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Alfred G. Bailey — Ethnohistorian*

PROFESSOR ALFRED GOLDSWORTHY BAILEY'S *The Conflict of European and Eastern Algonkian Cultures*, which deals mainly with the first two centuries of contact between Native People and Europeans in the Maritime Provinces, is the first recognizable work of ethnohistory published anywhere in North America. The University of Toronto, where this study was written as a doctoral dissertation, was in many respects an ideal environment in which an intelligent and innovative graduate student with widely ranging interests could bring together the disparate elements required to create ethnohistory. It also had one of the only anthropological programmes in North America where historical studies of contact between Europeans and Native People would not have been anathema.¹ Yet the University of Toronto and the New Brunswick Museum, where Bailey began to work after holding a post-doctoral fellowship at the University of London, were poor bases from which Bailey's accomplishments might influence the disciplines of history or anthropology as they were then practised in North America. As a result his work was long forgotten. It has not, however, remained forgotten. Over the past two decades, the reputation of *The Conflict of European and Eastern Algonkian Cultures* has increased steadily. The aim of this paper is to evaluate Bailey's initial accomplishment, briefly trace the development of ethnohistory in North America, and consider the relevance of his pioneering work for some current debates in ethnohistory.

Bailey has had a distinguished career as a teacher and university administrator at the University of New Brunswick; indeed, his family's history and that of the university are almost synonymous. His many scholarly achievements have won him nationwide recognition, including appointment as an Officer of the Order of Canada. Much of his biography in *The Canadian Encyclopedia* deals admi-

* This paper is based on an address delivered at a dinner hosted by the Department of History at the University of New Brunswick to honour Professor Alfred G. Bailey. The dinner was part of a series of events, including the meeting at the University of New Brunswick of the Atlantic Association of Historians, held to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Department of History at that university. I wish to thank Frances Halpenny for information concerning the original publication and reprinting of Bailey's thesis.

1 A.G. Bailey, "Retrospective thoughts of an ethnohistorian", *Historical Papers* (1977), p. 20. In 1930, the University of Toronto anthropologist, T.F. McIlwraith, stated that "an accurate interpretation of the first two hundred years of Canadian history must take cognizance of the Indian point of view as well as that of the white man": "The progress of anthropology in Canada", *Canadian Historical Review*, XI (1930), p. 132. Such a view was shared by few American anthropologists or historians. Although McIlwraith had adopted a Boasian view of culture, his awareness of the work of the English ethnologist G. Pitt-Rivers may have aroused his interest in studies of cultural contact (see note 6). This view was shared by McIlwraith's colleague at Toronto, C.W.M. Hart.

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ringly with his accomplishments as a poet.² He was also among the first Canadian historians to promote the study of social and regional history, which is now flourishing in this country.³ Yet his most important and lasting contribution has been to the development of ethnohistory. On this score the record is plain. In the early 1930s, this multifaceted scholar pioneered the study of ethnohistory in North America, thus laying the foundations for the work done by many researchers, including myself, who later came to this line of research.

Born in Quebec City and growing up in the provinces of Quebec and New Brunswick, it is perhaps no accident that the young Alfred Bailey should have become especially sensitive to cultural differences and their impact on human interaction. Yet by his own admission it was "little more than impulse" that led him in 1927, as a graduate from the University of New Brunswick, to follow the advice of an old acquaintance, Horace Hume VanWart, and seek admission to the University of Toronto's School of Graduate Studies.⁴ Another chance meeting, in the alien world of Upper Canada, caused him to enrol in the Canadian history seminar organized by the university librarian William Stewart Wallace, as a result of which he was irrevocably drawn to the study of Canadian history. When he returned to the University of Toronto after a brief spell in journalism, Chester Martin, the new head of the history department, suggested that he pursue doctoral research that would combine historical and anthropological studies. Within a short time he was at work on a trail-blazing study of how French and Eastern Algonkian cultures had mutually influenced each other in the 16th and 17th centuries.⁵ As models he had only W.C. MacLeod's *The American Indian Frontier* and G. H. L.-F. Pitt-Rivers' suggestive but markedly racist study of cultural contact in the Pacific islands.⁶

One must admire the efficient use that Bailey made of the rich but limited human resources that were then available at the University of Toronto. Under Ralph Flenley he studied the history of the French régime and became familiar with the vast literature documenting the early interaction of European colonists with Native Canadians. Bailey also came to know the distinguished economist

2 Michael Gnarowski, "Bailey, Alfred Goldsworthy", *The Canadian Encyclopedia* (2nd ed., Edmonton, 1988), I, p. 163.

3 P.A. Buckner, "'Limited identities' and Canadian historical scholarship: an Atlantic Provinces perspective", *Journal of Canadian Studies*, XXIII, 1 & 2 (Spring-Summer, 1988), p. 179.

4 A.G. Bailey, *Culture and Nationality* (Ottawa, 1972), p. 1.

5 *Ibid.*, pp. 2, 3.

6 G.H. L.-F. Pitt-Rivers, *The Clash of Cultures and the Contact of Races* (London, 1927); W.C. MacLeod, *The American Indian Frontier* (New York, 1928). While MacLeod wrote an extraordinary survey of Indian-White relations throughout the Americas, he did not achieve, except perhaps in his two chapters dealing with prophetic movements, anything resembling frontier history from "the Indian side of the frontier" (p. vii). Social history his book may be, ethnohistory it is not.

and polymath, Harold Innis, who had only recently published his history of the Canadian fur trade and its role in the development of the Canadian nation.⁷ In general, Bailey accepted Innis' account of how Native People were gradually drawn into relations of dependency as a result of their increasing reliance on European technology, and how in particular a growing need for iron cutting-tools led to the depletion of game and the proliferation of intertribal warfare as a result of the Indians' increasing need for furs to trade for these goods. Yet, while Innis acknowledged the important role played by Native People as trappers and collectors of furs, he paid little attention to how their specific beliefs and ways of life influenced their participation in the fur trade or how doing so affected their lives. Instead, he preferred to explain their participation in terms of universal patterns of rational economic behaviour; for Innis, Native People were 'Economic Man' dressed up in feathers.⁸ To a considerable degree this simplistic treatment of Native People may have reflected his conviction that the collection of furs "was somehow outside of and beneath what was really important" in the study of economic history.⁹

