

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF
WHO'S WHO IN BRITISH COLUMBIA
FOR THE YEARS 1931 AND 1953

This is a comparative study of prominent British Columbians of two years: 1931 and 1952. My purpose is to note similarities between the two years, and if possible to explain such differences as did exist. My source material consisted of volumes of Who's Who in British Columbia for the two years mentioned above. This series presents short, factual biographies of three hundred or so British Columbians. The books are well-adapted to quantitative research, although individual biographies tend to be incomplete. My sample consisted of seventy-five biographies chosen systematically from both years. Information from these biographies was recorded on questionnaire (see Appendix I).

Taking the average or most frequently-found value from each area, the typical "Who's Who-er" can be created for both years and compared.¹ The prominent British Columbian of 1931 is a male of 52 years residing in Victoria. He is a successful professional man with many business associates. He was born in England, from which he emigrated at the age of 27; he was 35 years when the Great War began but chose not to participate. He spent several years in college and perhaps took a Bachelor degree. At the age of 33 he married a lady named Margaret, who bore him one child.² He is not particularly religious, but has Protestant leanings and nominally adheres to the Church of England. His political preferences, if they exist, are not for general knowledge; one might detect faintly conservative attitudes. He patronizes the Union Club of Victoria, as well as perhaps one of the more exclusive golf or yacht clubs. He golfs and fishes, and occasionally hunts, for recreation.

¹See Appendix II for an explanation of my use of statistics

²To be exact, 1.4

His counterpart of twenty-two years later is a man of a different life-style. He is a slightly-younger male - 50 years - and is a professional man, once again with business associates. He was born in British Columbia and lives in Vancouver. For an unspecified number of years he attended a Canadian college and possibly took a degree. When the Second World War broke out he was 36, and he spent several years in the Armed Forces. He married at an earlier age than did his 1931 counterpart-- at 28; he has two children.³ He is Protestant, theoretically Anglican. He too is secretive politically, with no visible affiliation with any party. His recreations are more extensive than those of the 1931 Who's Who-er, but tend to be the same: golfing, fishing and hunting. Prominent among his clubs is the Vancouver Club.

These two generalized biographies suggest certain trends and patterns which took place in the years between 1931 and 1953, trends which may still be active today. The most obvious of these is the minor exodus from Victoria to Vancouver which occurred in the 1930s and 40s. In 1931, no less than 73% of my sample lived on Vancouver Island; by 1952, this figure had dropped to 38%. Correspondingly, there was a rise in Lower Mainland residence from 15% in 1931 to 51% in 1952-- an increase of more than threefold.

These figures indicate that prominent British Columbians were increasingly to be found residing on the Lower Mainland. This may not indicate a decline in population in the Victoria region, or even a decline in Victoria's prestige; but it does, in my opinion, signify a general change in the cultural values of British Columbians between 1931 and 1953, a change which is reflected in the standard for selection of Who's Who personnel. This change may be graphically described as a moving-away from aristocratic British leanings to attitudes which have an affinity with American capitalist values. Much of this essay will be devoted to supporting this statement.

³To be exact, 2.3

The statistics on Occupation tend to support this idea.⁴ In 1931 there were four major Occupations groups: Professional (25%), Business (23%) the Military (20%), and Political (12%). The pro-British element was represented by the Military group, who shared among them 31 assorted military decorations commemorating service to the British Empire. The Political group, too, tended to be pro-British. No less than 70% were born on the British Isles, and presumably were inculcated with British attitudes and sentiments; the remaining 30% were from Ontario, with one exception, who was a Japanese consul. It may be assumed that the reason so many prominent political figures were of British leanings was because the electorate favoured them; and the reason it favoured them was because the electorate itself was British in its outlook.⁵

Evidence that the British bias of British Columbian society had decreased by 1953 is given by the great decrease in Military (i.e. War Hero) personnel among the Who's Whos, from 20% in 1931 to 3% in 1953. This is particularly surprising when one realizes that the First World War had ended 13 years previously. Further, the British war decorations had decreased from 31 in 1931 to 11 in 1953.

