impressed Canadians as a form of environmental determinism, the assumption that geography simply summarizes a body of natural law concerning the physical environment is not widely shared within the field itself. Traditions of naturalism in geographic thought have been retreating before a more cultural and humanistic geography in which the landscape is seen as a social product. The emphasis is on the relationship between people and place, actors and settings. In studying this interaction between human activity and natural resources, geographers have highlighted the immense variety contained in the Canadian experience and historians have had much to learn from their work.⁴ Even while accepting the broad outlines of the staples thesis concerning early Canadian development, historical geographers such as Cole Harris have effectively pointed out the theory's flaws by identifying the categories not included in the approach. Meanwhile, for the more contemporary period, geographers have readily recognized the importance of metropolitan forces in shaping urban and regional systems in Canada.⁵ Indeed geographers today are increasingly reluctant to recognize the old assumption that history is about time and geography is about space. Not so, they protest, unless history is merely chronology and geography only description.⁶ All this has given us an especially vigorous school of historical geographers, who have often been the natural allies of social historians. Each group has insisted on broadening the scope of practical work in their field, and both have devoted

3 Carl Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History* (Toronto, 1986). See also Frank Underhill, *The Image of Confederation* (Toronto, 1964) and his "The Conception of a National Interest", *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, I (August 1935); and J.M.S. Careless, "'Limited Identities' in Canada", *Canadian Historical Review*, L, 1 (March 1969), pp. 1-10 and his recent lectures, *Frontier and Metropolis: Regions, Cities and Identities in Canada before 1914* (Toronto, 1989). For reflections on some of these problems, see W.L. Morton, "Some Thoughts on Understanding Canadian History", *Acadiensis*, II, 2 (Spring 1973), pp. 100-7.

4 Graeme Wynn, "Introduction", in Wynn, ed., *People, Places, Patterns, Processes: Geographical Perspectives on the Canadian Past* (Toronto, 1990), pp. 1-37.

5 See Cole Harris, "The Pattern of Early Canada", in Wynn, ed., *People, Places, Patterns, Processes*, pp. 358-73, and Donald Kerr, "Metropolitan Dominance in Canada", in John Warkentin, ed., *Canada: A Geographical Interpretation* (Toronto, 1968) and the more recent synthesis, L.D. McCann, ed., *Heartland and Hinterland: A Geography of Canada* (Scarborough, 1982).

6 Leonard Guelke, *Historical Understanding in Geography: An Idealist Approach* (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 5-7.

considerable attention to the material conditions of life among the population. It was no accident, for instance, that in the 1970s one of the first acceptable texts for social history courses was a work of historical geography.⁷

The preparation of a three-volume historical atlas has provided a fortunate point of intersection between history and geography. The latest instalment in this collaboration is Donald Kerr and Deryck Holdsworth, eds., *Historical Atlas of Canada, Volume III: Addressing the Twentieth Century* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1990). This is in many respects a worthy sequel to Volume I, which was so widely recognized for its success in combining rich empirical detail and brilliant visual appeal.⁸ The succeeding volumes have been awaited eagerly, and for the moment the appetite must be satisfied by the third volume in the trilogy. On the dust cover the green hills and forests of Volume I have given way to steel rails crossing a dark landscape into the evening sun; we accelerate in time and space along these gleaming tracks, past the curtained world of the 19th century and into the darkness of the 20th century. The verdant green cloth of Volume I is set aside; Volume III sits before us in a dark and sombre black.

This was a team effort at many levels. The editors had the assistance of a well-constructed editorial board composed of some of the most active practitioners in the fields of historical and urban geography (L. D. McCann, J. W. Simmons), economic history (Marvin McNinnis) and social history (Chad Gaffield, G. S. Kealey), each of whom also prepared individual plates. In turn, the project has depended on a large team of contributors and assistants who prepared the research for the 66 master plates. They have drawn on the rapidly growing body of new research for this period, much of it barely published; what is more, they have assembled a good deal of new information, in some cases pioneering revisions of previously published statistical data, and we are likely to continue seeing research notes and articles based on this work for several years.

From the beginning it is evident that this is not the kind of atlas we were accustomed to seeing in public schools a generation ago. The accepted scope of geographical information has expanded considerably in recent years, and atlases specifically have moved from the encyclopaedic to the thematic; the world of maps is no longer determined by geopolitical and physiographic concerns and it is common for atlases to contain much economic, cultural and social information. This intellectual current has coincided with the evolution of cartographic techniques which Yves Tessier has described as "multimédiatisation"; these innovations have helped to weaken the reductionist biases of mapmaking and to expand the interpretive and intellectual capacity of the form. Indeed, thanks to

7 R. Cole Harris and John Warkentin, *Canada Before Confederation: A Study in Historical Geography* (Toronto, 1974).

8 See, for instance, the review in the *Journal of Historical Geography*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (1989), pp. 325-6.

computer technology, he suggests, we should soon begin to see the next stage in the development of the atlas: interactivity.⁹