Bailey found the antithesis to Innis' view of Native People in the approach of the young anthropologist, Thomas F. McIlwraith, who soon became his principal director of studies.¹⁰ McIlwraith, whose brilliant ethnographic study of the traditional way of life of the Bella Coola Indians of British Columbia was carried out in the early 1920s but had the misfortune not to be published until 1948,¹¹ was firmly committed to the principles of Boasian anthropology, especially to its historical particularism and cultural relativism. Boasian anthropologists perceived every culture as the unique product of a specific historical process which had shaped a way of life that provided meaning and guidance to those who shared it. No two cultures viewed man and the universe in precisely the same fashion and there was no basis on which the anthropologist could judge one culture to be superior to another. Failure to understand the internal logic of each culture meant that it was impossible to understand the behaviour of the members of that group. Native American cultures were seen as based on principles that were very different from European ones and it was believed that, without anthropological knowledge of the traditional beliefs and values of each Native group, an understanding of its behavioural patterns was impossible.¹²

7 H.A. Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada* (New Haven, 1930; rev. ed., Toronto, 1956).

8 B.G. Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers: Canada's 'Heroic Age' Reconsidered* (Montreal, 1985), pp. 183-4. Innis nevertheless asserted that "the Indian and his culture were fundamental to the growth of Canadian institutions": *The Fur Trade in Canada* (Toronto, 1956), p. 392.

9 J.M. Bumsted, "A matter of perspective", *The Beaver*, LXVIII, 4 (1988), p. 56.

10 Bailey, *Culture and Nationality*, p. 3.

11 T.F. McIlwraith, *The Bella Coola Indians* (2 vols., Toronto, 1948).

12 For accounts of the basic concepts of Franz Boas, see M.J. Herskovits, *Franz Boas: The Science*

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Bailey skilfully synthesized the theoretical approaches of Innis and McIlwraith to create a theoretical basis for interpreting the historical data that were available concerning the mutual impact that French and Eastern Algonkian-speaking peoples had on one another during the first two centuries of contact. Because there was at that time no doctoral programme in anthropology at the University of Toronto, Bailey's thesis was submitted to the history department in 1934.¹³ It was published by the New Brunswick Museum three years later,¹⁴ minus a chapter on the disappearance of the St Lawrence Iroquoians in the 16th century, which Innis had arranged to have included in the *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*,¹⁵ and also his concluding chapter, which outlined the ideas that had guided his research and summarized the main conclusions he had reached. Fortunately, the latter appeared in 1938 in *The Canadian Historical Review*.¹⁶ In his study, Bailey documented the social disintegration of Algonkian cultures that had come about as a result of European contact. Following Innis, he saw growing reliance on key elements of European technology, which the Algonkians soon recognized to be superior to their own stone and bone tools, as leading to the depletion of game, growing intertribal warfare, and increasing economic and eventually political dependence on Europeans. He also delineated the fragmentation of their traditional kinship systems. As competition increased among hunting and gathering groups, aboriginal patterns of band ownership gave way to family control of hunting territories. Wars and epidemics led to a rapid population decline in many regions. Growing impoverishment, social disintegration, and dependency on Europeans encouraged the development of drunkenness, lethargy, and despair, which contributed to the decline of the Native population. It also led Native People to embrace Christianity or to incorporate Christian concepts of dualism and the punishment of the wicked into their traditional belief systems. European technology and resistance to epidemic diseases that were killing large numbers of Indians encouraged Native People to believe that they were inferior to Europeans.¹⁷

of Man in the Making (New York, 1953); G.W. Stocking, Jr., *A Franz Boas Reader: The Shaping of American Anthropology 1883-1911* (New York, 1974); and Marvin Harris, *The Rise of Anthropological Theory: A History of Theories of Culture* (New York, 1968), pp. 250-318.

13 A.G. Bailey, "The Conflict of European and Eastern Algonkian Cultures, 1504-1700, A Study in Canadian Civilization", Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1934.

14 A.G. Bailey, *The Conflict of European and Eastern Algonkian Cultures 1504-1700: A Study in Canadian Civilization* (Saint John, 1937). Frances Halpenny informs me that this was an edition of only about 300 copies.

15 A.G. Bailey, "The significance of the identity and disappearance of the Laurentian Iroquois", *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, 3rd series, sec. 2, XXVII (1933), pp. 97-108.

16 A.G. Bailey, "Social revolution in early eastern Canada", *Canadian Historical Review*, XIX (1938), pp. 264-76.

17 Bailey, *Conflict*, pp. 46-83.

Along with his documentation of decline, Bailey also presented evidence of the survival of Native Peoples and their adaptation to a world dominated by alien newcomers. Old religious beliefs proved to be tenacious and often survived alongside of, or under the disguise of, Christian beliefs.¹⁸ Because of that baptisms are an unsafe index of success in the conversion of Native People.¹⁹ He also documented how Native People incorporated European art styles, music, and mythology into their cultures with such success that modern anthropologists cannot agree whether many traits are of Native or European origin.²⁰ He traced the reciprocal influences of Algonkian culture upon French life and thought. While he generally viewed Native People as suffering badly in the long run as a result of European contact, the diminishment of their ways of life was not total nor did it occur without concerted and often partially successful efforts by the Indians to combine their traditional beliefs and values with the benefits of European technology.

Bailey was the first scholar to begin to understand in an organized fashion the complexity of the changes that had occurred in Native ways of life during the first two centuries of contact in eastern North America. By modern standards, he appears to have underestimated the extent of the demographic decline brought about by European epidemic diseases, although he did begin to recognize the importance of these diseases.²¹ He also may have overestimated the respect that Native People felt for Europeans in the 17th century²² and paid too much attention to Lucien Lévy-Bruhl's theory of primitive mentality in a few instances when he sought, on the basis of too little evidence, to infer the thought patterns of Native People.²³ What is far more important, however, is that he realized the importance of understanding European contact within the total context of Amerindian culture. He agreed with Innis, and the 17th century trader Nicolas Denys, that Native People valued European knives and kettles for sound utilitarian reasons. Yet, as an anthropologist, he also argued that "no treatment of primitive economics could be complete without some consideration of the religious factor". The Indians believed that the efficacy of an

18 *Ibid.*, p. 131.

