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BOOK REVIEWS/COMPTES RENDUS

Science, Technology and Canadian History/Les Sciences, la technologie et l'histoire canadienne. Edited by R.A. Jarrell and N.R. Ball. Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1980. Pp. xviii, 246.

As the co-editors state, this volume of proceedings of the first conference on the history of Canadian science and technology, held at Kingston in 1978, provides us with the papers of a meeting that marked 'the end of an era, the pre-history of a professional history of Canadian science and technology.' At Kingston some 150 participants from a wide variety of backgrounds discussed the state and problems of the discipline, exchanged information and mapped out the lines along which future development could take place.

Not surprisingly, many of the papers are introspective, and introspection is necessary in a conference that marks 'the end of an era.' Others are naturally prospective, looking ahead to what needs to be done next. Some suggestions are overly hopeful: it will take more than a knowledge of the history of our science and technology to give us a coherent science policy, though such knowledge may well help. A few are blatently ridiculous: it is extremely doubtful factually, as well as insulting, to assert that 'science is our only distinctive culture.' Finally, 'professionalism' seems overstressed at times; the amateur with no degrees can have a vast and helpful knowledge.

Beyond the philosophical papers, the volume does a fine job of presenting an overview of the present situation. Three case studies demonstrate the varieties of research than can be done in the field, three other essays discuss practical problems, a series of eight workshop reports examine special topics and there are reference appendixes. In a category by itself J. W. T. Spinks' reminiscences after the banquet provide most enjoyable reading, and considerable insight.

The case studies by Jacques Bernier, Arthur Ray and Peter Gillis delve into samples of archival resources in both English and French Canada. All raise questions that are asked only too rarely by many professional historians and thus broaden our possible approaches to data. Having worked with the Hudson's Bay Company papers in other contexts, I found the information that Ray abstracts particularly interesting. Equally informative are the discussions on the operations of granting agencies by Yves Mougeot of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and on publishing by Ian Montagnes of the University of Toronto Press; these should be read by all workers in the field.

The reports given at the workshops, together with the commentaries and paraphrases of the discussions, are another excellent resource. The topics selected--invention and discovery, adaption of modern science, institutional frame-

work, teaching materials, course organization and content, archives, museology and the history of medicine--cover a broad spectrum of the problems facing the researcher. Two appendixes list the Canadian museums of science and technology and provide a bibliography. The latter demonstrates that, despite all that has been done, that one of the greatest problems in the field is--as is stressed in the papers--a lack of publications.

Given the limited amount of work available on our Canadian history of science and technology, and the problems of planning future directions with so many diverse interests, topics and disciplines involved, the collection is going to be of great value to students in the field. Even at the most hopeful pace, however, it will be many years before many of the topics can be discussed much differently. Possibly selected information from the book should be extracted as the basis of an eventual handbook to the discipline; it is to be hoped that the editors will give such a volume their consideration.

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