As before, the design and cartography are by Geoffrey Matthews, who again displays his technical skills and ingenuity. The design is often inventive, sometimes playful, always effective. Besides the multidimensional maps, bar graphs and pie charts, time-lines and production pillars, there are also take-away skyscrapers and sub-sectioned boxcars, not to mention the occasional (perhaps too occasional?) elements of documentary art such as photographs and paintings, posters and publicity. In addition there are incisive essays to introduce the sections and good bibliographies to back up each plate. Consider, for example, how well Plate 48 take us into the multiple experiences of life on the home front in the Second World War: the swift changes in structures of employment and investment, the convoys sailing from east coast ports, the daycare services for the children of women in war industries, the evacuations and internment camps for those considered a menace to the state. Or consider Plate 57 which so neatly presents the Canadian presence abroad around three themes: missionaries, diplomatic posts and bank branches. In general, the *Atlas* stands up extremely well beside other recent national historical atlases. Although they feature similar production values, the single-volume American and Australian counterparts, for instance, are much less ambitious in scope and contents.¹⁰

Even with such a skilful production team, there are imperfections. All of the plates require a two-page spread and the central gutter in a bound volume is always a problem for cartographers — the thin lines tracing corporate connections or the clever effect of steel rails, for instance, are damaged in Plate 6 — but none of the alternatives (such as folios or foldouts) seems appropriate for a book of this kind. Also, in more than a few places the detail is so intense that one wishes for magnification; this reader required in-house assistance from a grade four student to distinguish the red and purple dots identifying the origins of NHL players in Plate 35. The range of colour is pleasing, but some of the soft pastels show a postmodernist brush whose shades do not reproduce well at the xerox machine. Which brings us to a last observation: this volume belongs on generous study tables, possibly coffee tables, but it is too bulky for airplane seats, too big for bus stations — and awkward to use in the classroom. Indeed it is not clear how these splendid graphics can have much visual impact in a class of more than a dozen students. This is to beg questions which are better addressed to marketing departments: will there be a set of paperback editions, along the lines of the Penguin pocket atlases? can a streamlined school edition be anticipated? will

9 Yves Tessier, "Tendances récentes dans la production des atlas", *Cahiers de géographie du Québec*, vol. 33, no. 88 (avril 1989), pp. 73-88.

10 See Wilbur E. Garrett, ed., *Historical Atlas of the United States* (National Geographic Society, 1988) and J.C.R. Camm and John McQuilton, eds., *Australians: A Historical Atlas* (Broadway, New South Wales, 1988).

there be a folio edition with removable sheets? what about slides and overheads and wallmaps for class use? or video and computer formats? It is disturbing to be reminded of the difficult struggle for survival which has overtaken significant public undertakings such as the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* and the *Atlas* in recent years; the continuation of these projects is a testament to the persistence and determination of their sponsors and staff. We are told often enough these days that wide popular dissemination is one of the passwords which will unlock government funding for scholarly work in the 1990s. Who better to lead the breakthrough than a major work of public scholarship like this, presented in an appealing and effective visual style?

The earlier volume has been aptly described as a cartographic essay and this is very much the overall effect of the *Atlas*. There is a story, often a complex one, in each of the 66 plates; they invite us not only to consider the broad picture but also to enter into specific local experiences. Each of the busy pages has its rewards for casual inspection or close contemplation. The most sustained section of the *Atlas* is undoubtedly the series of plates contained in Part One (Plates 5-39) under the title "The Great Transformation, 1891-1929". These images guide us through an identifiable chapter marked by a geography of expansionism and centralization. A reasonably detailed historical consensus has emerged concerning this period down to the Great Depression. As early as 1952 the economic historian Vernon Fowke had distinguished between the era of the Old National Policy prior to the 1930s and the New National Policy which followed, and the *Atlas* implicitly accepts this framework.¹¹ The treatment of the 1930s is highly effective, but as a whole Part Two (Plates 40-66), "Crisis and Response, 1929-1961", suffers from a less certain focus on the ambiguous consequences of an age of rapid material growth. The ending in 1961 is abrupt, and it introduces a kind of discontinuity which was probably unavoidable in a project edging so closely into the contemporary period.

We begin then in 1891. This was the year of *Canada and the Canadian Question*, Goldwin Smith's classic repudiation of Canadian history in which he argued that the forces of geography must ultimately overwhelm those of history and lead to the disappearance of the country. It was also, by way of rebuttal, the year of John A. Macdonald's last hurrah — his successful final campaign in defence of the British Empire and the National Policy. Moreover, the decade has been accepted as a take-off period in Canadian economic history, the transitional decade which introduced the new staples and new immigration of the 20th century; from labour and social historians we have also learned to see the 1890s as the beginning of Canada's second industrial revolution, with its emphasis on mass production and corporate concentration. From a regional perspective, the

11 V.C. Fowke, "The National Policy — Old and New", in W.T. Easterbrook and M.H. Watkins, eds., *Approaches to Canadian Economic History* (Toronto, 1967), pp. 237-58.