19 Bailey, "Social revolution", p. 274.

20 Bailey, *Conflict*, pp. 148-91.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 83. Cf. H.F. Dobyns, *Their Number Become Thinned: Native American Indian Population Dynamics in Eastern North America* (Knoxville, 1983); A.W. Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900* (Cambridge, 1986).

22 Bailey, *Conflict*, pp. 128, 185.

23 *Ibid.*, pp. 102, 115; this tendency was criticized by the anthropologist Robert Redfield: "Review of *The Conflict*", *Canadian Historical Review*, XIX (1938), p. 83. W. Walker also complained that in a few instances Bailey ascribed motives to 17th-century Europeans that anachronistically reflected the racist ideology prevailing in the early 20th century: "Review of *The Conflict*", *American Anthropologist*, LXXII (1970), pp. 1493-5.

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implement "was determined by factors which operated from beyond the material world" and that "the relative potencies of these mystical forces were equated with the relative superiority of the materials which they controlled". He observed that it took a long time before Indians were prepared to abandon their custom of burying even the technologically most useful objects with their dead owners.²⁴ Historians must therefore consider the displacement of Native culture not only in terms of their own ideas about relative utility and superiority but also in terms of traditional Native beliefs and values. That proposition remains as valid today as it was in 1934. Bailey's interpretation of the evidence had clearly gone far beyond the concern with innovation, diffusion, and adaptation that had characterized early Boasian anthropology. By combining the ideas of Innis and McIlwraith, he had created a new way of looking at and explaining cultural change as a result of contact between societies at different levels of technological development.

Bailey's findings were far from congenial to the vast majority of anthropologists of his day. Traditionally anthropologists had sought to determine what Indian cultures had been like prior to the arrival of the Europeans. They attempted to do this by studying Native groups before their cultures were seriously altered as a result of European contact. This approach led anthropologists to study Native groups living beyond the frontier of European settlement, or, where this was impossible, to try to learn from elderly Native men and women what life had been like in their youth. While Boas and his students acknowledged that Indian cultures had changed since the arrival of the Europeans, they regarded these changes as an obstacle to their work that had to be overcome if Native cultures were to be reconstructed rather than as something worth studying for their own sake. They also assumed that everywhere in North America the disintegration of Native cultures had begun recently enough and that sufficient evidence of their traditional ways of life had survived for anthropologists to be able to reconstruct them. Until well into the 1960s anthropologists had little doubt that descriptions of Native cultures from the 17th century recorded ways of life that were essentially unchanged since prehistoric times.²⁵

Bailey's work challenged this conventional view by demonstrating that in the northeastern corner of North America cultural changes resulting from European contact had begun far earlier than anthropologists had assumed and that already at an early date they had transformed these cultures far more extensively

24 Bailey, *Conflict*, p. 47.

25 For examples of this tendency, see Elizabeth Tooker, *An Ethnography of the Huron Indians, 1625-1649* (Washington, 1964) and B.G. Trigger, *The Huron: Farmers of the North* (New York, 1969). A critique is provided by B.G. Trigger, "Ethnohistory and archaeology", *Ontario Archaeology*, XXX (1978), pp. 17-24; "Archaeology and the ethnographic present", *Anthropologica*, XXIII (1981), pp. 3-17.

than most anthropologists had realized. He had, for example, seriously challenged the prestigious ethnologist Frank Speck's claim that Montagnais hunting territories had been owned by families rather than by entire bands already in prehistoric times.²⁶ The response of the American anthropological community was to ignore Bailey's work. No review of the first edition of *The Conflict of European and Eastern Algonkian Cultures* appeared in their journal, the *American Anthropologist*. No doubt, they hoped that this potentially troublesome work, published in an obscure Canadian museum series, would pass unnoticed. By ignoring Bailey, American anthropologists also ensured that they would eventually have to reinvent ethnohistory.

The reception Bailey received from historians was scarcely better. His book was reviewed respectfully in *The Canadian Historical Review* by the distinguished American anthropologist Robert Redfield. Yet Redfield took care to distance Bailey's work from anthropology by pointing out that as an idiographic historical study it did not attempt to provide a "hypothesis as to general characteristics of culture contact".²⁷ In other words, it was not a typical early study of acculturation. A cursory notice in *The American Historical Review* bizarrely stressed the "sterility" of the *Jesuit Relations* as a source of information about Indian behaviour and dismissed Bailey's work as a gathering of "selective material" presented in a "largely apologetic" style.²⁸ Clearly, very few anthropologists or historians were at this period prepared to take the study of Native history seriously. Reviewers had no model against which Bailey's work could be measured or the significance of his innovation could be understood. Only in retrospect can we appreciate the extent of the injustice that was done to Bailey's work at this time.

Beginning in the 1930s, a small number of American anthropologists grew

26 Bailey, *Conflict*, pp. 84-95. The Canadian ethnologist Diamond Jenness had independently challenged Speck's conclusions in his book *The Indians of Canada* (Ottawa, 1932), p. 124. For a detailed account of the reaction of American anthropologists to Bailey's view, see Bailey "Retrospective thoughts", pp. 20-3. While it is widely believed that the denial by American anthropologists of the idea that family hunting territories had developed as a result of the fur trade was related to their opposition to Marxism and its concept of 'Primitive Society', work in progress by the anthropologist Harvey Feit suggests that Speck's support of the aboriginality of family hunting territories may have been motivated at least in part by his desire to defend Native land rights.

27 Redfield, "Review", p. 82. The Toronto anthropologist C.W.M. Hart, in the most sympathetic and perceptive review of Bailey's work, comments on the "anti-chronological" tendencies in Redfield's study of acculturation in Central America: "Review of *The Conflict*", *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, IV (1938), pp. 600-1. The idea that the formulation of general laws should be the primary goal of ethnohistory persisted into the 1960s; see Harold Hickerson, *The Chippewa and their Neighbors: A Study in Ethnohistory* (New York, 1970), p. 7.

