

John Russell, ed. — *Liberties*. Vancouver: New Star Books, 1989. Pp. 246.

This is a political manifesto of civil rights. The book assembles seventeen essays dealing with civil liberties in British Columbia since 1962. The collection represents the work of the B.C. Civil Liberties Association (BCCLA), and gives an overview of the Association's position and achievements on a host of issues, though it does not deal with any topic systematically. It is an impressive testimony to the commitment of the members of the BCCLA over the years to sustain their advocacy of civil liberties not in the face of oppression, but rather — in an uphill struggle for what may be an even more difficult task — apathy. The issues are all important, but in the midst of democracy, with no local libertarian tradition, the Canadians have been more followers than leaders in the area of civil liberties.

The editor of the volume is John Russell who has played a leading role in the Association during the last decade. Russell suggests that the attitudes to civil rights are changing, and the volume is a testimony to the shift. The introduction to the book was written in the spring of 1989, before the European revolutions had charted a whole new agenda, including a spectrum of issues pertinent to Canada, from traditional civil liberties to problems of ethnicity. Would Canada be able to construct in this context a new independent way to deal with its own civil liberties questions? (1). I wonder. Whatever the future may hold, the book is an instructive introduction to the "institutional mind" (3) of the BCCLA, and a welcome educational effort to provide Canadians with information and ideas (without intimidating lingo) which only a small minority consider of importance. This instructive purpose led the editor to select material from different media. So while the book lacks stylistic coherence, it compensates for it by the diversity of topics.

The loose common denominator is provided by the BCCLA commitment to democracy, which translates into a demand for respect "or at least acting — that is legislating — as if you do" (20). This silver lining of legislating tolerance, or at least lobbying for it, is the focus of the Association's work and the volume.

This book is very instructive in illuminating several instances of unjustifiably curtailed freedom of speech. The details are most telling. After the regular suspects are rounded up, we are introduced to "The Bessie Smith Factor", a cocktail of sexual paranoia compounded by administrative rigidity. The paradox, we are told, is that the Canadian custom prohibits the importation of literature which deals with legal activity [anal sex between consenting adults], but yet allows films or literature which depicts illegal activity [murders]. Administrative arbitrariness and faulty logic are marshalled to highlight the internal contradictions in public norms. In the ongoing political battle, the partisan presentation illustrates most profoundly the purpose of the book: to highlight the absurdity caused by letting administrative bodies draw guidelines for handling civil rights.

The stakes, however, are higher when the opposition is not the traditional conservative "authoritarian" bodies, against whom civil rights have always fought, but rather feminists, who supposedly, belong to the hard core of libertarianism. Therefore, I found the most interesting article to be John Dixon's, "The Porn Wars" (1986), for what it tells about the libertarians as a community, as much as for its subject matter. Pornography by definition is negative, but the inability to delineate it from "respectful" representations leaves this can of worms permanently open on the public shelf. In the early eighties, the issue was especially problematical since the

feminist community succeeded in imposing its own moral standards on the libertarian agenda thereby mitigating the traditional anti-censorship position of civil rights. The feminist argued that compared to the harm caused by uncontrolled pornography which subjugates half of humanity, the price of censorship is not too dear. The internal conflict for libertarians could not pose a harder choice. Tension run high, moral values within one community torn apart threatened to bring about civil war rather than civil rights. Civil wars are always more painful than conventional wars, even if conducted against a powerful enemy.

The first person testimony by John Dixon [excerpted from BCCLA President's Message in the 1985 Annual Report] alludes to "unconventional war" "enemies" and a strategy of getting "a whole lot more combative with some of our meanest opponents". This changed with the entry of several women into the debate on the libertarian side (in the anthology *Women Against Censorship*). They were greeted enthusiastically by libertarians, who felt as though they were in "encircles wagon train, hearing the first bugles of the approaching cavalry" (27). The evoked images are powerful. After all, the feminist opposition did not quite represent the oppressive authority of the dictatorial state, nor presumably was there a danger they would turn into a meaningful political force in the foreseeable future. Yet, Dixon refers to them as "our meanest opponents". The language is instructive. The intense emotions resulted from a rivalry over the question of legitimacy: who rightfully occupies the victims' podium. If the libertarian agenda was no longer relevant, there was no reason for them to survive. Once legitimacy was regained, libertarians were only too happy to be able to return to their known territory of fighting against censorship and not for pornography.