1890s marked a new stage in the process of Canadianization, when technologies of integration such as the railways enabled the reconstructed empire of the St. Lawrence to extend its hegemony over the Dominion by developing national markets in goods, labour and capital.

The decades which followed substantially restructured the Canadian experience and the *Atlas* is at its best in depicting this process. The first four plates provide an overview of Canada, 1891-1961, focusing in turn on land use, boundaries, population and economic growth. The marginalization of native people and the eclipse of the older staple trades are effectively shown; both had held centre stage in Volume I. The expansion of territory and growth of population are conveyed in dramatic terms. But what stands out above all in these introductory plates is the emergence of that well-integrated parallelogram of intensive urbanization and industrialization bounded on the west by Windsor and Owen Sound and on the east by Sherbrooke and Quebec City. The description of economic growth in Plate 4 shows that even by the end of the 19th century the new industrial economy occupied a clearly differentiated spatial territory.

The intensity of the forces of centralization is conveyed again and again in the following plates. In Plate 9 we encounter the exodus of capital from the Maritimes under the aegis of the Bank of Nova Scotia (general manager's office: Toronto), a process originally documented in *Acadiensis* some years ago. Similarly, in Plate 24 Larry McCann reports the results of his study on the extension of branch businesses into the Maritimes, again work reported at length in this journal. Plate 27 draws on regional migration studies to show us the movements of people who were drawn out of the underdeveloping sectors of the region and towards the centre and the west, as well as to New England; even as a population of barely five million people added three million immigrants, there was internal movement within the Dominion and massive outmigration to the United States.¹² Meanwhile in Plate 15 we have witnessed the awesome architectural changes occurring on a single city block where the administrative revolution took physical shape in the skyscrapers rising at the heart of the Canadian empire on King Street in downtown Toronto. In numerous other plates along the way we are repeatedly shown the dynamism of resource-based economic growth on the Laurentian Shield and the vigour of community development in the West. And Plate 52 shows us the metropolitanization of the retail trades, as major players from the centre such as Eaton's and Woolworth's entered the hinterlands.

Only a handful of plates are devoted specifically to the Atlantic Region, but these summarize a wealth of information. Plate 23, by Eric Sager (with an assist

12 James D. Frost, "The 'Nationalization' of the Bank of Nova Scotia, 1880-1910", *Acadiensis*, XII, 1 (Autumn 1982), pp. 3-38; L.D. McCann, "Metropolitanism and Branch Businesses in the Maritimes, 1881-1931", *Acadiensis*, XIII, 1 (Autumn 1983), pp. 112-25; Patricia A. Thornton, "The Problem of Out-Migration from Atlantic Canada, 1871-1921: A New Look", *Acadiensis*, XV, 1 (Autumn 1985), pp. 3-34.

from John Mannion), portrays the marine economy of the region, in this case wisely extended to include not only Newfoundland but also the Gaspé, in recognition of a regional economy based not on territorial boundaries but on a shared maritime orientation. Measured by the tonnage of boats and vessels, the capital of the northeasterly Gulf of St. Lawrence region appears to be Caraquet; Lunenburg occupies the principal position on the south shore; but the Canadian fleets themselves are greatly outweighed by those in Newfoundland. The paradoxes of progress are certainly evident in this portrait: in Newfoundland salt cod exports rise in the 20th century even as employment falls by 25 per cent. A vision of relative self-sufficiency in Point Lance can be compared with what follows in the industrial parts of the region, but there is nothing romantic about the marine economy portrayed here. The returns of the seal hunt are measured alongside the human disasters on the ice. And the Fishermen's Protective Union, which challenged the fish merchants and asserted political power in St. John's, also receives recognition for its attempts to reform and regulate the industry.

In Plate 24, L. D. McCann examines the industrialization of the Maritimes, highlighting several features of the process which have been documented by regional scholars over the last 20 years. Separate elements touch on several themes, including the transition from lumber mills to pulp and paper in the New Brunswick woods and the rise of the metal trades and coal and steel complexes in Pictou County and Cape Breton. The severe shrinkage in regional manufacturing investment and employment between 1910 and 1930 presents a sharp contrast. The outreach of the metropolis, first from Montreal and then from Toronto, is shown in the spread of branch businesses in the Maritimes. In Plate 25, McCann provides a closer glimpse of changes in Halifax, the great "metropole manqué" which initially appeared to be so well-situated to take advantage of the intersection of marine and continental economies. The causes of the failure and decline portrayed in these plates are the subject of a large literature which cannot be adequately depicted here, but the *Atlas* can obviously serve as an introduction to a major set of historical questions¹³. Unfortunately one of the unsigned introductory essays for this section makes a dubious claim that "By and large the Maritimes missed out on the Great Transformation" (p. 32). This is unduly dismissive and misses one of the main themes in the account of industrialization contained in the plates: judged on its own terms, the industrialization of the Maritimes was a respectable achievement. But the regional achievement was almost immediately overwhelmed by the greater intensity and superior pace of industrialization