28 G.A. Reichard, "Review of *The Conflict*", *American Historical Review*, XLIV (1938-39), p. 677.

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interested in learning more about how the ways of life of Native Peoples had changed in response to European domination. It was believed that if anthropologists could discover more about how Native Peoples had adapted to the presence of Europeans, they would be able to advise government agencies how to deal more effectively and humanely with them.²⁹ These early studies of 'acculturation', which aimed (as Redfield observed) to formulate generalizations about cultural change, gradually resulted in a growing appreciation of the complexity and diversity of what had happened to various Native groups since European contact.³⁰ In this fashion the study of acculturation slowly evolved into 'ethnohistory', the coming of age of which was marked by the publication in 1962 of Edward Spicer's *Cycles of Conquest*, a monumental study of what had happened to the diverse Native groups in the southwestern United States under successive Spanish, Mexican, and American domination.³¹ In northeastern North America, the development of ethnohistory was further encouraged by the American economist G.T. Hunt's *The Wars of the Iroquois*, which elaborated Innis' study of the fur trade by arguing that Native economies, political alliances,

29 R. Redfield, R. Linton, and M.J. Herskovits, "Outline for the study of acculturation", *American Anthropologist*, XXXVIII (1936), pp. 149-52; H.G. Barnett *et al.*, "Acculturation: An explanatory formulation", *American Anthropologist*, LVII (1954), pp. 973-1002. An early example of this approach, together with its historiographic limitations, is M. Mead, *The Changing Culture of an American Indian Tribe* (New York, 1932). F.M. Keesing's *The Menomini Indians of Wisconsin: A Study of Three Centuries of Cultural Contact and Change* (Philadelphia, 1939; reprinted Madison, 1987) was an early ethnohistoric study in the modern sense. Keesing was educated in New Zealand and before visiting the United States on a Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship between 1928 and 1930 he had published a study of cultural change among the Maori (*The Changing Maori*, [New Plymouth, 1928]). While holding this fellowship, on the advice of Clark Wissler, he went to live among the Menomini. Later, he combined historical and ethnographic data to create a study of cultural change among these people from 1634 to 1929, which Catherine Price has described as "an ethnohistorical study twenty years before ethnohistory became a viable discipline" ("Review of *The Menomini Indians of Wisconsin*", *Ethnohistory*, XXXV [1988], p. 399). Like Bailey, Keesing suggested that many features of Native culture that anthropologists had assumed were aboriginal were in fact a product of acculturation. While a major pioneering study, this precocious monograph influenced the development of American ethnohistory scarcely more than did Bailey's publication. Keesing's continuing interest in the study of cultural change is evident in his *Culture Change: An Analysis and Bibliography of Anthropological Sources to 1952* (Stanford, 1953).

30 R. Linton, ed., *Acculturation in Seven American Indian Tribes* (New York, 1940).

31 E.H. Spicer, *Cycles of Conquest* (Tucson, 1962); his approach had been applied to other parts of North America in E.H. Spicer, ed., *Perspectives in American Indian Culture Change* (Chicago, 1961). Ethnohistory is here taken to mean the study of change and persistence in Native cultures that are in either direct or indirect contact with European ones. It employs a combination of oral traditions and documentary evidence, mainly recorded by Europeans, to study the history of Native groups. Ethnohistory does not include the use, which has been made since the last century, of documentary evidence as a source of ethnographic data. The latter is now generally called 'historical ethnography'.

and values had been suddenly and radically transformed as the imperatives of the fur trade rendered these traditional relations obsolete.³² None of the American 'pioneers' of ethnohistory drew attention to Bailey's work. Even Eleanor Leacock, who, like Bailey, sought to refute Speck's arguments in support of the aboriginality of family hunting territories, dismissed it as a compilation of "the early material on eastern Algonkian acculturation".³³

It was not until a new generation of Canadian anthropologists and historians turned to the study of Native history that Bailey's pioneering work was appreciated for its true worth. This process was substantially assisted when the University of Toronto Press reprinted *The Conflict of European and Eastern Algonkian Cultures* in 1969.³⁴ In their work on eastern North America these younger scholars had had to rediscover the sources Bailey had used and, like him, many of them had been guided in their early interpretations by the work of Harold Innis on the fur trade. Many had also been trained in anthropology by McIlwraith and those who succeeded him at the University of Toronto. As a Canadian who was introduced to ethnohistory in the United States, I can personally attest the excitement I experienced when I discovered in Bailey's writings the roots of the national tradition in which I was working. I know that I am not the only Canadian ethnohistorian who had that experience.³⁵ While ethnohistory is today an international approach to the study of 'people without history' in their encounters with Europeans,³⁶ the special importance of the fur trade for understanding the history of relations between Natives and newcomers across Canada ensures the lasting importance of the work of Innis and Bailey for defining a specifically Canadian version of this approach. I have no doubt that Bailey's inspiration accounts in part for the flourishing condition of ethnohistorical research in Canada and the disproportionate role that Canadian ethnohistorians play in North American and international contexts.³⁷

32 G.T. Hunt, *The Wars of the Iroquois: A Study in Intertribal Trade Relations* (Madison, 1940).

33 E. Leacock, *The Montagnais "Hunting Territory" and the Fur Trade* (Menasha, 1954), p. 8.

34 A.G. Bailey, *The Conflict of European and Eastern Algonkian Cultures 1504-1700: A Study in Canadian Civilization* (2nd ed., Toronto, 1969). This second edition, spurred by a small but continuing demand for Bailey's work and highly supportive readers' reports, numbered 2,000 copies, of which only a few remain unsold. Six years before, the University of Toronto Press had reprinted another Canadian anthropological classic, Horatio Hale's *The Iroquois Book of Rites* (Toronto, 1963).

35 B.G. Trigger, "Review of *The Conflict*", *Canadian Historical Review*, LII (1971), pp. 183-7; Donald Smith, "Review of *The Conflict*", *Ethnohistory*, XIX (1972), pp. 88-9.

