

# The Canadian Encyclopedia of Limitless Identities

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been exhausted. The importance of the region (except as setting) in most of these studies is not at all apparent. Some ethnics, such as the Jews, are more ethnic than others. And some ethnics, such as the Acadians, appear not to be ethnics at all. Whatever the extent of ethnicity in their approach, all these studies share a common sense of tension and ambivalence. They seek for their subjects a full sharing in economic prosperity and social equality, at the same time that they maintain an expectation of a separate sense of identity. Acculturation is desirable, so long as it doesn't go too far. If Atlantic Canada's ethnic groups can manage this trick of balancing short of assimilation, the ostensible ideal of multiculturalism, they will indeed have done well.

J.M. BUMSTED

### The Canadian Encyclopedia of Limitless Identities

THE CANADIAN ENCYCLOPEDIA IN BOTH ITS 1985 and 1988 editions has been hailed by most reviewers as a publishing triumph. I have no quarrel with such a position. As someone who teaches Canadian Studies and is presently writing several chapters for an introductory Canadian history textbook, I can testify to the enormous value of this handsome monument to Alberta's 75th anniversary as a Canadian province and to Mel Hurtig's unfailing confidence in Canada as an independent national entity. The expanded second edition, the subject of this review, is especially welcome, correcting, as it does, some of the errors of the first, providing statistics from the 1986 census, and offering a more reliable index. Unfortunately, the second edition adds new errors and consolidates some of the questionable assumptions built into the *Encyclopedia's* structure. It will, of course, come as no surprise to readers of *Acadiensis* that some of these difficulties arise from the way in which the Atlantic Region is integrated into the *Encyclopedia's* "national" perspective. For, although "limited identities" are richly explored in these volumes, reflecting, as they must, the intellectual climate of the times, the pitfalls of this approach are also starkly revealed.

I will not dwell long on the virtues of the *Encyclopedia*. It is obvious even from a cursory glance that it is a well-illustrated, meticulously-edited publication, an indispensable reference work for every home and school library. My undergraduate students are already plagiarizing its entries on such topics as Patriation of the Constitution, Foreign Investment and Women's Suffrage, no doubt spurred by the assumption that no professor in her right mind would read "the whole damned thing". In truth, many of the entries in the *Encyclopedia* are a pleasure to read. Among my favourites are Jack Granatstein's spirited piece on Canada and the United States, presumably penned while the free trade debate was reaching a crescendo, and J. Murray Beck's loving overview of his native province, whose

people, he argues, “are insisting more and more that their pleasant way of life should not be sacrificed to material considerations”. There are excellent essays on Literature, the Environment, Native People, Science and the Welfare State, to name only five examples. Students can almost be forgiven for sticking closely to such texts. Indeed, I doubt if I could have written my textbook chapter on “The Canadian Economy Since 1960” without the *Encyclopedia*’s substantial entries on aspects of the Canadian economy and various industries — complete with easily read graphs and tables. In short, the *Encyclopedia* is everything I could ask for in a Canadian reference book.

Because this is so, it is alarming to discover that the part of Canada I know best, that is, the Annapolis Valley of Nova Scotia, is the subject of a number of egregious errors and surprising omissions. Are the entries for areas I know less well equally flawed? Wolfville is still cited in the second edition as being 75 rather than 95 kilometers from Halifax, the brief reference to (New England) Planters — new to the second edition — is hopelessly muddled, and the photograph of Annapolis Royal, wrong in the first edition, is still puzzling to a native of the area. The entries on Joao Fagundes and the Bay of Fundy make no connection between the two. The Canadian Forces base at Greenwood is left out; Cornwallis is included. Valley-born industrialist R.A. Jodrey is inexplicably absent. (He is, of course, dead now but so, too, are a number of other businessmen who rate an entry.) Although William Hall, a Black from Horton Bluff, was the first Canadian to receive a Victoria Cross, he is neither mentioned in his own right nor in the entry on the Victoria Cross. A.L. Hardy, who immortalized the “Land of Evangeline” in his fine photographs, and whose career is detailed in Graeme Wynn’s 1985 *Acadiensis* article, failed to make the grade while pioneer photographers in other parts of Canada are included. And, I have a sneaking suspicion that if Mermaid Theatre, a young audience puppet troupe with an international reputation and a strong 15-year track record, had been based in a more central location than Windsor, Nova Scotia, it and its founder, Evelyn Garbouroy, would have warranted separate billing.

Omissions in the larger regional context are also disturbing. Nowhere in the discussion of the English language is there a reference to Newfoundland English, a topic which inspired a dictionary all of its own. Although Canadian literature in nearly all its forms — novels, poetry, autobiography — is magnificently documented, diaries and journals are ignored as a separate category. Surely it cannot be because two of Canada’s world famous diarists are Maritime-born L.M. Montgomery and Charles Ritchie. And how in a historical treatment of Hymns in Canada could Canada’s first major hymn writer, Henry Alline, be ignored? or the Sable Island ponies be given such short shrift in the entry on Wild Horses? or a discussion of early exploration focus almost exclusively on the Canadas and the West? When Thomas S. Axworthy claims in a discussion of liberalism that it entered Canada with the Loyalists, his ignorance of the political culture of Atlantic Canada is clearly revealed. (Whiffs of liberalism wafted through the region as early as 1758 when a reluctant Governor Charles Lawrence

was forced to establish representative institutions, and offer assurances of freedom of religion, speech and assembly in the old province of Nova Scotia.) The region's political culture is also short-changed when United Farmers organizations in Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec receive separate entries but those based farther east are passed over. While we in the Atlantic Region have become accustomed to such treatment, we are once again reminded in the pages of the *Encyclopedia* how difficult it is to get regional scholarship integrated into national analysis. The volumes are rich in entries on the Atlantic Canada, lovingly written by regional specialists, but when a topic is covered from a national perspective the region too often recedes from view, unless, in rare cases, such as David Frank's entry on the Working Class in English Canada and James Walker's discussion of Canada's Black population, the general entry is written by someone whose special interest is Atlantic Canada.