By 1953, politically-prominent Who's Who personnel had increased from 12% to 20% of the sample. The increased number of political figures is explained when one realizes that there were only two major parties in 1931 - Liberals and Conservatives - while in 1953 there were four. Of the fifteen

⁴I have made "Occupation" synonymous with "Reason for Inclusion" in "Who's Who". Reason for inclusion was never explicitly stated, but could usually be derived from the information given. In most cases "Reason for Inclusion" seemed to be synonymous with "Occupation", the exceptions being those who were retired (many of them war veterans) and the few who had achieved prominence in local sports.

⁵This statement assumes that voters tend to elect representatives whose ethnic background is their own, which I think is a reasonable assumption. What I have said can be supported (or refuted) by the ethnic statistics of British Columbia for 1931, which I unfortunately was unable to locate.

Who's Whos of 1953 who were political figures, 6 were Social Credit, 3 were CCF, one was Liberal, and the other five were either neutral (for eg., the Mayor of Victoria) or unknown. The first Social Credit government was formed the year previous to my study, and it is as if the compilers of Who's Who felt obligated to include members of this new political elite, as well as continue to honour members of the old.

The above statement supports my theory of attitudes changing from British to North American. Both the CCF and Social Credit are basically Canadian. Too, the ethnic origins of these political Who's Whos are more diverse than those of 1931, as they include representatives born in British Columbia, the Prairies, the Maritimes and the United States as well as Britain and Ontario.⁶

Another indication of the change in British Columbia society, as reflected in different qualifications for inclusion in the 1953 Who's Who than in the 1931 volume, is shown by the decline in the number of individuals included for purely social reasons. In 1931, "socialites" accounted for 9.3% of the Who's Who population. This figure includes most of the ten women in the 1931 sample. These people achieved prominence through marriage (for eg., Lady Margaret McBride, wife of Sir Richard McBride, late Premier of B. C.) or through excessive membership in clubs and councils (for eg., Mrs. D. J. McLachlan was a director of the Alexandria Non-Sectarian Orphanage, Executive member of Council of Women, President of the Provincial Council of Women of B. C., former Vice-president on the Vancouver Council, a member of the Playgrounds Association, former corresponding secretary of Provincial Council of B. C., Convenor of the Alexandra Fresh Air Camp, Charter-member of the Point Grey Golf and Country Club, etc.). By 1953, however, only one person was included for purely social reasons - the wife of the Lieutenant-Governor of B. C., whose position had secured her enough

⁶Since statistics as to a person's ethnic origin were never given, I have equated it with Place of Birth.

honorary memberships in enough clubs to pass the most selective of Who's Who editors. These statistics indicate either that social position and club membership were no longer considered reason enough for inclusion, or that there were less bored matrons looking for clubs and charities with which to occupy their time. Regardless of which is true, and I think they both are, it is certain that a change occurred in British Columbia society - the aristocracy of social position and prestige, a British legacy, had by 1953 been superseded by the aristocracy of wealth, an American import.

It is interesting to note that women in general were unable to keep up with these changing standards. Women accounted for 13.3% of my 1931 sample but only 5.3% of the 1953 sample.

As for Occupations in general, the 1931 sample is the more diverse of the two. Perhaps this is because the society of 1931 was broader in its interests and scope. In 1931, social position and patriotism (i.e., War Heroes) were as legitimate as wealth and political power as the chief virtue of a prominent man or woman. This does not seem to be the case in 1953; in this year, success in one's chosen occupation seems to be the major virtue--patriotism is not much to recommend a man, and one's social position seems to be a result of wealth, not a substitute for it. The diversity of 1931 Occupations is shown by the fact that no single occupation accounts for more than one-quarter of the sample; there is a Sports category (2.6%) which is not to be found in the later year, and an Other category of 8% whose members include a flying pioneer and the man responsible for "Happy-land at Hastings Park," to name a few. The Other category of 1953 contained only two members (2.3%), both with rather ordinary occupations. Further evidence that the 1953 society was willing to recognize achievement only in a narrower number of fields is given by the great many Who's Who personnel involved in three fields: the Professions (38.6%), Business 34.6% and Politics (20%), which together total 94%. These occupations accounted for only 60% of my 1931

sample.

My point here is that these statistics seem to indicate an increasing interest in wealth and in occupations which promise it, in lieu of other concerns. It is as if the loose social system borrowed from Britain were being replaced by a more capitalistic one, this resulting in an emphasis on those who achieve financial success and the occupations in which they are able to achieve it (e.g. Law, business).