36 E.R. Wolf, *Europe and the People without History* (Berkeley, 1982).

37 Another factor is the influential role that has been played from early times by historical approaches in the social sciences in Canada. This is reflected in the commitment of McIlwraith and Hart cited in note 1 and the far-reaching influence of the economic history promoted by Innis. It may be that Bailey and younger Canadian ethnohistorians both reflect this general trend

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Over the years, ethnohistory has grown increasingly important throughout North America as the 'New History' has turned from an almost exclusive preoccupation with national political development to the fragmented study of the history of regions, classes, genders, and ethnic groups.³⁸ Over the past three decades the number of people studying Native history and the audience for their works have not ceased to grow. Professional ethnohistorians are now employed in anthropology, history, and Native studies departments. While the interdisciplinary character of ethnohistory is clearly recognized and accounted to be one of the approach's strengths, ethnohistorians who have been trained in either history or anthropology continue to debate the relative importance of the contributions made by these two disciplines.³⁹ This is a creative tension so long as it does not get out of hand. While some see ethnohistory as a new discipline, a growing number view it as a technique that makes possible the broader study of Native American history.⁴⁰

I periodically reread *The Conflict of European and Eastern Algonkian Cultures*, and each time I do I am impressed by the extent to which Bailey anticipated later developments in ethnohistory. I also discover in his book hitherto unnoticed material relating to current debates in the discipline. This is not to claim that the book is not also a reflection of its time. Reviewers, especially of the second edition, have deplored Bailey's occasional unwitting employment of racial stereotypes, his failure to subject Jesuit sources to sufficient criticism before accepting them as evidence of Native behaviour, and his undue reliance on Lahontan.⁴¹ I have criticized him for his preoccupation with diffusion and for lumping together the, in many respects, very different

in Canadian scholarship. The relative unimportance of the historical approach in the social sciences in the United States has been commented on by J. Bronowski, "Symposium on technology and social criticism: introduction-technology and culture in evolution", *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, I (1971), pp. 195-206.

38 Bernard Bailyn, "The challenge of modern historiography", *American Historical Review*, LXXXVII (1982), pp. 1-24; for recent developments in Canadian historiography, see Carl Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History* (2nd ed., Toronto, 1986), pp. 259-320 and articles collected in T. Crowley, ed., *Clio's Craft: A Primer of Historical Methods* (Toronto, 1988).

39 This topic is examined in B.G. Trigger, "Ethnohistory: problems and prospects", *Ethnohistory*, XXIX (1982), pp. 1-19. For examples of historians' complaints about anthropologists, see Francis Jennings, "Anthropological foundations for American Indian history", *Reviews in American History*, VII (1979), pp. 486-93; J.S. Pritchard, "L'amérindien victime de l'incompétence des historiens", *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, XLI (1987), pp. 63-70; Cornelius Jaenen, "Assessing early Native-European contact", *Journal of Canadian Studies*, XXIII, 1 & 2 (Spring-Summer 1988), pp. 243-7.

40 B.G. Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic* (Montreal, 1976), p. 12.

41 W. Walker, "Review of *The Conflict*"; C.W.M. Hart, "Review of *The Conflict*"; Donald Smith, "Review of *The Conflict*".

experiences of the Micmac and Montagnais in their relations with Europeans.⁴² As time passes, however, these imperfections pale into insignificance beside Bailey's enduring accomplishments.

Since the 1960s, it has been increasingly recognized that Native American cultures have been changing in response to European pressures since the 16th century, as Bailey argued in 1934. European diseases, trade goods, and Native population displacements transformed groups far beyond the frontier of European exploration and settlement.⁴³ Archaeological evidence also reveals, far more clearly than it did in the 1930s, the extent to which Native cultures changed throughout prehistoric times.⁴⁴ The notion that Native cultures were static prior to European contact and altered only slowly thereafter until they disintegrated as a result of European domination is now recognized to have been part of a mythology the Euroamericans created to justify their colonization of North America.⁴⁵ Native Peoples were always capable of change and the forms of change that they were familiar with in prehistoric times often provided patterns for their reactions to earliest contact with Europeans.⁴⁶ Every ethnographic description must be understood as referring, not to a static traditional culture, but to how Native People lived at a particular point in time and only through empirical research can it be determined how these same people lived at an earlier or later period. It is now widely acknowledged that there are no such things as ethnographic data that have meaning independently of a historical context. Under these circumstances, ethnohistorical research is essential if anthropologists are to understand the significance of ethnographic

42 B.G. Trigger, "Review of *The Conflict*".

43 D. R. Wilcox and W.B. Masse, eds., *The Protohistoric Period in the North American Southwest, AD 1450-1700* (Tempe, 1981); W.W. Fitzhugh, ed., *Cultures in Contact: The Impact of European Contacts on Native American Cultural Institutions, A.D. 1000-1800* (Washington, 1985); J.W. Bradley, *Evolution of the Onondaga Iroquois: Accommodating Change, 1500-1655* (Syracuse, 1987); A.F. Ramenofsky, *Vectors of Death: The Archaeology of European Contact* (Albuquerque, 1987); Peter Ramsden, "A society transformed", *Rotunda* (Spring 1988), pp. 45-8; M.T. Smith, *Archaeology of Aboriginal Culture Change in the Interior Southeast: Depopulation During the Early Historic Period* (Gainesville, 1987).

44 Standard surveys include G.R. Willey, *An Introduction to American Archaeology*, Vol. I, *North and Middle America* (Englewood Cliffs, 1966) and J.D. Jennings, *Prehistory of North America* (2nd ed., New York, 1974).

45 B.G. Trigger, "Archaeology and the image of the American Indian", *American Antiquity*, XLIII (1980), pp. 662-76; the role of the Smithsonian Institution in promoting a 'flat view' of Native prehistory has been documented by D.J. Meltzer, "The antiquity of man and the development of American archaeology", *Advances in Archaeological Method and Theory*, VI (1983), pp. 1-51.

46 N.O. Lurie, "Indian cultural adjustment to European civilization" in J.M. Smith, ed., *Seventeenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill, 1959), p. 37; Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*.

data.⁴⁷ This historicization of the very core of anthropology — its comparative study of non-Western cultures — represents the elaboration of insights that were first clearly articulated in Bailey's early work.

Each year sees further documentation that the Columbian encounter was disastrous for the Native Peoples of the New World both because of the epidemic diseases that Europeans inadvertently brought with them and because of the negative impacts that their rapacity for land and profit had upon Native People. It is also being realized that relations between Native People and newcomers involved the increasing subjugation of Native People to colonial regimes that were simultaneously oppressive, neglectful, and paternalistic. There has been growing documentation of the extent to which force was used to subject Canadian Native People to EuroCanadian control and of the dishonesty and callousness that all too often characterized the Canadian government's administration of Native affairs.⁴⁸ These developments also continue a trend that was clearly established in Bailey's work.

