

Reviews

The Historiography of the British Empire-Commonwealth: Trends, Interpretations and Resources. Ed. Robin W. Winks. Durham, N.C., Duke University Press, 1966. 596 pp. U.S. price: \$12.50.

THIS comprehensive work owes its origin, no doubt, to the increasing study of British Imperial and Commonwealth history in the universities of the United States; but scholars in Commonwealth universities will also welcome it, though they may have reservations about some parts of it. Professor Winks has written a lively introduction in which (to some extent sheltering behind Professor J. S. Galbraith) he takes Commonwealth historians to task. 'Few . . . seem to have engaged in research relating to more than one or at best two societies; and even fewer appear to have compared imperial British administrative, constitutional or social problems to like problems within other empires . . . Nor have historians utilized as fully as they might the insights provided for them by the social sciences, employing to their own advantage the models by which social scientists organize and interpret their material.' Dr. Winks, though he spent twelve months in this country fourteen years ago, seems to have forgotten the conditions under which New Zealand and doubtless also Australian, South African and Malaysian, not to mention other historians work. Our libraries cannot afford to build up research collections on the history of other parts of the Commonwealth (the Australian National University possibly being an exception). Our scholars can rarely, if ever, hope to confine their university teaching to their specialist interests. They cannot afford to drop over to England at little expense to work in the Record Office or British Museum in the summer vacation. They must wait for their sabbatical leaves, and, if they wish to work on another Commonwealth country, cannot well cover both its materials and the materials in London on a single leave. The remarks about the insights of the social sciences are in one sense a platitude: we should all be better historians if we knew more political science, more economics and more anthropology. But we must also bear in mind the limitations of the human brain (and of the University timetable). If we read more and more, we shall write less and less, and to miscarry of a big book is an occupational disease to which historians are liable.

It is time to pass from the general to the particular. The main theme of Dr. R. L. Middlekauff's essay on 'The American Continental Colonies in the Empire', one of the best in the book, is the differentiation between 'the Imperial School'—C. M. Andrews, G. L. Beer and L. H. Gipson—and those scholars who have concentrated on the actual working of the colonial economy and colonial politics. He praises the former for 'their willingness to work on the broad scale' but considers that the latter will increasingly predominate. Professor Galbraith in his well-balanced and fair-minded essay on 'The Empire since 1783' makes the sound point that 'the study of Imperial history has been greatly affected by the disintegration of the Empire into a congeries of sovereign states, each intent on demonstrating its national identity.' This is natural, especially in the newly independent states of Africa and Asia, but it is hoped that the study of Commonwealth history will continue as a corrective. After all, it is now widely believed that 'nationalist history' be reckoned among the causes of, for example, the

Franco-German war of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the short run, nationalist history may seem like progress, but in the long run it is regression.

Dr. Winks himself undertakes the essay on Canada. It is full (perhaps too full on the earlier historians), lively and sound in its judgements. The numbers of works mentioned, however, running to over four hundred and fifty in the text and perhaps as many more in the footnotes, will reduce librarians in less affluent universities to despair. The essay on Australia by Kenneth A. MacKirdy, a Canadian who has worked in Australia, is less satisfying. It underrates Arnold Wood. *The Discovery of Australia* is no mean memorial for a man who 'was responsible for all instruction in history [in the University of Sydney] from his installation in 1891 until an assistant was appointed in 1916.' After all most of Ernest Scott's works antedated his appointment to the Melbourne chair. Professor MacKirdy may be forgiven for not being aware that 'the Rev. Fr. Eric O'Brien' is now an Archbishop, but hardly for his curious omission of Tasmania from his survey of State history. Even if Giblin's volumes are disregarded as too idiosyncratic, what of W. D. Forsyth's *Governor Arthur's Convict System* and Kathleen Fitzpatrick's *Sir John Franklin in Tasmania?* Professor Sinclair is of course well-informed on New Zealand and less subjective than usual. Professor J. M. Ward deals authoritatively with the British territories in the Pacific: it is unfortunate that the new Hakluyt volumes on Carteret and Quiros came too late for inclusion, but he appears to have missed Kuykendall's second volume on the Hawaiian Kingdom, published in 1953. South Africa is in the safe hands of Professor L. M. Thompson. Professor George Shepperson has little to report on British Central Africa: Mr. George Bennett on British East Africa and Professor Harrison Wright on West Africa are rather more fortunate—though it is hardly fair of Dr. Wright to say that 'the British historians were not interested in the indigenous population'. We must pass over the competent contributions on Egypt and the Sudan, trusteeship and the mandate system, the Mediterranean territories, 'Ireland's Commonwealth Years, 1922-1949' (fortunately wider in scope than in title), and the West Indies in order to devote a little space to the very odd essay by Professor Robert I. Crane on India.

