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Review of *A Social Geography of Canada: Essays in Honour of J. Wreford Watson* by Guy M. Robinson

Randy Widdis

Department of Geography, University of Regina

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A Social Geography of Canada: Essays in Honour of J. Wreford Watson.
Guy M. Robinson, ed. Edinburgh: North British Publishing, 1988. x + 390 pp.
Maps, tables, and references. \$29.95 paper.

As a graduate student at McMaster and Queen's, I was made very aware of the contribution of J. Wreford Watson to Canadian geography. This is understandable since he was largely responsible for the establishment of geography departments at both these institutions as well as at Carleton. This collection of essays by former graduate students, friends, and colleagues on both sides of the Atlantic cover many of the themes of inquiry that interested Watson. The contents focus upon the changing character of Canadian landscapes and society, including dimensions of its historical development, its present spatial forms and current social issues. The essays are arranged into four different sections, each with an introduction by the editor who also provides an opening chapter discussing Watson's history in Canada and his fascination with the social geography of this country, and a concluding appendix outlining his geographical writing with a full bibliography.

Part One, a collection of articles on the cultural and ethnic mix of Canada, focuses on the historical competition between the two founding peoples over control of and access to political power, emphasizing that the existence of this competition is at the heart of Canadian society. At the same time, Pierre Camu, Jacques Bernier, and J. David Wood recognize that alongside the fundamental dualism of the country, regionalism, pluralism, and the relationship with the United States play an important part in economic, political, and social organization. The emphasis on the historical-geographic contexts of dualism, plurality, and regionalism are designed to set the stage for subsequent sections which focus on urban, rural, and planning dimensions of Canadian society.

Part Two, "The Urban Dynamic," introduces the reader to the rapidly changing social geographies of Canadian metropolitan areas. Lyndhurst Collins presents an historical overview of these changes; Fraser Taylor "maps" the socio-economic landscape of Ottawa-Hull; Isobel Carlyle does the same for Winnipeg, focussing particularly on the ethnic dimension of this pluralistic community; Leonard Evenden outlines the expansion of domestic space on Vancouver's North Shore; Peter Smith adopts a "territorial justice" approach in his comparison of metropolitan growth in Edmonton and Calgary, attributing the consolidated and fragmented nature of both cities respectively to different circumstances of community development; and Bernard Thraves offers some predictions on Canada's urban system for the year 2001, noting changes in the physical structure and social dimensions of the nation's urban communities.

Part Three, "Beyond Main Street," offers a discussion of rural Canada. Several themes are examined but all relate to the problems that are encountered by Canadians at the margins. Depopulation and social change and decline are themes that are addressed by all the authors, regardless of regional setting. After an introductory overview, Guy Robinson examines the rural-urban fringes of the country, noting in particular urban pressures placed on agricultural land; William Carlyle discusses rural change in the prairies, focussing on depopulation, fluctuating markets, declining services, and ethnicity; Eric Ross and Alan MacPherson continue on with this theme of decay in the hinterland in their respective historical studies of Pictou Island, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland; and John Stager presents a brief overview of the impact of Europeans on Inuit life and a more detailed discussion of the role of cooperatives in the north.

The essays in the final section examine planning policies and how social geography in Canada plans for the regulation of human use of the environment. Jonathan O'Riordan provides a general treatment of this theme, outlining the historical dimensions of environmentalism in Canada and identifying present issues and future challenges facing the country. In particular, he discusses the ways in which various interests have affected resource management policy, noting the problem of sharing responsibilities between federal and provincial governments. Derrick Sewell focuses on many of the same themes in his study of environmental policy in British Columbia, especially with respect to conservation and development issues in wilderness areas. Ernest Weeks considers the sticky issue of government mediation and the role that geographers can play in social planning in terms of establishing a geographical framework for implementation and evaluation of policies.

A Social Geography of Canada is very much a geographical interpretation, written by geographers in honour of one of their best and most influential

practitioners. The contributions are well written and readable, despite a few typographical errors, and present the reader with a myriad of facts, concepts, and reflections about this complex country. In particular, this book addresses the issues affecting aboriginal Canadians more than most regional and thematic treatments, carrying on in the humanist tradition of Wright's social geography. At times, references to geographical concepts and themes and specific Canadian historical and social trends make it difficult for non-geographers and those who know little about Canada to understand what processes are at work, but the monograph is not intended to be an introductory textbook on Canadian geography. The regional and social dimensions of Canada's relationship with the United States are only addressed briefly and Canadians living outside Ontario and Quebec may perceive the limited discussion of regional alienation in the Maritimes and the West in the opening section as another example of central Canadian bias. While one may question the choice of themes and variability of regional coverage, it nevertheless is a work that furthers our understanding of a country that is not well understood by its inhabitants, let alone its global neighbors. **Randy Widdis**, *Department of Geography, University of Regina*.