At the same time ethnohistorians are also elaborating Bailey's observation that, despite its brutality, the European conquest of North America did not have only a destructive effect on Native People. The histories of Native groups throughout the Americas are marked by tenacious resistance to European encroachment and the successful preservation of many aspects of their traditional cultures down to the present. At the same time Native People did not hesitate to borrow technology, art, folklore, and religious beliefs from Europeans and integrate them into their cultures. Native Peoples have also shown great ingenuity in devising solutions to the formidable problems that have confronted them. These include forging new alliances and new levels of identity, most recently on a pan-Indian scale.⁴⁹ No other people in history, including the Europeans who were afflicted by the Black Death in the 14th century, have suffered from mortality rates that reached the levels experienced by the Native

47 The implications of this relationship are discussed in greater detail in B.G. Trigger, "Archaeology at the crossroads: what's new?", *Annual Review of Anthropology*, XIII (1984), pp. 275-300.

48 L.F.S. Upton, *Micmacs and Colonists: White-Indian Relations in the Maritimes, 1713-1867* (Vancouver, 1979); J.L. Tobias, "Canada's subjugation of the Plains Cree, 1879-1885", *Canadian Historical Review*, LXIV (1983), pp. 519-48; B.M. Gough, *Gunboat Frontier: British Maritime Authority and Northwest Coast Indians, 1846-1890* (Vancouver, 1984); E.B. Tittle, *A Narrow Vision: Duncan Campbell Scott and the Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada* (Vancouver, 1986).

49 On the development of pan-Indian movements after 1899, see H. W. Hertzberg, *The Search for an American Indian Identity* (Syracuse, 1971); S.D. Gill, *Mother Earth: An American Story* (Chicago, 1987), presents a brilliant analysis of changes in Native religious concepts in response to new conditions; on the survival of traditional religious concepts under a veneer of Christianity, see D. Blanchard, "...to the other side of the sky: Catholicism at Kahnawake, 1667-1700", *Anthropologica*, XXIV (1982), pp. 77-102.

Peoples of the New World in the first two centuries of European contact. Nor have many peoples had to fight against heavier odds to preserve their lives and identities and in the longer term to overcome the disadvantages of poverty, inadequate education, and discrimination that have been their lot as losers in the struggle for control of North America. The Native People of North America have emerged from these battles as survivors *par excellence*. Today, in the midst of the ecological and social crises that are afflicting North American society, a growing number of them believe that it is their turn to teach a lesson to the newcomers and guide them to a better way of life.⁵⁰ Over half a century ago Bailey clearly delineated both aspects of the North American encounter and began to document the dual role of Native People as victims and survivors.

Bailey also stressed the importance of viewing the encounter between Europeans and Native People as a two-way process in which Europeans were influenced less negatively but scarcely less significantly than were Native People. Today ethnohistorians are no longer preoccupied almost exclusively with the impact that the presence of Europeans had upon Native cultures. There is growing emphasis on the technological and economic contributions that Native cultures made to successful European colonization, how Europeans perceived Native People, and the intellectual impact that the encounter with Native People and their values had upon European thinking.⁵¹ These developments are progressively blurring the distinction between ethnohistory and a burgeoning Western intellectual history. This has also had a methodological impact on the study of Native history. Ethnohistorians now recognize that the European reporting of their contact with Native Peoples was greatly influenced by the preconceptions that Europeans brought with them. Because it is impossible to determine what the records left by these Europeans tell us about Native behaviour unless these preoccupations are understood and allowed for, European intellectual history is now seen as an essential prerequisite for the study of ethnohistory.

The most heated controversies in ethnohistory today take the form of confrontation between rationalist-materialist and idealist-cultural relativist interpretations of human behaviour. No ethnohistorian ignores the importance

50 Georges Sioui, "Pour une autohistoire Amérindienne: Essai sur les fondements d'une morale sociale proprement Américaine", M.A. thesis, Université Laval, 1987.

51 Cornelius Jaenen, *Friend and Foe: Aspects of French-Amerindian Cultural Contact in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Toronto, 1976); R.F. Berkhofer, Jr., *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York, 1978); Anthony Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology* (Cambridge, 1982); O.P. Dickason, *The Myth of the Savage and the Beginnings of French Colonialism in the Americas* (Edmonton, 1984); F.-M. Gagnon, *Ces hommes dits sauvages* (Montreal, 1984); James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America* (New York, 1985).

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of cultural traditions as factors influencing human behaviour. Nor would any of them still accept Hunt's claim that Native cultures were revolutionized with electrifying speed as soon as European technology became available.⁵² Ethno-historians disagree, however, about the role that different aspects of the contact situation played in bringing about changes in Native cultures and the relative speed and ease with which different kinds of change occurred. The rationalist-materialist school, drawing part of its inspiration from the work of Innis, argues that Native People quickly appreciated the utilitarian value of European metalware and soon became dependent on it. Their efforts to obtain these goods led them to ignore traditional supernatural sanctions that limited the taking of game and eventually brought them into increasingly destructive conflicts with neighbouring Native groups over the control of trade routes and hunting territories. Growing reliance on metal goods and decreasing supplies of furs increased dependence on Europeans that undermined Native self-confidence and led to the gradual abandonment of traditional belief systems.⁵³ Some ethnohistorians interested in political relations between Indians and Europeans have likewise stressed rational calculations of the political situation as playing a major role in the struggles of Indian groups to maintain their independence and control of lands.⁵⁴

Recently, however, a growing number of ethnohistorians have criticized such views for being unacceptably rationalistic and have assigned cultural traditions a more important role as determinants of human behaviour.⁵⁵ George Hamell has argued that Native groups initially valued European goods not for their utilitarian properties but for the religious significance they assigned to them in terms of their traditional religious beliefs. He maintains that these traditional evaluations explain relations between Indians and Europeans during the two centuries following the European discovery of North America.⁵⁶ While most materialists agree that Hamell has helped to elucidate how Native Peoples initially perceived Europeans and their material culture, they argue that in the long run Native People rationally assessed the value of European technology

52 Hunt, *Wars of the Iroquois*, pp. 4-5; cf. Richard White, *The Roots of Dependency* (Lincoln, 1983), p. xix.

53 A.W. Trelease, *Indian Affairs in Colonial New York: The Seventeenth Century* (Ithaca, 1960); B.G. Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic and Natives and Newcomers*.