13 For brief introductions to this literature, see S.A. Saunders, *The Economic History of the Maritime Provinces* ([1939], Fredericton, 1983) and David Frank, ed., *Industrialization and Underdevelopment in the Maritimes, 1880-1930* (Toronto, 1985), which reproduces three influential studies from *Acadiensis*. The most succinct account is to be found in the relevant chapters of John Reid, *Six Crucial Decades: Times of Change in the Maritimes* (Halifax, 1987).

elsewhere in Canada. The comparison is apparent when we turn back to Plate 4: by the standards of economic growth shown there, the Maritime Provinces boasted five centres of substantial size, and by the measure of manufacturing value added, Saint John was larger than all but four or five of the cities in Central Canada. But there were only two centres the size of Saint John and a small handful of lesser industrial towns. The disjuncture of the two landscapes suggests that even as the Maritimes marched proudly into the age of industry, the industrialization of the region was already doomed. Within the political economy of Confederation, there would be no separate Maritime road to industrial success; the forces of concentration and centralization would soon relegate the regional economy to a subordinate place in the Canadian parade.

Apart from these three plates in Part One, there are no other pages devoted entirely to the Atlantic Region. But students of the region should not pass too quickly through the remaining pages of the *Atlas*, for there is still a great deal more to be learned concerning Atlantic Canada and, especially, how local developments are related to national developments. To take one instance, Plate 19 ("The Grain-Handling System") documents the staple export trade in grain and appears to confirm the Maritime Rights critique of Canadian transportation policy, namely the neglect of Maritime ports in favour of Montreal and Portland, Maine. But a closer look shows a more complex picture. Saint John was handling 10.4 million bushels per year at the end of the 1920s and Halifax 1.3 million, while their traditional rival, Portland, Maine, the object of so much vitriolic regional rhetoric, accounted for only 3.1 million bushels, hardly enough to satisfy the Maritime appetite for participation in the National Policy. It is more important to note that Philadelphia was handling ten times more Canadian exports than Saint John, and that the position of Montreal itself was hardly predominant since the majority of the eastbound export trade went through American ports.

This kind of observation raises the important question of the changing relationship of the Canadian landscape to the rest of the North American continent, a theme which assumes increasing significance as we advance further into the 20th century. In this respect the national boundaries imposed by the scope of the atlas have partly limited the treatment of some themes. The discussion of migration patterns in Plate 27, for instance, could have more fully reported the mass movements of population, permanent and cyclical, out of Atlantic Canada and French Canada into the northeast United States. Historians of labour and migration have been especially insightful in pointing out how the map of working class life in the industrializing period transcended national boundaries. As David Montgomery has recently shown, the emergence of an industrial core in the interior of North America straddled the international boundary and drew on rural peripheries across the continent.¹⁴

14 See David Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 70-1. For a

A significant amount of information concerning the Atlantic Region is also contained in other thematic plates. For instance, one part of Plate 26 (“The Great War”) closely documents the fate of the members of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment who were recruited from the neighbourhoods of St. John’s. Then in Plate 35 we can learn that Maritime teams played for the Stanley Cup four times prior to 1927 (with a 0-4 record), but never again after the sport was restructured around the National Hockey League; recruitment of players also bypassed the region, although we can detect four individual Maritime players in the NHL in 1961. On the other hand, baseball is less effectively treated and blank spaces on the map leave the misleading impression that there was no minor league baseball in the region except for a brief moment in the late 1930s.¹⁵ Plate 36 highlights the impact of tourism, especially in the age of the motor-tourist; under the onslaught of tourism the Maritimes once more became an outpost of New England. Plate 42 shows that the vast majority of fees for hunting and fishing licences in New Brunswick were paid by New York money. Meanwhile, in Plate 37, Glace Bay is considered alongside Campbellford, Ontario as one of the examples of the company town; this plate tends to privilege the sources of dependency in the single-industry community, but the working class response, in which the coal miners were so prominent, is highlighted in the following pages (Plates 38, 39), which trace the evolution of labour organization and the size, duration and frequency of strikes. In the depiction of the Great Depression, the location of relief camps in the 1930s can be traced in the Maritimes, as elsewhere, in Plate 42, which also shows us that church relief committees on Prince Edward Island shipped five freightcars of fruit and vegetables (presumably potatoes) to Saskatchewan in 1931-32. Plate 44 highlights the parallels between colonization and cooperative movements in Quebec and the Maritimes, although the impact of colonization projects in New Brunswick, for instance, is overlooked. Plates 47 and 48 show the impact of the Second World War on the region, tracing both the military activity in the North Atlantic and the structures of support on the home front. This kind of summary does not exhaust the list of observations contained in the *Atlas*, but simply demonstrates some of the rewards to be found in a close reading of individual plates.

