

Hamelin, Louis-Edmond (1973) *Canada : A Geographical Perspective*. Toronto, John Wiley of Canada Ltd. 234 pages.

R. C. Harris

Volume 19, Number 47, 1975

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/021276ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/021276ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Département de géographie de l'Université Laval

ISSN

0007-9766 (print)

1708-8968 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Harris, R. C. (1975). Review of [Hamelin, Louis-Edmond (1973) *Canada : A Geographical Perspective*. Toronto, John Wiley of Canada Ltd. 234 pages.] *Cahiers de géographie du Québec*, 19(47), 410–411.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/021276ar>

may be cancelled out in the annual mean, as in the case of insolation. The importance of the size and depth of the water body is clearly shown in the contrasting influences of the largest and deepest of the lakes, Superior, and of shallow Lake Erie. This is of particular interest today when hydro-electricity power sites are also being set up in low-lying country, resulting in vast relatively shallow expanses of water, rather than the creation of less extensive but much deeper reservoirs.

This is a most welcome contribution to the *Climatological Studies* series of the AES. A french edition is in preparation.

Cynthia WILSON
Centre d'Études nordiques
Université Laval, Québec.

CANADA

HAMELIN, Louis-Edmond (1973) **Canada : A Geographical Perspective**. Toronto, John Wiley of Canada Ltd. 234 pages.

For the last twenty years a geography that has sought statistical precision and spatial rigor has disdained broad, regional interpretations. Far better, too many of us have assumed, studies of traffic flows to supermarkets, of suburban housing complexes, or of linkages within the Central Business District. In such studies, after all, lies utility and social science respectability. This may have been an understandable trend in our field, but it is a narrowness much to be deplored. The public has been denied broad, geographical interpretations of place except as they emerge obliquely in literature or thinly in popular travel books; and geographers have shied away from a scholarly challenge demanding wide erudition, considerable synthesizing skill, and an ability to conceptualize at a high level of abstraction. Thus it is more than satisfying to have one of Canada's eminent geographers take up again the neglected task of broad regional synthesis by writing a geography of Canada.

Professor Hamelin brings much expertise to this task: his years of research as a geomorphologist, and as director of the Centre d'Études nordiques at Laval, his service on the Council of the Northwest Territories and considerable familiarity with the problems of Indian and Eskimo, his long interest in French Canadian rural society, his wide travel and reading about Canada. Most interesting, perhaps, he brings a sense of Canada larger than the sum of its parts. All of this has gone into *Canada : A Geographical Perspective*, a book that is considerably more than a translation of Professor Hamelin's *Le Canada*, published in 1969. Data from the 1971 census have been incorporated, and many sections enlarged.

Much in this book is excellent. The initial chapter on the north, introducing Canada as a northern country, is a bold, commanding stroke. The section on indigenous peoples, significantly beginning a chapter on cultural groups, is handled with great knowledge and understanding. The treatment of an evolving French Canada, short as it is, is also a highlight. I like Professor Hamelin's bold use, reminiscent of Griffith Taylor at this best, of diagrams and pictograms, and I like his writing which, in this effective translation, retains its sharpness, clarity, and wit. There are also weaknesses. The opportunity to follow up chapter one's excellent introduction to Canada's northerness is not seized. The treatment of economic organization and of urban Canada seems very derivative, and lacks the spark of Professor Hamelin's best sections. Like any of us, Professor Hamelin is most effective with what he knows best. Overall, the book tends to become a series of fragments, a reflection both of the enormous difficulty of writing

at this scale, and of the nature of Canada itself Professor Hamelin had given himself an integrating platform in chapter one, the northern land, the base around which a generation of historians conceptualized this country. That conception has faded from Canadian historiography, probably because of its inability to account for much of the variety of Canadian life, and it may be for this reason too that Professor Hamelin treads warily. But having discarded northerness, he is not left with anything else around which to build a coherent interpretation.

This uncertainty is picked up in the conclusion. Professor Hamelin is well aware of the deep rifts in Canada now, of the extraordinary variety of which this country is composed. As a French Canadian he is particularly sensitive to the tensions between French and English speaking people, but he is sensitive too, as many French Canadian are not, to the variety within English Canada. He senses a Canada and a Canadian opportunity that transcends our variety, but he is hard pressed to put his finger on it. Thus the book embodies a tentativeness and uncertainty that is in the nature of Canada now. One wonders what regional geographies of Canada will be written twenty years hence, and one hopes there will be geographers around to take on the challenge as honestly and directly as has Professor Hamelin in this short, effective book.

R.C. HARRIS
Department of Geography
University of British Columbia

HARVEY, Jocelyn (1973) *Le trafic maritime de la Côte-Nord*. Québec, Ministère de l'Industrie et du Commerce. 453 pages, 75 tabl., 47 fig., 42 photos, bibl.

Cette publication présente un intérêt particulier puisqu'elle reproduit la thèse de doctorat en géographie que Jocelyn Harvey a soutenue à l'Université Laval. Elle comporte une étude de géographie économique axée sur le trafic maritime de la Côte-Nord. Or, la lecture de ce gros ouvrage soulève plusieurs questions de fond.

Quelle est d'abord la portée de ce mémoire ? L'auteur n'y formule pas de thèse proprement dite. Il se contente plutôt de décrire les activités économiques de la Côte-Nord en insistant beaucoup sur les implantations industrielles, les infrastructures et les trafics portuaires. Il tente de montrer que l'exploitation des ressources naturelles a fait de cette région un centre d'activités maritimes, qui sont en voie d'en accélérer l'intégration (p. 400). Il dresse en quelque sorte le « bilan actuel de cette région en pleine transformation » (p. 11). Le volume traduit ainsi beaucoup plus un effort de compilation que de démonstration. Il y manque en fait l'essentiel, c'est-à-dire un essai de conceptualisation, d'interprétation et de théorisation. Cet ouvrage demeure essentiellement une somme documentaire, un « ouvrage de référence » comme il est dit dans l'avant-propos.

La structure du mémoire laisse ensuite à désirer. Ses trois parties sont déséquilibrées, la troisième étant cinq fois moins étendue que la seconde. La description de la mise en valeur de la mer compte 50 pages et celle du trafic minier, une centaine en comparaison des vingt pages consacrées à l'exploitation de la forêt et d'un paragraphe seulement sur le rôle de l'aviation commerciale (p. 444). Ce déséquilibre s'explique probablement par l'abondance variable de l'information disponible selon les sujets. On aurait pu souhaiter que l'auteur y exerce une sélection et qu'il évite par exemple d'inclure dans une « thèse » de doctorat une description des techniques de pêche (p. 36-43) et des chalutiers avec toutes leurs dimensions en plus de plusieurs illustrations. La pêche est d'ailleurs qualifiée d'activité marginale, qui occupe environ un millier de personnes. Par comparaison, la mise en valeur de la forêt est insuffisamment traitée.

En relation avec la structure, on peut s'interroger sur l'objet et le titre du volume. L'analyse du trafic maritime couvre 250 pages, soit un peu plus de la moitié de l'ouvrage.