Even where integration is reasonably successful, the failure to convey the richness of regional culture rankles. It is as if "limited identities" were somehow mutually exclusive and, if region is taken into account, regional ethnicity, class and gender can be overlooked. Despite the careful research by Ruth Holmes Whitehead, Micmac quillwork receives scant attention compared to the craft traditions of the West Coast tribes. The legendary Africville is missing while Cabbagetown rates an entry. In general, the political and cultural heroes of the region's Black population are, with the exception of boxer Sam Langford, absent. Did the great contralto Portia White, a woman, a Black and a Maritimer, have simply too many "limited identities" to make her worthy of notice? With such books as John N. Grant's *Black Nova Scotians* (Halifax, 1980) easily available, it is surprising that the region's Black heritage is so cursorily dismissed. At the same time, in a curious reversal of the tables, feminist Agnes Dennis is recognized while her husband and nephew, successive publishers of the influential *Halifax Herald*, are unaccounted for. Since other important Canadian newspaper publishers are singled out for recognition, the male Dennises should receive "entry equity".

It would be all too easy to continue in this vein and to do so would be rightfully considered ungenerous. I suspect there are perceived inadequacies from any cultural perspective. I perhaps should be grateful that only once in the four volumes were my regional sensibilities genuinely offended. Donald Phillipson claims in his entry on Wallace Turnbull that he triumphed as an aeronautical engineer despite working in the "geographically remote" location of Rothsay, New Brunswick. (Strangely, Marconi, Bell and McCurdy also found the Atlantic Region a congenial place for experiments in transportation and communications.) Such throw away lines alert us to the fact that the *Encyclopedia*, for all its virtues, is spiritually located outside of Atlantic Canada. Only 14 out of 278 paid consultants were drawn from the region, nine from Nova Scotia, three from Newfoundland and two from New Brunswick. Prince Edward Island remains unrepresented, though Ian Robertson, based at the University of Toronto,

undoubtedly performed yeoman service on behalf of his native province. Those representing the "limited identities" of our own region — Natives, Blacks, Acadians, for example — appear not to have been directly involved in planning the *Encyclopedia* at all. It is also unfortunate that more of the region's consultants do not come from fields other than history and political science in an enterprise that rightly emphasises many other aspects of Canadian reality. But perhaps nose counting is an irrelevant exercise. From the Preface it is clear that the original consultants were not much involved in the preparation of revisions for the second edition. Phyllis Blakeley's name remains on the list of consultants despite the fact that she has been dead for some years, and people like Phillip Buckner, Gregory Kealey, John Reid and Peter Waite, consultants who are all very much alive most of the time, would almost certainly have spotted the problems I have observed had they been asked to read the text from a regional perspective. My major concern here is not the perceived errors and omissions in the text. They would inevitably develop in an enterprise as ambitious as this one. Instead it is the haunting fear that the planning with respect to regional balance that went into the first edition seems to be lacking in the second. While it may be the changing political climate between 1985 and 1988 that explains such a shift in emphasis, I suspect it is also the unintentional result of the bureaucratization of the editorial process which almost by definition excludes major input from the Atlantic Region.

If regions within Canada are sometimes undermined by the rigorous nationalism of the *Encyclopedia*, identities outside of Canada are even less well served. Like the encyclopedias associated with the great imperial nations, *The Canadian Encyclopedia* treats the world as an extension of Canada's foreign policy, but such a perspective is surprisingly, indeed, sometimes absurdly, limited. Consider, for example, the entry for Hong Kong. Surely, as one of the "Four Tigers" transforming the global economy, Hong Kong means more to Canada in the 1980s than an unfortunate military experience during the Second World War. Despite Canada's extensive relations with many nations, only the United States and Australia warrant separate discussion. Arguments could certainly be made for including essays on Great Britain and France and, in my opinion, for a paragraph or two on Canada's interaction with each of the world's nations. A brief, though excellent, entry on Canada and the Third World is simply not good enough. Canada's relations with such countries as the Soviet Union, China, South Africa or Brazil are complex and as worthy of inclusion as entries on Farm Drainage or Sondra Gotlieb.

Fortunately, the *Canadian Encyclopedia* will almost certainly have a long life and many editions. In the future, the editors may well be advised to hire a few prickly polymaths to read "the whole damn thing" from a variety of perspectives, just to avoid the pitfalls of Canada's limitless identities. A more practical approach would be for the region's scholars to submit to the *Encyclopedia's* editorial offices their own lists of errors and omissions. If the region has been

short-changed in some way by the second edition, it is in part because we in Atlantic Canada were slow to review the first edition in our journals and newspapers. (Even *Acadiensis* failed to review it!) It is all too easy to take pot shots at a mammoth undertaking such as this one and much harder to take the steps necessary to make the changes that are in order.

MARGARET CONRAD