Among other issues which will strike the American reader as familiar are articles on the right of racists to free speech, attitudes towards Aids, intelligence testing, the public control of internal intelligence, ("Dissent and National Security" could have been edited better to eliminate the less pertinent data for the general reader), prostitution, drugs, legal proceedings, etc.

Overall, the collection suffers from lack of historical contextualization, which may limit its ultimate audience. This is somewhat eased by a concise introduction to each article by the editor. Yet, many of the pieces may prove not wholly intelligible for the uninitiated. So, while the collection serves also as a commemorative volume — and would presumably fulfil this function primarily in encouraging the 500 or so members of the Association who are committed to a cause the appreciation of which is "depressingly shallow and narrowly distributed" (6) —, its appeal for wider audience may consequently suffer.

At times, the text addresses an unknown reader. We are told that "The BCCLA is not a radical body; we are not cop-haters or cop-baiters. We are a conservative body ... We believe in ordered liberty ..." (9). One wonders how many who view the BCCLA as such would read the book, and whether those who view the BCCLA as radical and subversive, and may still read the volume for whatever reason, would be persuaded by these words.

Even with such a diverse subject matter, selection has to be made, and not everything could be included. Abortion is the most glaring in this category. This is a pity, since this conceivably could have been a topic that would have attracted a larger readership. The collection should be recommended as a good introduction to the

BCCLA, and it would be most useful for readers who are interested in civil liberties in comparative perspective. One can safely assume their number is growing, especially in Europe nowadays.

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Alfred P. Smyth — *Warlords and Holy Men: Scotland AD 80-1000*. Edinburg: Edinburg University Press, 1989. Pp. viii, 279.

G.W.S. Barrow — *Kingship and Unity: Scotland 1000-1306*. Edinburg: Edinburg University Press, 1989. Pp. 185.

Olive and Sydnor Checkland — *Industry and Ethos: Scotland 1832-1914*. Edinburg: Edinburg University Press, 1989, Pp. 232.

David McCrone, Stephen Kendrick and Pat Straw, eds. — *The Making of Scotland: Nation, Culture and Social Change*. Edinburg: Edinburg University Press in conjunction with the British Sociological Association, 1989. Pp. 234.

The first three books listed above are welcome reissues of titles which were originally published by Edward Arnold in 1984 as part of "The New History of Scotland" series, while the fourth is drawn from among papers presented at the annual meeting of the British Sociological Association held in March 1988. Taken together, they cover a remarkably wide sweep of chronological eras and societal issues, while also illustrating the wealth and diversity of methodological approaches that can be usefully applied to the Scottish past.

In *Warlords and Holy Men*, Alfred P. Smyth assays one of the most difficult periods in Scottish history. The historian of the Early Middle Ages in Scotland is faced not only with a paucity of documentary — or even narrative — evidence, but also with a multiplicity of peoples — and linguistic groups — whose complex interactions are the basis for any clear understanding of the period. As earlier reviewers of Dr. Smyth's works have noted, he does not shy away from controversy, and, here, he begins by arguing forcefully that there was virtually no Romanization in the Pennines, and that the Anglian (English) influence on the Britons (in Scotland) was minimal.

Having rejected a Roman starting point for the study of Caledonia, Smyth turns his attention to the problem of the Picts, a veritable minefield of controversy. He views the term Pict as cultural rather than linguistic, and, therefore, sees it as useful, placing the Picts in a Celtic milieu. As the Pictish regions of the 4th through 9th centuries were already Celtic by the 1st century, he places much greater emphasis on Irish influence than on that arising from contacts with the Anglo-Saxons. Smyth also argues against the tradition of matrilineal descent among the Picts, instead pointing to "a strong cognatic element in Celtic royal succession" (68).

In his chapters on Columba and Adomnán, Smyth places early medieval Scotland very firmly in a Celtic Christian milieu. If Columba was not perhaps as fully the "apostle of the Picts" as usually described, he was nevertheless a tireless spiritual warrior and founder of monasteries, whose personal connections with the Uí Néill highkings drew the Irish Dál Riata and Scots Dál Riata into an even closer affinity