Besides the Occupation statistics, much of the other material supports this general theme. My figures on War Service do not seem to support this, however. In 1931, 43% had spent some time in the Armed Forces; in 1953 this figure was up to 60%. This might indicate a rise in pro-British sentiment; on the other hand, there may be other reasons for it. Of the 43% who served in the First War, 20% had distinguished themselves in this war, and at the conclusion of it had either remained in the Armed Forces and made it their career, or had been too severely wounded to do anything but retire. This is to be contrasted with the 1953 group: although 60% served in World War II, few of them distinguished themselves and only two of them had careers in the Armed Forces (and had retired by 1953). These figures suggest that the First War was fought largely by professionals who had made this sort of thing their career, whereas the personnel of the Second War were amateurs who had enlisted for other reasons. Perhaps they enlisted because they believed in the justice of the Allied cause, or because it was the thing to do; perhaps they enlisted simply for employment, as Canada had not yet totally recovered from the effects of the Depression. While working through the 1931 biographies, I had the impression that war was rather a good thing, as

⁷There is perhaps another reason for the broader scope of the 1931 volume. In his Preface, editor S. M. Carter writes: "An endeavour has been made to include representative leaders in learning, politics, government, professions, industry, science, army, navy, and social affairs of British Columbia." No such comment appears in the later volume.

it enabled a man to prove himself. There was none of this in the later volume; here, war was an unpleasant duty, to be fought and then to be done with.

The information on Place of Birth reveals that an increasing number of our prominent citizens are home-grown. In 1931, the number of native Canadians exactly equalled that of native British Islanders--42.6%; but by 1953, native Canadians accounted for 63% of the sample, to Britain's 24%. In the earlier year, native British Columbians represented a mere 11% of the sample, a figure matched by native Maritimers and exceeded by people from Ontario (12%). By 1953, native British Columbians were up to 28%, still a surprisingly small number for a province that had been in existence for over 80 years. Maritimers had dropped to 4%, but Ontario-born people were up to 19%. These figures show, if not an increasing Americanization, at least a declining British aspect of our society.⁸

This trend is emphasized by the religious statistics. The various Protestant sects far exceeded any other denomination in both years: 64% in 1931, 68% in 1951. Among the sects, however, there was a major trend evident. The Church of England suffered a decline in membership from 29% to 8%, while its Canadian counterpart, the Anglican church, rose from 12% to 25%. Nobody in either sample went so far as to admit to atheism, but there was a significant number who gave no response: 35% in 1931, 25% in 1953. This may not signify an increase in religious belief since there were many more responses of "Protestant" without mention of denomination in 1953 than in 1931 (12% to 3%), and I cannot imagine such a response made by a person of definite

⁸It is interesting to note how few Who's Whos came from places other than Canada, Britain, US, or northern Europe. In 1931 there were three: from Australia, New Zealand and Japan - the latter being the aforementioned consul who is probably a Japanese citizen. In 1953 there was only one - from New Zealand. These statistics would be irrelevant if B. C. had no citizens of Asian, Russian or Southern European origin; but even without statistics it is obvious that this is not so. At any rate, the WASPish orientation of our province cannot be doubted.

religious sentiment. There was also an increase in Roman Catholicism (from 1.3% to 5.3%), but this is likely too small an increase to be statistically relevant.

The rest of my statistical information can not be used either to support or refute what I have been saying. For the rest of this essay I will discuss the remainder of my statistics. I had originally planned to find statistics on British Columbia for the years of my samples, for such subjects as average age at marriage, average number of children, ethnic origin, etc., but was unable to find this information. Therefore, I have had to limit myself to a comparison of the two years without reference to statistical norms.

The statistics on marriage and family show an interesting change toward earlier marriage and larger families. Age at marriage in 1931 averaged 33, but was 28 by 1953. The average number of children increased from 1.4 to 2.3. This was a surprising statistic, because I had believed Canada's birthrate to be declining. Statistics on the birthrate in British Columbia would be needed to show whether the Who's Who personnel faithfully reflected the general pattern of their respective years, or whether they were in fact "a thing apart."