54 Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America* (Chapel Hill, 1975); *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire* (New York, 1984); *Empire of Fortune* (New York, 1988).

55 The most influential exponent of this point of view is the anthropologist M.D. Sahlins, *Islands of History* (Chicago, 1985); for theoretical background, see his *Culture and Practical Reason* (Chicago, 1976).

56 George Hamell, "Strawberries, floating islands, and rabbit captains: mythical realities and European contact in the Northeast during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries", *Journal of Canadian Studies*, XXI (1987), p. 74.

and that these assessments provided the basis for future relations with Europeans.⁵⁷

Other idealist ethnohistorians have gone still further and suggested that Native groups were little influenced by European technology or economic considerations relating to the fur trade during the early centuries of contact. They maintain that at least until 1760 most of them remained economically independent and were able to determine their own destinies in the midst of European colonial rivalries.⁵⁸ They also claim that Indian warfare during the early historical period was nothing more than a continuation of long-standing conflicts, the scale of which was perhaps exacerbated by the acquisition of European firearms and by a traditional desire to replace unparalleled population losses resulting from European diseases by incorporating prisoners into their societies.⁵⁹

The most extreme formulation of these views suggests that a historical consciousness is alien to North American Indians, who have always viewed their relationship to the cosmos very differently from the anthropomorphic concept that dominates Western thinking. Calvin Martin and some other scholars (both Native and non-Native) deny that ethnohistorians have the ability to write about societies that were not "conceived in history" and did not willingly launch themselves into a historical trajectory.⁶⁰ Even if such generalizations about the many hundreds of Native cultures that have existed in North America are correct, it is contrary to all historiographic experience to suggest that historians or ethnohistorians cannot gain sufficient understanding of an alien culture to study its history or that histories cannot be written about cultures because the people being studied were not interested in history.⁶¹ Hyper-idealism has led Martin to adopt an ostrich's view of historiography.

While these revisionist positions reflect the recent, and perhaps transient, popularity of idealist interpretations of human behaviour in the social sciences, even the less radical ones have serious implications for how we explain human behaviour. Many Native activists and Euroamerican scholars want to convince

57 B.G. Trigger, "Early Native North American responses to European contact: romantic versus rationalistic interpretations", Paper read at Conference on "Rethinking the Encounter: New Perspectives on Conquest and Colonization", University of Florida, Gainesville, 17-20 April, 1988.

58 William Eccles, "Review of *Natives and Newcomers*", *William and Mary Quarterly*, XLIII (1986), pp. 480-3; C.E. Heidenreich, "Review of *Natives and Newcomers*", *Native Studies Review*, II (1986), pp. 140-7.

59 D.K. Richter, "War and culture: the Iroquois experience", *William and Mary Quarterly*, XL (1983), pp. 528-9.

60 C. Martin, ed., *The American Indian and the Problem of History* (Oxford, 1987).

61 B.W. Sheehan, "Review of *The American Indian and the Problem of History*", *William and Mary Quarterly*, XLV (1988), pp. 362-6.

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their readers that there is a traditional pattern of Native cultures which is irreconcilably opposed to that of Europeans and which has survived unaltered, despite all of the changing circumstances in which Native People have found themselves over the past 500 years.⁶² While such beliefs should not be dismissed out of hand,⁶³ if carried too far they lead to the conclusion that every aspect of human behaviour is determined by the pattern of culture into which an individual is born. Such views de-emphasize the role of reason and calculation in human affairs and are counterfactual to observations, frequently made in our own lives and in the historical record, that even the most cherished beliefs have been abandoned when the people who hold them cease to believe that they promote their best interests.⁶⁴ At one level modern idealism is far removed from the evolutionary and racist views that inspired Francis Parkman's denigration of Native Peoples. Its adherents sincerely believe that they are honouring and enhancing the values of traditional Native cultures. Yet they share with Parkman a minimization of aboriginal rationality that, upon reflection, few Native People can find attractive and which seriously distorts our understanding of any human behaviour.

Other idealistically-inclined ethnohistorians have tended to lay heavy emphasis upon reason divorced from either economic or cultural specifics. Lucien Campeau, who firmly believes Christianity to be superior to traditional Native religions, argues that the Jesuit missionaries had little difficulty in convincing their Native converts of this self-evident truth.⁶⁵ James Axtell likewise views

62 The most convincing presentation of this position is Sioui, *Pour une autohistoire Amérindienne*. On the other hand, on the basis of the flimsiest evidence, Calvin Martin suggests that traditional beliefs in animal spirits were widely abandoned as a result of epidemics in the first two centuries of contact, although curiously enough these beliefs have survived to the present in some areas where they are supposed to have disappeared. He also argues that this religious change led to a 'war against the animals' which, rather than a Native wish for European goods, initiated the fur trade: *Keepers of the Game: Indian-Animal Relationships and Fur Trade* (Berkeley, 1978). For critiques, see Shepard Krech, III, ed., *Indians, Animals and the Fur Trade* (Athens, Georgia, 1981).

63 Gill's *Mother Earth* provides a systematic account of the recent origins of supposedly aboriginal beliefs that are claimed to be shared by most modern Native groups. Calvin Martin also discusses the recent development of the view (including the self-view) of modern Native People as natural ecologists, although he argues that they had a profoundly different 'cosmic vision' when it came to interpreting nature than did Europeans: *Keepers of the Game*, pp. 156-88. On this cosmic vision, see also William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York, 1983).

64 Recent thoughtful support for the rationalist position can be found in Dan Sperber, *On Anthropological Knowledge* (Cambridge, 1985). For more general discussions of rationalism and relativity, see M. Hollis and S. Lukes, eds., *Rationality and Relativism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1982); I.C. Jarvie, *Rationality and Relativism* (London, 1984); Ernest Gellner, *Relativism and the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, 1985).