We are told in the introduction that Professor C. H. Philips's *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon* and Professor D. G. E. Hall's *Historians of South East Asia* 'called for a general and quite interpretative statement on India and more specific and proportionately longer essays on Ceylon, Pakistan and Malaysia'. This works out quite satisfactorily for the three latter countries, but for India the 'interpretative statement' can only be called seriously distorted. Having paid a conventional tribute to British historians of India, Professor Crane proceeds to criticize them for 'a tendency to put too much reliance . . . upon official sources and official viewpoints, and an emphasis on purely political or quasi-dynastic history'. In a series of rapid leaps from topic to topic, Professor Crane covers the ascendancy of the East India Company in two pages without troubling to mention the vast series of publications of their records edited by Sir William Foster and others. Two of the most distinguished scholarly authorities, the late H. H. Dodwell and P. E. Roberts, are each represented by a single textbook — not surprising perhaps when the men of whom they wrote, Clive, Warren Hastings and Wellesley, are not mentioned in the text. Nearly every Viceroy and Governor-General has had an authoritative biography, but Lady Betty Balfour's *Lord Lytton's Indian Administration* and Lady Minto's

India: Minto and Morley are alone mentioned. Curzon is mentioned, but not Lord Ronaldshay (now Lord Zetland)'s standard biography. Nor is there any mention of the best up-to-date textbook, T. G. P. Spear's *India* in the University of Michigan *History of the Modern World*. Altogether the selection is most erratic.

The last essay in the volume, Professor Joseph Jones's 'Commonwealth Literature: Developments and Prospects', perhaps hardly concerns us here; but the present reviewer would have preferred fewer names and more interpretation if the essay was to be included at all. There is in fact an overlap with some of the earlier essays.

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Thomas Munro and the Development of Administrative Policy in Madras, 1792 - 1818: The Origins of 'The Munro System'. By T. H. Beaglehole. Cambridge, University Press, 1966. 183 pp. U.K. price: 35s.

THE Indian administrative system with which Sir Thomas Munro is associated was characterized above all by *ryotwari*: the land revenue settlement was made directly with the peasant. No *zamindar* of the Bengal landlord variety was to have a place between government and the cultivator. There was to be the maximum of administrative freedom for the man on the spot; Munro's district collector was to have both executive and judicial functions. In the exercise of these functions he was to follow Indian precedents where possible and to take full advantage of the available reservoir of Indian administrative talent. 'The main evil of our system', Munro once asserted, 'is the degraded state in which we hold the Natives.'

It is this last aspect of Munro's policy which is of immediate interest today. In this new study Dr. Beaglehole makes some judicious remarks on the subject. Munro has to be seen in his context: he has affinities with the twentieth-century 'liberal', but he was certainly not a twentieth-century man. In the nineteenth century, of course, one of Munro's main contributions was to the cult of 'paternalism', in India and beyond; his ideas on the role of indigenous peoples in 'colonial' situations were largely forgotten. Yet much of Dr. Beaglehole's book is devoted not to these matters of broad principle but to the intricacies of revenue policy. This is as it should be in a book which deals with Munro's activities in the years before his appointment as Governor of Madras in 1820. Most of Munro's time in these years was spent in the saddle, or in his tent, patiently dealing with revenue business. Dr. Beaglehole shows us first how Munro obtained many of his ideas through working with Alexander Read in the Baramahal. We then see how Munro's experience of the indigenous system of peasant proprietorship which he found in Kanara, the first district of which he was head, consolidated his opinion in favour of *ryotwari*, and how he sought to apply his theories in the districts ceded by the Nizam of Hyderabad in 1800. Some most useful pages examine Munro's influence, during a period of leave in England, on the deliberations which produced the notable 'Fifth Report' of 1812, and on the changes in the outlook of the home government which followed this report. It would appear that the role of Munro at this time has been exaggerated; Dr. Beaglehole shows that a most important part was played by James Cumming, head of the Revenue and Judicial Department of the Board of Control.