A person's marital status was given only when the subject was married or widowed. Those for whom no marital status was given have been classified as single. The fact that there were no divorced persons in a sample of 150 suggests either that marital stability was unusually pronounced among these people, or that such information was purposely suppressed. If the latter case is true, it may be implied that this information was suppressed, possibly because it was felt to detract from the image of virtue which these biographies consistently attempt to radiate. This brings up another point: was this information censored by the individuals themselves or by the person(s) compiling the Who's Who series? I feel, for the 1931 biographies

at least, that this information was censored by the individuals themselves. My reason is that the 1931 Who's Who seems to be one of the earliest volumes - perhaps the earliest - in the series, and it seems to be a more individual work than the later volume. It was edited by S. M. Carter, who, in the Preface, states that the information for the biographies came from "research and personal interviews", and that in many cases individuals were reluctant to give him "the necessary authority and details for publication." The later volume is more impersonal, having no editor or Preface; by 1953 the series seems to have become an institution, following the format established by Carter. But the later volume is no more complete statistically than the early one, and it seems reasonable to conclude that the later biographers found it as difficult to wrest information from their subjects as did Carter 22 years earlier.

Statistics are needed also to corroborate the extent of deviance between Who's Who people and British Columbians in general with regard to education. However, it cannot be doubted that a discrepancy exists, the Who's Who people as a group receiving more education than British Columbians in general. In 1931, 61% had some university. This figure can be broken down further: 25% of the sample had attained a degree, and the remaining 36% may or may not have achieved degrees, although I am certain that many of these people did in fact receive degrees.⁹

Obviously, these people are highly educated. Those without any university education were classified as Uncertain (44%), as it was never stated whether the subject without any university even finished High School.

⁹This is supported by the fact that several people were listed as having attended as many as three different universities with no mention of a degree having been awarded. Similarly, High School graduation is never stipulated. This ambiguity is a result of the editors' practice of stating that the subject "attended school at Oxford" or was "educated at Wellington College, England."

It is evident that some did not—many of the English and Scottish immigrants received what appears to have been a basic education, after which they spent several years in clerical employ before coming to Canada.

The 1953 statistics show a general decrease in the extent of college education received. This was surprising since I had expected an increase—I had assumed that educational opportunities have been increasing for the last few decades. The increase in professional men, and in lawyers in particular (from 5% to 12% of the sample), also led me to expect an increase in education. Perhaps post-secondary educational facilities were unable to keep up with the population increase, resulting in a decrease in incidence of college entrants. Or perhaps the explanation lies in the increase in businessmen among Who's Who personnel from 23% to 35%, as business success is not necessarily dependent on academic success.

The Recreation statistics follow the expected pattern. 49% of the 1931 sample indicated no recreation, while in 1953 this group was down to 35%, possibly a result of increasing leisure time and improving recreational facilities. The attraction of certain activities was constant—Golf (29% and 27%), Fishing (20% and 21%), and Hunting (11% and 11%) being the most popular. The only recreation which suffered a decline in popularity was Motoring (5.3% to 1.3%), indicating that the horseless carriage was still something of a novelty in 1931.

Membership in clubs and organizations showed an increase as well, from an average of 2.4 clubs per person in 1931 to 2.7 in 1953. The most popular club in 1931 was the Union Club of Victoria, in which 24% of the sample — representing 46% of those who were living in Victoria — belonged. The club's membership had declined by 1953 to 16% of the sample, but this does not indicate a decline in the club's popularity, as 44% of Victoria-dwelling Who's Whos were members. The shift from Victoria to Vancouver affected the membership of the Vancouver club: 7% in 1931 to 20% (40% of

Vancouver-dwelling Who's Whos) in 1953. It seems as if prominent British Columbians tend to seek out the company of their peers, and that such haunts as they patronize soon become established as institutions of prestige, which one may enter provided one has amassed enough status, or has reached such an elevation as to pass the exacting demands of membership.¹⁰

Among the other clubs patronized by Who's Whos are clubs whose names literally reek with success: the Royal Vancouver Yacht Club (3% and 8%); the Royal Victoria Yacht Club (3% and 4%); Shaughnessy Golf (1.3% and 7%); the Pacific Club (7% and 5%); and Colwood Golf and Country Club (7% and 0%), among others. Several others of less distinction were quite popular: AF and AM (11% and 11%); Kiwanis (0% and 5%); Masons (3% and 4%); Rotary (1.3% and 9%). The women's clubs underwent a personnel decline — both the IODE and Canadian Women's Club was reduced from 4% to 0% — which is likely only a result of the decrease in the number of women represented in the 1953 volume. Among non-social organizations, the largest membership was in the Vancouver Board of Trade (1.3% to 8%).