65 Lucien Campeau, *La Mission des Jésuites chez les Hurons, 1634-1650* (Montreal, 1987).

conversion primarily as an intellectual process that was aided by the changing circumstances in which Native People found themselves living. He also believes, though offering no substantiation for the claim, that "Indians were not as far from the Christian invaders in religious belief as they seemed to be in practice".⁶⁶ Axtell credits the Jesuits with far greater success in their endeavours to convert Native People during the 17th century than did many contemporary French eye-witnesses, or Bailey, who unequivocally concluded that their missions must be judged to have been a failure.⁶⁷

Bailey was aware of the alternative rationalist-materialist and idealist-relativist positions in 1934, and sought to reconcile them when he insisted that European goods were evaluated by Native People both from a pragmatic point of view and in terms of their traditional religious beliefs. My reading of Bailey suggests that he regarded the rational appraisal of European technology as playing a major role in shaping Native relations with Europeans. He did not discount the importance of traditional cultural patterns but rejected the idea that such beliefs dominated Native behaviour to the extent that a reasoned assessment of such views in the context of changing political and economic circumstances was impossible. Yet his emphasis on the resilience and tenacity of Native religious beliefs and values suggested that these were not abandoned easily or until growing dependence on Europeans rendered such psychological transformations compelling.⁶⁸ My aim at this point is not to resolve problems of human behaviour that have bedevilled philosophy, history, and the social sciences for many generations. It is clear, however, that the young Bailey had thought carefully about these issues and selected a middle ground that still accords well with the data.

Like anthropology, ethnohistory was originally regarded as a romantic concern with people and problems that had little relevance to everyday life. Those who studied acculturation claimed to be seeking generalizations that would help government agencies adjust Native People more effectively to life in modern societies, and after the Second World War many anthropologists and historians in the United States turned to ethnohistory as a result of their involvement as researchers in land claims cases.⁶⁹ Many others, myself included, were initially drawn to ethnohistory in a spirit of pure romanticism. Ethnohistory remained the study of the history of groups that were of little concern either to mainstream North American society or to North American historians.

In recent decades the situation has changed radically, not because of what ethnohistorians have accomplished, but because of what Native People them-

66 Axtell, *The Invasion Within*, p. 14.

67 Bailey, "Social revolution", p. 275.

68 *Ibid.*, pp. 266-7.

69 Hickerson, *The Chippewa and their Neighbors*, p. 2.

selves have done. Now the most rapidly increasing ethnic grouping in North America, Native nations are rapidly overcoming longstanding ethnic antipathies that often made it possible for Europeans to pit one Native group against another and are acquiring the determination and skills to recover control over their own lives in the economic, political, and cultural spheres. As Native agitation increases, EuroCanadian and EuroAmerican politicians and the general public are finding it more important to understand Native People and how the present situation has arisen. While ethnohistory has played only a marginal role in the Native renaissance, and the impact of this renaissance on ethnohistory can scarcely be said to have begun, it has revealed, first to ethnohistorians and then increasingly to non-Natives generally, how European settlers dealt with Native People. It is uncovering the often reprehensible stereotypes and base motives that guided such behaviour and which continue to influence EuroCanadian and EuroAmerican views of Native People to the present day. In recent years Canadian ethnohistorians have been particularly effective in stripping away the saccharine coating of our national history to reveal the injustices, coercion, and hypocrisy that have pervaded relations between Native People and Europeans, especially during the last 200 years.⁷⁰ Yet the principal accomplishment of ethnohistory so far is not what it tells us about how Native People have perceived their experiences or coped with European newcomers over the centuries, but what it is revealing about White attitudes towards Native People. At a time when Native People have been effectively shut out of the constitutional process by the Meech Lake Agreement and when rising anger about the failure of federal and provincial governments to redress longstanding grievances is likely to boil over increasingly often into violence, such understanding is extremely valuable.⁷¹ All of this confirms the farsightedness of Bailey's belief, acquired as a graduate student at the University of Toronto, that Canadian history should have "a significance beyond its intrinsic interest".⁷² As a mirror in which EuroCanadian society can learn how it has treated Native People, the discipline Bailey invented has an important role to play in resolving one of the key moral and practical issues that continues to confront contemporary Canadian society.

70 See note 48. For recent studies in the history of missions, see J.W. Grant, *Moon of Wintertime: Missionaries and the Indians of Canada in Encounter Since 1534* (Toronto, 1984); David Mulhall, *Will to Power: The Missionary Career of Father Morice* (Vancouver, 1986).

71 While anthropologists have little to say about this, M.T. Kelly brilliantly portrays the rising levels of violence in his award-winning novel *A Dream Like Mine* (Toronto, 1987). Walker ("Review of *The Conflict*") criticized Bailey for titling his book *The Conflict*..., on the grounds that this title ignored the co-operative aspects that Walker claimed bulked equally large in relationships between Native People and Europeans. Recent research, including Upton's *Micmacs and Colonists*, tends to confirm the appropriateness of Bailey's choice. Bailey's title echoed G. Pitt-Rivers's *The Clash of Cultures*.

72 Bailey, *Culture and Nationality*, p. 2.

Although he has always been modest about accepting credit for his accomplishments in this field,⁷³ Alfred Bailey is without a doubt North America's first identifiable ethnohistorian. While at first little attention was paid to his efforts and ethnohistory was reinvented in the United States, his pioneering work in this field is not merely a historical curiosity. When *The Conflict of European and Eastern Algonkian Cultures* was rediscovered by Canadian ethnohistorians in the 1960s, a special intellectual affinity was immediately recognized between his work and theirs. In part that affinity reflected the particular ecological and historical processes, centring on the fur trade, that have shaped Indian-European relations in the northern half of North America. More significantly, however, it reflected the astonishing comprehensiveness of Bailey's initial vision of what ethnohistory should be and the depth of his insights into the processes shaping relations between Natives and newcomers in Canada. It is highly significant that after the passage of more than 50 years his founding writings, more than any others which which I am familiar, continue to address and take a position in relation to controversies that have only recently developed within ethnohistory. There may well be other issues he addressed that remain unrecognized because current thinking in ethnohistory has not yet caught up with him. While Bailey has published very little in ethnohistory since he wrote *The Conflict of European and Eastern Algonkian Cultures*, his original work remains alive and relevant to a vital and rapidly expanding discipline. There is no more convincing testimonial to the power and creativity of his original insights.

73 See his comment reported in *UNB Perspectives*, Alumni Edition (Winter 1988), p. 5.