

A Curious Field Book: Science and Society in Canadian History

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A Curious Field Book: Science and Society in Canadian History

Edited by T. H. Levere and R. A. Jarrell
Oxford University Press, Toronto.
233 p., 1974.
Soft Cover \$6.95

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This is a very good book, and a timely one as well. Most of us share the outer limbs of some scientific, educational or corporate organism within which circulation may have become so sluggish we rarely perceive the nature of our roots or the direction in which we are heading. How pleasant it must have been when science was not yet 'organized'! Through a collection of relevant source materials and connecting comments the editors of 'A curious field-book' bring those times back to life, and may destroy a few preconceptions about the good old days along the way.

From its early beginnings the relationship between science and society in Canada appears to have been one between seemingly urgent projects and a reluctant public purse. The personalities, stage and politics may have changed over the years, the process has remained the same, and the result can be considered as beneficial to the growth and development of Canada. Levere and Jarrell make the point that Canada never had a scientific leisure class and that early on science did have a definite social responsibility. They point to the strictly utilitarian aspect of the first geological, agricultural, and geophysical surveys carried out mainly by Scottish Canadians. Sir William Logan's testimony on the state of the Geological Survey to the Legislature in 1855 is one outstanding document for this period.

With the rise of learned societies, science in its pure form found its own spokesmen who not only offered to warn the government 'against schemers and pretenders', but were also looking happily towards geology as a proof for the Holy Scripture. The

book takes a look at the birth of big science during World War I when 'three years of war accomplished for science what thirty years of peace might not have done' (Proc. Trans. Roy. Soc. Can., 1918).

The concluding section follows science education from the Jesuit Colleges to the adoption of the German scheme of professor-researcher-graduate student funded by a national institution. After World War I the latter role was taken on in Canada by the National Research Council.

In summary, this book should be of interest to anyone planning, organizing, promoting, teaching or even doing science in Canada.

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Avis aux Collaborateurs

Les dates limites de remise des MS pour *Geoscience Canada* sont:

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Le 28 fév. pour le numéro 2.

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