In discussing Volume I of the *Atlas*, Brook Taylor reported that the coverage of the Atlantic Region was fairly adequate: “Newfoundland did very well, the Maritimes less so”.¹⁶ The case of Volume III, however, is less satisfactory.

recent “Canadian” study, see Bruno Ramirez, *On the Move: French-Canadian and Italian Migrants in the North Atlantic Economy, 1860-1914* (Toronto, 1991).

- 15 See Colin Howell, “Baseball, Class and Community in the Maritime Provinces, 1870-1910”, *Histoire sociale/Social History*, XXII, No. 44 (novembre/November 1989), p. 285: by 1912 there was a thriving Maine-New Brunswick baseball league and several teams operating in the Nova Scotia colliery towns.
- 16 M. Brook Taylor, “Exercises in Orientation”, *Acadiensis*, XVIII, 2 (Spring 1989), p. 131.

Possibly there was a need for a plate exploring the loyalties of class and region in the 1920s, those classic regional responses embedded in the labour wars and regional protest of the decade. Although the rise of unions and the prominence of the coal strikes is well-recorded in other plates, the class conflict could have been more effectively described as a form of regional resistance to the National Policy. Moreover there is no specific mapping of the rise and fall of the Maritime Rights movement or even of one highly provocative cause of this form of protest, namely the steep decline in the political influence of the Maritimes due to a reduction in the number of the region's seats in the House of Commons. All this could have been combined with a parallel treatment of Western Canada in this decade, in this way underlining the emerging conditions of crisis in the National Policy in the decade before the Great Depression. We could have benefitted also from a similar treatment of the 1950s and 1960s, reminding us of the prevalence of the province-building quiet revolutions in most of the hinterlands, from Alberta and Saskatchewan to New Brunswick and Newfoundland, and the growing acceptance of the state's responsibility to manage, and possibly alleviate the impact of, regional disparities. Such background could have helped focus attention on the high level of regional expectations associated with John Diefenbaker's electoral victories in 1957 and 1958.¹⁷

Still, the editors faced some tough choices of balance and the Maritimes possibly did about as well as could be expected for the period covered in this volume; in contrast, Newfoundland did much worse. One concern is the ambiguous treatment of the Newfoundland border in Labrador. In Plate 2 the line is labelled as "unsurveyed", a widely accepted justification for drawing this boundary differently from other interprovincial boundaries.¹⁸ However, the text provides no discussion of the survey question; it is reported that the Privy Council in 1927 "ruled in favour of Newfoundland" but that Quebec subsequently "did not recognize that Canada confirmed the boundary in 1949". The idea that this remains a disputed boundary is implied by the concluding comment that "Elsewhere in this volume the boundary is shown by a dashed line". When we look ahead to some of the subsequent plates, Labrador is coloured in stripes, which again implies that the territory remains disputed. There is a consistency here as stripes are used for plates which cover the period prior to 1927 and the dotted line for

17 For the 1920s and the 1950s see the chapters by David Frank and Margaret Conrad respectively in E.R. Forbes and D.A. Muise, eds., *A History of the Atlantic Provinces in Confederation* (forthcoming).

18 The *National Atlas of Canada* states unambiguously that Newfoundland entered Confederation in 1949 "with the boundaries as delimited in 1927"; the plate shows the border as an unsurveyed line and this is clearly identified as such in the accompanying key: *National Atlas of Canada, Fifth Edition* (Ottawa, 1985), Plate 13.5. See also Norman Nicholson, *The Boundaries of Canada, Its Provinces and Territories* (Ottawa, 1954), pp. 51-2 and his *The Boundaries of the Canadian Confederation* (Toronto, 1979), pp. 78-84.

the post-1927 boundary. Unfortunately, the intentions of the *Atlas* are not made clear and the apparent ambiguity about the status of the border has the potential to raise concerns among a public unaccustomed to cartographic conventions.¹⁹ This was an issue which the *Atlas* did not need to evade, and it could have been, instead, an opportunity to describe more fully the significance of boundary lines in the process of state formation or even to comment on the role of geographers in constructing notions of territory.²⁰ Parenthetically, it should be noted that in another section Plate 2 shows a more creative approach to the problem of territory. Although native people generally do not appear prominently in this volume, there is a good insight into alternative constructions of territory in the interior of British Columbia. Two views of the land are presented and it is observed that “the territorial laws and management systems of native peoples were largely ignored by the demands of resource capital and homesteaders”.²¹

