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BOOK REVIEWS/COMPTEs RENDUS

Hardrock Mining. Industrial Relations and Technological Changes at Inco. Wallace Clement, Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1981. Pp. 392, illus., endnotes.

Mining is central to the Canadian economy and Canadian history. Moreover, the International Nickel Company of Canada (INCO) is one of the world's mining giants. The subject matter is there for an excellent book. The dust jacket is also promising. On the front, *Hardrock Mining. Industrial Relations and Technological Changes at Inco* surmounts a colourful underground photo, graphically conveying the message that INCO means advanced technology mining. On the back, a black and white photo of the pensive author appears with the declaration 'An in-depth study of one of the nation's most powerful corporate giants.' The dust jacket also identifies the author as one of 'Canada's most important sociological analysts.' Regretably the contents do not live up to either the potential of the subject matter or the promises of the dust jacket.

Hardrock Mining has two clearly stated aims:

The first is a portrayal of what it is like to work in the mining industry, particularly from the perspective of those actually engaged in the work, and includes an examination of class struggles within the industry The second aim is longer range: it is to work *towards* an analysis, explanation, and understanding of class transformation in Canada since the Second World War. (p.9)

Chapter One, 'Class Transformations in Mining' provides a brief introduction to relevant Canadian historiography (pp.15-19) and a longer introduction to 'The Class Approach' (pp.19-26). Very quickly the reader realizes that money, capitalists, industrialists and managers are going to be convicted. The only question is whether it will be with or without benefit of trial.

The introductory survey of Canadian mining (pp. 27-42) is written primarily in terms of capital versus labour struggles and the consequences of changes in modes of production. Despite the sketchy superficiality of the chapter, it represents an approach which could be illuminating if some attempt were made to understand the complex reasons for technological change. Instead, this chapter introduces the pattern rigidly adhered to for the remainder of the book; Clement sees only a fraction of the process of technological change, namely the effects he claims it had on factors such as worker pride, autonomy, skill levels, safety and ease of replacement. By failing to see technological change as more than a capitalist-management plot to weaken and control workers in the 'class war,' Clement will undoubtedly lose credibility with those who understand that changes in mining technology are often the only workable way of coping with increasingly lower grade or

more recalcitrant deposits. This loss of credibility is most unfortunate because every now and then interesting observations which historians and the mining industry could beneficially contemplate do emerge from the steady drone of anti-capitalist accusations. The author is obviously concerned about the lot of the miner but Clement's writing is so one-sided that few who need to be swayed will bother to listen.

While there are no surprises to follow and certainly no semblance of trial or balanced judgment, one should nevertheless read on. Various chapters provide much fascinating information about INCO operations above and below ground and the changes occurring therein. In addition, the endnotes provide some useful and more balanced sources, although even they are not without mystery. Chapter Six (pp. 163-216) is devoid of endnotes even though it has sentences such as

A hell-hole, referred to by *Canadian Mining Journal* (certainly one of the company's friends) as one of the "dark satanic mills," Copper Cliff's Smelter is Inco's largest surface operation
(p. 173)

Hardrock Mining reads like a research report undertaken not to find answers but to confirm a pre-existing view of society and industry. Although loaded with criticism, it lacks a spirit of open critical inquiry and in the end is no more compelling, informative or believable than the overly-defensive puff pastry industry handouts which some regard as history or a reasonable facsimile thereof. Clement's book adds little to an understanding of a corporation or an industry but a great deal to our comprehension of misunderstanding.

It is an unfortunate truth that Canadians know very little about the nature and history of Canadian mining and it is unlikely that this will change in the near future. Canada is an industrial nation whose corporate, cultural and educational leaders have decided that its technological past will not be studied in a meaningful way. As a result, there is little serious research, writing or teaching on the nature and role of technology in Canada. All too often anyone wishing to read about the foundations of Canadian development has their choice of unrealities: the approach of *Hardrock Mining* or a 'tune from the nickelodeon' in which Charles Baird, chairman of INCO, Ltd., lamenting the poor image of mining, announces that 'what the industry needs today is stability, understanding from governments, realism and a problem-solving approach from both management and unions.' (Charles Baird, 'A Tune from the Nickelodeon,' *Maclean's*, 4 October 1982, p. 21). Clement seems not to understand mining as a technological activity and Baird seems ill-acquainted with cultural dynamics and does not understand that to be popular, respected and appreciated, it is not enough to do your job well, but you must also be perceived to be doing so. If Canadian industry wishes to be understood, it should look to the cultural and educational complex which too often ignores it rather than the occasional end product which damns it. For generations Canadian industry has been content to fund and approve a cultural network which chooses to ignore

and misunderstand industry. The fact that one cannot suggest a more balanced recent treatment of nickel mining than *Hardrock Mining* shows how successful Canadian industry has been in keeping itself far removed from Canadian cultural and historical studies. What is not clear is why it behaves in such a curious manner.

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Public Archives of Canada