The latest volume in the *DCB* series contains 574 biographies of individuals whose death dates occur between 1871 and 1880, the first census decade following Confederation. The argument advanced for this chronological jump in the coverage of the series is based on the receipt of a Centennial Commission grant for research in the period 1850-1900, and the desire to produce something towards the centenary. This seems more plausible when one considers that these individuals flourished principally during the sixty-year period prior to 1880, which marked the struggle for national self-determination. The effect of this break, however, is very much like attempting to use a dictionary with only three of the necessary twenty-six letters of the alphabet completed.

The editors admit to a certain difficulty in the selection of subjects for this volume. While persons of the stature of George Brown or Louis-Joseph Papineau are automatically assured of a place in this work, individuals of less importance present a problem because of their great number. In order to resolve the question of selection at this level, the editors have worn the blinkers of the social historian. Choosing the less well known individuals on the basis that these were representative of either a region or a profession, they have eliminated others of equal importance and still expected to present "a full perspective of Canadian life, a life that, even allowing for the extent of territory, shows certain common currents" (p. xii). The hazard in this method of selection is to determine who is representative. One would have thought that the more appropriate criterion of selection should be whether an individual has or has not earned a place for himself in Canadian history.

The result of this policy has been the creation of an unusually uneven work. For the less well known individuals, who have been selected on a representative basis, there is a paucity of either primary or secondary material to work from. This leads to a certain amount of historical "padding". Such a process does not have a distorting effect when one is considering the life of a major subject, who often played an important part in these events. When, however, the known events in an individual's life cover perhaps only several years, the addition of purely historical matter is not only misleading as to the part the person played in such events, but confusing to the serious researcher who is after biographical facts and not a discursive essay. At times it almost seems as if the *DCB* would fulfill its obligations to the public in better fashion by simply publishing the Preliminary Name Lists rather than the official volume. For the individual who is attempting to collect the series, it might provide a cheaper manner in which to acquire a proper reference tool now that the price per volume has increased by five dollars.

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