There is a second question concerning Newfoundland in the *Atlas*. There is no explicit statement about the treatment of territories which were not part of Confederation throughout the period covered by the *Atlas*. This is a question for all historians of Canada, and Peter Waite has stated the case for including Newfoundland in all periods of Canadian history with his customary generosity: “Let us take the big view, not the little one”.²² That was certainly the assumption in Volume I of the *Atlas*, where the entire Atlantic Region stood in the foreground of the story. But in some parts of Volume III it is as if *Terra Nova* in the 20th century had reverted to the status of a *terra incognita*. The 1948 referendum results are shown usefully in Plate 2, but there is no consistent presentation of what preceded Confederation in Newfoundland. The Fishermen’s Protective Union is there and so are outmigration and school enrollments and even branches of the Bank of Nova Scotia and pulp and paper mills at Corner Brook and Grand Falls. But absences are sometimes startling. Is it possible that nothing systematic is known of industrialization and economic growth in Newfoundland between the 1880s and 1940s? Plate 3 shows provincial indicators of economic growth for 1891, 1926 and 1961. But Newfoundland is omitted in the first two maps, and since Plate 24 was limited to the industrialization of the Maritimes, that of Newfoundland is not addressed elsewhere. As a result, David Alexander’s

- 19 See, for instance, the exchange in letters to *Canadian Geographic* (August 1982), p. 79 and (December 1982), p. 77, in which the editor attributed the dotted line convention to a continuing dispute over the boundary. My thanks to Jeff Webb for discussing this issue and providing copies of this exchange.
- 20 For some relevant comments, see Gilles Sénécal, “Les géographes et les idéologies territoriales au Canada: deux projets nationaux contradictoires”, *Cahiers de géographie du Québec*, vol. 33, no. 90 (décembre 1989), pp. 307-21.
- 21 See also Hugh Brody, *Maps and Dreams: Indians and the British Columbia Frontier* (Vancouver, 1981).
- 22 P.B. Waite, “Keeping Newfoundland and Other Issues: Perspectives on Political History”, in P.A. Buckner, ed., *Teaching Maritime Studies* (Fredericton, 1986), pp. 24-5.

thought-provoking work comparing Maritime and Newfoundland economic development cannot be considered at all here.²³ Likewise, although satisfactory strike statistics were not kept for Newfoundland prior to Confederation, this hardly justifies the complete omission of Newfoundland from Plate 39, given what we know of the tide of labour protest which rose there, as in Canada, in 1918-20; in the absence of evidence the uninformed reader will simply assume lack of activity and another regional stereotype will be reinforced (only to be contradicted forcefully in Plate 62 which indicates that union membership in Newfoundland in the 1950s was as high as in British Columbia). And of course the blank spaces concerning Newfoundland in the 1930s (Plates 40-46) are highly misleading for a decade when the island was going through an extraordinary period of upheaval and an exceptional recourse to the suspension of democracy.²⁴ And what of the various measures of relations between Newfoundland and Canada before Confederation, such as the recurrent recruitment of Newfoundlanders for the Canadian labour market or the Canadian government's early involvement in subsidies for transportation to Newfoundland? In a national atlas, each part of the territory deserves some attention for its intrinsic interest and, if necessary, pre-Confederation Newfoundland could have been presented more fully in a separate plate. From a larger perspective, though, the process of national integration is one of the major themes of the *Atlas* and it is unfortunate that opportunities to demonstrate the process in the case of Newfoundland have been missed.

Looking ahead to the period of "Crisis and Response" in Part Two of Volume III of the *Atlas*, there are again generous rewards as well as occasional disappointments. The portrayal of the Great Depression of the 1930s is one of the highlights of the volume and Plates 40-46 are among the most imaginatively constructed. They justifiably occupy a central place in the presentation because they mark the transition to the era of the New National Policy. In the era of the original National Policy the process of centralization and consolidation culminated in a period of extreme dislocation and social crisis. The Second National Policy installed a renovated structure of social supports in which the demands of economic growth would be accommodated alongside the humanizing forces of the welfare state. In the *Atlas* the social unrest and political protests which helped introduce the change are well-presented, with attention to the human dimensions of the unemployment problem and the rise of alternative political challenges. The impact of the Great Depression on individuals and families (Plate 41) is brilliantly depicted by using oral histories to plot the cross-country itineraries of workers in search of employment. The achievements of the New National Policy are not

23 David Alexander, "Economic Growth in the Atlantic Region, 1880-1940", *Acadiensis*, VIII, 1 (Autumn 1978), pp. 47-76.

24 For several recent studies see "Special Issue: Labour in Newfoundland", *Labour/Le Travail*, 26 (Fall 1990).

exaggerated, however. Already in Plate 32 readers have gained a sense of the uneven arrival of mothers' allowances, old age pensions and public health plans in the various provincial jurisdictions, and Plate 33 confirms that even after the arrival of free and compulsory public schooling, registration and attendance were far less than universal. Later on a summary of several complex public policies is presented in Plate 63, "The Emergence of Social Insurance", which serves as an excellent short introduction to the dimensions of the modern welfare state.

