

## *Reviews/Comptes rendus*

**Planting the Province: The Economic History of Upper Canada 1784-1870.**  
Douglas McCalla. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993, 446 pages.

The publication of Doug McCalla's book marks the long awaited completion of the three volume series about Ontario's economic history from 1784 to 1975 sponsored by the Ontario Historical Studies Series. Students now have good general sources for any aspect of Ontario's economic history during that time period. Following the formula of the other volumes, McCalla does not just present the outline of that history, but provides interpretation and commentary where he believes it appropriate. This is particularly interesting because this is the first time that Ontario's economic history for that time period has been presented in one place. In fact, given the time period that McCalla covers, 1784 to 1870, with its relative paucity of statistical information in already published form, many of the points that he makes are being presented for the first time.

The book is divided into three general parts along chronological lines. Part one, "Establishing a New Economy", deals with the years 1784 to 1822, and presents the material in a more or less continuous time frame. Part two, "Extensive Growth, 1822-51", takes a more topical approach to the materials and devotes separate chapters to forest products, agriculture, artisanship, manufacturing, transportation, trade-finance, government, and economic fluctuations. Since the economy of Upper Canada was relatively fragmented and segmented in the late eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth centuries, the organization of Part two works better than the more year by year approach of Part one, and the final chapter of Part two does relate many of the individual strands of the previous chapters. The different structures make it more difficult to locate points of comparison in the two parts. Part three, "The Province at Mid-Century", reverts to the chronological method of presentation found in Part one and carries the history from 1851 to 1870; some readers would have preferred the continuation of the topical approach.

As anyone knows who has ever written a history of some longer time period that is split into sub-periods, starting and ending points for them need to be chosen. McCalla picked 1822 and 1850-51. Why did he choose those years? This is not just casual curiosity because the demarcation points used in

any study suggest turning points, important changes in structure or emphasis, something different after the date than before. Just as good a case could be made for 1815 or 1828 to end the first period, and 1846 to end the second period.

Although all of the features common to Upper Canada's economic history are dealt with in the book (for example trade, transport, settlement, agricultural growth), McCalla puts a different "spin" on that history. He argues that telling the history in terms of the staples of timber and wheat alone presents an oversimplified and inaccurate view of the economic development of Upper Canada. While arguing that those staples had a role to play, McCalla believes that four other elements have not been given the emphasis they deserve: 1. there were other external influences besides the exports of wheat and timber, 2. the spending in the colony by both the British and Upper Canadian governments was significant, 3. local markets were important, and 4. exports other than wheat and timber should be emphasised. This shift away from a heavy reliance on the two traditional staples has gained momentum over the past decade and McCalla clearly presents one unified view on this change of focus.

Two themes noted by McCalla in the introductory chapter, are briefly described and then dropped, but these themes could have been more usefully exploited. The first relates to staples. They are much more than just the exploitation of relatively unprocessed products for export markets; the idea of staples also involves, in the Upper Canadian context, diversification around the staples, especially through linkages. When this is recognized, the staples approach becomes more of a strategy for balanced development. The second relates to the useful distinction between economic growth and economic development and their use as one framework for dealing with the economic history of Upper Canada. If economic growth is described as simply more real output while economic development involves welfare improvement, structural change, technical change, and institutional change, the causes of this growth and development become a useful method for organizing the story. To provide one example, it may be helpful to think of the 1850s as a decade of relatively rapid economic growth, but it lacked certain aspects of economic development.

In sum, this is a very interesting book as it provides many stimulating ideas for further thought and research. The statistical tables and computations in the body of the book provide a wealth of data that were not available before. This book will be quoted for many years to come.

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