

It is in the emergence of a strong disability movement as part of the new social movements that Oliver places his hope for the political momentum that can ultimately improve the quality of life for disabled people.

The theoretical analysis of disability which Oliver presents in this book is well constructed, rigorous, comprehensive and coherent. Its distinct departure from mainstream tendencies to psychologize the disability problem, and his application of a framework which asserts social causation, is a major strength. In the opinion of this reviewer (who incidentally also has had to make sense of the experience of disability), the perspective applied is a breath of fresh air. Oliver maintains an unfaltering focus on identifying and challenging the ideological underpinnings of pervasive social practices and beliefs normally taken for granted. In this he demonstrates considerable skill. He is persuasive in his critique of distortive mainstream theory and the incorporation into research design of ideological bias. At one point he exposes the ideological content in a set of questions used in a disability survey by juxtaposing an alternative form of the same questions, his own questions assuming social rather than individual causation. His questions are no less biased than the survey questions, but their juxtaposition serves effectively to demonstrate the use of research design to build and perpetuate ideologically constructed and oppressive theory.

The treatment of a strategy of counter-hegemonic politics is perhaps the least well developed section of the book. Further, while many disabled people might well recognize aspects of their own experience in this work, the theoretical formulation advanced is complex, and the analysis at times pyramids abstractions one upon the other, possibly limiting the potential of this undertaking to meet his goal of informing strategy among disabled people themselves. Nonetheless, this is an important contribution to both social theory and to the field of disability.

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**Valerie Knowles**, *Strangers at Our Gates. Canadian Immigration and Immigration Policy, 1540-1990*. Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1992, pp. 220. \$19.99 (softcover).

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Few things could be more important to Canadian history than the experience of immigration over the past five centuries. The untraceable multitude of local, small-scale exoduses and colonizations, the never-ending creation of new frontiers, the complex intermingling of peoples of diverse cultural,

ethnic, and religious backgrounds, the forging of regionalism, human settlement, class development, gender construction, and group identities — these, surely, are the decisive bases for pondering, defining, and refining our past. There can be little doubt, then, of the potential relevance of Ottawa-based journalist Valerie Knowles' most recent book.

As the author has intended, *Strangers at Our Gates* is a useful single volume introduction for general readers interested in the broad sweep of Canadian immigration history. It is concise, clearly-written, and mercifully jargon-free. Social policy scholars may well consult it for reference purposes, although it will not eclipse such standard works as Freda Hawkins' *Canada and Immigration. Public Policy and Public Concern* (1988, revised) or Jean R. Burnet with Howard Palmer's *Coming Canadians: An Introduction to a History of Canada's Peoples* (1988).

The book is divided into eleven chapters, beginning with New France. The next two deal with British North America, followed by a chapter on the Macdonald era, two on the Laurier years, one on the two world wars and the Great Depression, three on the ensuing thirty-five year period, and a concluding section, "The Turbulent Eighties and Beyond".

To her credit Knowles has mined a number of primary materials at the federal level, mostly from the twentieth century. Sensitive treatments are accorded William Scott, the successor to Sir Clifford Sifton as minister responsible for immigration (chapter six), and the post-World War II Palestinian Arab refugees (p. 131), to cite two examples.

There are minor shortcomings, among them, the virtual omission of reference to Native Canadians before and after European contact; and the lack of a brief, overriding sketch of different stages of immigration over the course of Canadian history, such as that proffered by the late Arthur Lower some thirty-five years ago (*Canadians in the Making. A Social History of Canada*, 1958, p. 187).

*Strangers at Our Gates* straddles two historiographic traditions, social history and political history, and to a considerable extent favours the latter. This is particularly true of the last half of the book. Thus the sense of what life was like for immigrants, which appears in earlier chapters, is all but lost after 1960 to the weight of details concerning policy and administrative developments within the responsible federal departments.

A work of this scope necessarily depends upon secondary literature. Because much recent social historical research is not consulted, the narrative does not expand upon that rich tapestry of human agency which characterized the immigrant experience, the dynamic matrix of push/pull factors which profoundly influenced immigrants and prospective immigrants, and those distinct forms of familial, social, economic, and community systems which were so central to life in the new country.

At the same time, the author has relied upon historical literature now several decades old, overlooking recent publications which might have provided a more intricate analysis of the political, social, and economic undercurrents of Canadian immigration policy: Angus McLaren's *Our Own Master Race: the Eugenics Movement in Canada, 1885-1945* (1990), Mariana Valverde's *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925* (1991), or Reg Whitaker's *Double Standard: the Secret History of Canadian Immigration Policy* (1987), among others.

*Strangers at Our Gates*, then, is a good effort, but also something of a lost opportunity, offering few new insights into the nature of Canadian nativism, immigration policy, nationalism, or the immigration experience itself. In all fairness, however, it was never intended as a landmark of Canadian history. And given immigration's vital significance to all aspects of the country's development, Knowles will not have the last word on the subject.

Recent historiographic imperatives, in fact, may have improved the odds of seeing subsequent multi-century studies of Canadian immigration history. Historian Michael Bliss has lamented that recent historical research often appears arcane to readers other than the professional historian, and of limited relevance to those seeking a context in which to contemplate current political affairs ("Privatizing the Mind: The Sundering of Canadian History, the Sundering of Canada", *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 26, 4, Winter 1991-92, pp. 5-17). According to this argument, there must be a return to that lost praxis, which characterized several preceding generations of Canadian historians, of explaining the nature of the country via broad, interpretive treatises, potentially spanning the course of several centuries.

When and if another historian ventures into that grand terrain which Knowles has attempted to cover, who knows? — such a publication may well be the very catalyst which, according to some, is needed to rescue Canadian historical writing from its current malaise.

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**Dorothy Moore and James H. Morrison, eds.,** *Work, Ethnicity, and Oral History*. Halifax: International Education Centre, 1988, pp. xii + 242.

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This engaging book contains the edited proceedings of a conference that took place in Baddeck, Nova Scotia, in October 1986. It was organized by