Meanwhile, the completion of metropolitan dominance in the economic realm is hardly neglected in Part Two; these developments are portrayed in numerous plates concerning net migration and divisions of labour, urban integration and transportation systems, resource exploitation and energy supply, manufacturing investment and advertising networks. Less well-emphasized, however, is the growing significance of a new external metropolis in the form of the American Empire. Although foreign investment is among the factors addressed in considering resource exploitation and manufacturing patterns in Plates 50 and 51, it would be easy to underestimate the dynamic impact of the process of Americanization here. Similarly, the impact of American radio and television programming receives little attention in Plate 65, where the central theme is explicitly limited to "National Broadcasting Systems". In general it seems strange to think that the reader of the *Atlas* might be surprised by the appearance of nationalist critiques of Canadian development in this era such as George Grant's *Lament for a Nation* (1965) and Kari Levitt's *Silent Surrender* (1970).

But as suggested earlier, Part Two addresses a less well-defined period in the Canadian experience. From the perspective of the 1980s and 1990s, it seems much clearer that we are entering a new period of restructuring, an insight which was considered a good deal more controversial when the *Atlas* was conceived 20 years ago. Historians are by no means in agreement on how to characterize the period of postwar reconstruction in the 1940s and the resource-based economic expansion of the 1950s. Was this the ultimate triumph of Canada as an independent North American nation, the long-awaited advent of the Canadian Century? Or was it the final instalment in a progress from colony to nation to colony, the beginning of the slow disintegration of the Canadian state? As for the regions, was this the long-delayed state-sponsored quiet revolution to reverse regional disparity, or was it the final subordination of the hinterlands to the metropolis, a condition of internal colonization to be maintained by the apparatus of the welfare state? And do we now face in the 1990s the dangers of an imminent "Maritimization" of Canada itself? Such a warning repeats David Alexander's keen observation that the special case of Atlantic Canada in the course of the last century may well threaten to be the destiny of the country as a whole in the 20th century.²⁵

25 See David Alexander, *Atlantic Canada and Confederation* (Toronto, 1983). See also Michael

But the *Atlas* has no explicit conclusion, and Plate 66 — “Canada in 1961” — must perform the function. It is, in many ways, the most intriguing plate in the volume. Where the conventional wisdom might wish to show us that Canada at midcentury had become a well-integrated state and economic system, its various parts and regions functioning harmoniously as part of a larger organism, Plate 66 offers a more provocative view. How successful was the geography of centralization? Plate 66 provides two answers, one confirming the achievement of integration, the other underlining the experience of differentiation. In one of the images, the ragged human landscape of the late 19th century has been compressed. The technologies of integration have accomplished their task. This is represented in the form of an isodemographic map which depicts a compact crustacean body in which the individual parts of the country are drawn according to their relative weight in the country’s population. The heart of the organism, therefore, is the Toronto-Ottawa-Montreal complex and their tributary territory; there is a strong appendage in the northwest (Winnipeg-Victoria and parts between), but only a few broken bits of bone and cartilage on the eastern shores.

A second image, however, underlines persistent difference. This is done in the form of a cartogram of economic regions. Here the shape of Canada is determined by economic factors, particularly industrial structure and accompanying incomes. It is noted, for instance, that the concentration of income in Canada by the 1960s was so great that the total income of the Toronto region was twice that of all Atlantic Canada taken together. The result of measuring this kind of internal differentiation is a map displaying not five or ten regions in Canada, but a more complex assembly of more than 60 regions, each with its own set of characteristics to distinguish it from the adjacent territory. In Atlantic Canada these measurements of internal differentiation produce 14 individual regions (three in Newfoundland, four in Nova Scotia, two in Prince Edward Island, five in New Brunswick). Those who know the territory will have little difficulty in identifying these distinct little societies since they also seem to be verifiable in social, cultural and political terms. We are left with the possibility that regional or provincial identities may not be so meaningful to Canadians as these kinds of local communities whose separate existence is supported in so many of the fundamental conditions of daily life.

There can be endless discussion about the shape of Canada, but at the end of such an impressive cartographic tour it is worth going back to consider whether the *Atlas* advances an overarching interpretation of Canadian history in this volume, equivalent to the epic drama of local history and social revolution contained in Volume I. The answer is not clear. Perhaps there is even an element of ambiguity in the subtitle — “Addressing the Twentieth Century” — which suggests an uncertainty of destination in the modern world. But then the French

edition does seem to have a more penetrating subtitle — “Jusqu’au coeur du XXe siècle”....

Returning to examine the several notes, prefaces and forewords which grace this volume, differences of emphasis can be detected. A short prefatory note by one of the corporate sponsors underlines the ideological function which maps have played in the last 500 years: “Mapmaking and nation-building are inextricably linked”; indeed it is pointed out that there is something of a joint achievement to be celebrated in the pages of the *Atlas*: “Like Canada’s first mapmakers, our predecessors at the Bank of Montreal once stood on the threshold of a vast frontier”. The successful conquest of time and space is also underlined by William G. Dean, the director of the project, in paying tribute to the enormous efforts of the editors and contributors: “the *Atlas* is an illustration of the feasibility of interpersonal communication and co-operation across the whole of Canada. It is a prime example of Canadian success in overcoming distance and difficulty in order to achieve a common aim”. In another foreword, however, the Québec historian Paul-André Linteau (who supervised the translation of the volume into the simultaneous French-language edition issued by Les Presses de l’Université de Montréal) briefly emphasizes a different theme: “the complexity of the country and the numerous differences among its regions and in its ethnic and social groups”. “This volume”, he writes, “is thus part of a recent trend in Canadian historiography: the recognition that diversity is and has been a fundamental component in the shaping of Canadian society”.

That familiar theme of pluralism is repeated eloquently in the preface by the editors Kerr and Holdsworth themselves:

If Canada were a homogeneous society, perhaps a broad brush could be used to portray its historical evolution. Our plates make apparent, however, that many generalizations about Canada are simplistic or unconsciously reflect particular regional or class perspectives. Although we can only begin to depict the richness of our history, it is readily apparent that many of the old myths about Canada are unsupported. The stereotype of Canadians as hewers of wood and drawers of water peripheral to an industrial world economy can be discarded. Similarly, it is clear that life did not unilaterally improve for all Canadians in the 20th century. At the turn of the century some Canadians enjoyed prosperity, while others lived in severe deprivation; the birth rate of some groups was high and of others low; some people lived in industrial cities, others on labour-intensive farms; some successfully promoted their own cultural identities, others fought discrimination and cultural repression.

Certainly this is a volume which does not rely heavily on the conventional wisdoms about nation-building and natural order. On balance, the *Atlas* documents

a history of expansion and growth, but it does not do so in a spirit of exclusivism or triumphalism. Indeed, the *Atlas* generally reflects the revisionist approaches which have given us a more critical perspective on the economic, social, political and cultural structures of the country in recent years. But the work of reconstruction remains incomplete and, although older paradigms have been found wanting, an alternative vision has not been fully realized. Since maps are a way of seeing, they come before words and the process of selection and interpretation is not always apparent to the eye. Some critics may complain that maps give us wonderful portraits of simultaneity but fail to supply a linear narrative of cause and effect. Do they lend themselves consequently to poststructuralist interpretations where everything mixes together in an accumulation of effects and a multiplicity of patterns in a world which seems to defy rational ordering and the discovery of causes?²⁶

To accept such a pessimistic conclusion would be to underestimate the body of systematic evidence and interpretation presented in the *Atlas*. This volume invites an active reading. Those interested in the problems of synthesis between history and geography will be pleased to see how well the *Atlas* has asserted the significance of spatial factors in the historical process.²⁷ Social historians will be pleased with the extensive body of information concerning the conditions of life and structures of interdependence among ordinary Canadians, even if the ambitions of an ultimate "histoire totale" cannot be satisfied. Economic historians will welcome the prominence given to economic factors in explaining Canadian development, but they should also be encouraged to take problems of regional variation and multiple causation seriously and will find little evidence to sustain assumptions about the operation of free markets in the past.

For their part, regional scholars will find ample evidence of the integration of the regions into national patterns. Those influenced by dependency theories will discover extensive evidence of the subordination of the hinterlands to the domination of the centre. Others will remain in the halfway house of metropolitanism, reading the *Atlas* as an account of the evolving diversity of the Canadian community over time and space. Those concerned with the impact of technology will point to the obvious connections between industrialism and centralization, the economies of scale and the networks of urbanization and transportation which have produced an uneven spatial distribution of activity. There is also ample verification for the renewal of a Marxist approach to Canadian spatial development: in this view, capitalist accumulation proceeds not only by the

26 For a cautionary note on some recent intellectual trends, see Bryan Palmer, *Descent into Discourse: The Reification of Language and the Writing of Social History* (Philadelphia, 1990).

27 For a classic statement, see Cole Harris, "Theory and Synthesis in Historical Geography", *Canadian Geographer*, XV, 3 (1971), pp. 157-72. A strong argument for the restoration of spatiality in historical and cultural analysis, is Edward W. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (New York, 1989).

intensification of exploitation but also through geographical extension; the geography of state formation and capital accumulation is accompanied by recurrent class and regional revolts, which place increasing pressure on the social structures of accumulation and legitimation.²⁸

In the course of all these processes of integration, Canada takes shape as a fascinating case study in the construction of the 20th century state. Canadians in turn, appear as a people whose local loyalties and identities are not destroyed by their interdependence. Those who seek a justification for the Canadian state may certainly find it here in the activist role of Canadian governments in accommodating and directing so much of Canada's economic growth and territorial expansion in the modern world; they will find justification, too, in the legacy of struggle by regions and classes to produce a more democratic and responsible version of the Canadian state.

28 One constructive effort to articulate the spatial implications of Marxist theory is David Harvey, *The Limits to Capital* (Oxford, 1982). For a recent Canadian effort to consider the spatial dimensions of capitalist development, see Janine Brodie, *The Political Economy of Canadian Regionalism* (Toronto, 1990).