In conclusion, the statistics upon which this essay is based indicate a great variety of things. Some of the trends which they reveal can be expanded outward to apply not only to British Columbia but to Canada (for eg., immigration trends). Some of the statistics explain others: for example, the statistics on Residence explain the statistics on Clubs, showing why Victoria-based clubs were replaced in popularity by Vancouver-based clubs. Other statistics can only be explained with reference to outside statistics: for example, the decreasing age of marriage and the increasing number of children. In other words, I felt some statistics to be representative of

¹⁰To be fair, it should be stated that no indication is given as to when each Who's Who entered a particular club, and that it is possible that some members entered before they had attained Who's Who status. But if this is the case, what is indicated is that successful members have a sixth sense for the detection of rising young stars which draws them instinctively to members of their own spiritual tribe—which helps their case not at all.

society in general, and others to be peculiar to the group studies. Without outside statistics, I could not infallably assign some statistics to one of these groups.

As for the worth of these people in general, one cannot pronounce judgement with so little information. I had the impression that, although some were Babbitts, others were men whose achievements were worthwhile. There seemed to be too many people associated with managerial and directoral positions. The plan behind the series was to present "representative leaders" of British Columbia; one assumes that the definition of "representative leader" is one whose position gives him much responsibility and power. Because of this, there is a trend toward sameness in these people; even when a person is included for achievement in such an occupation as agriculture, it is because he is President of Associated Growers Ltd. "Representative leaders" of education, for example, include no real teachers--the Municipal Inspector of Schools, the head of the Department of Dairying at UBC, and a man who has held executive positions on the B. C. Teachers Federation.

I would evaluate this project as a success. I feel that my statistics reveal things worth revealing. Although the biographies themselves tended to be dull, it was interesting to discover that British Columbia was once something entirely different than it is today. There is an "aura" about the 1931 biographies which suggests an entirely different kind of society than ours today. That this aura is not to be found in the 1953 biographies suggests to me that the Depression and Second World War had greater effects on British Columbia than I had previously believed. Another reason why I consider this project a success is because I have learned a great deal about the compiling and organizing of statistics. Because of the open form of my questionnaire, I had the problem of organizing my material in the most meaningful way at the end of my research, and in some instances a different arrangement of the material would likely have been more effective. With

Occupations, for example, I have classified each person into one of seven categories; at times this led to rather arbitrary classification, as in some instances an individual had two or more "accomplishments", each of which contributed to his being included in the book (for eg., the prominent journalist who had formerly served on the executive of many clubs and had once been an MLA; or the proprietor of a prominent hotel, who had been decorated three times). Another major shortcoming is my lack of knowledge about Canadian history in general and British Columbia in particular. Had my knowledge been more extensive, my information would have led me to some better and more exact conclusions.

APPENDIX I

SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Place of Birth: _____

Name and Occupation of Parents: _____

Ethnic Origin: _____

Date Came to Canada: _____

Marital Status: _____

Name of Spouse: _____

Religion: _____

Political Affiliation: _____

War Service: _____

Employment: _____

Previous Employment and Positions: _____

Organizations and Clubs: _____

Recreation: _____

Residence: _____

Other: _____

APPENDIX II

STATISTICAL METHOD

In this essay I have made use of two measures of central tendency: the arithmetic mean and the mode (the most frequent value). In most instances I had no choice as to which one to use. For example, when compiling statistics of Place of Birth, one cannot add up individual statistics and divide by the total number of individuals; in this instance, a mode is used to determine the "average" country of birth.

In the two generalized biographies, modes have been used for sex, residence, profession, place of birth, war service, education, name of wife, religion, political affiliation, clubs and recreation. At times, the modal average can be misleading. It should not be imagined that "Margaret" is the name of the majority of 1931 wives; but it is the most-frequent name, appearing in 7% of the biographies, and this is 3% higher than the next most popular name (which is Mary). My use of mode in these generalized biographies may lead to some misleading impressions: for example, although the modal average of Who's Who personnel was born in England, and although the majority of Who's Whos did not fight in World War I, the incidence of war service among Who's Whos from England was considerably higher than from anywhere else.

Arithmetic means have been used for the age of the typical Who's Who, his age at immigration to Canada (derived from all those who were not native Canadians), his age at marriage, and his number of children. For the last of these, I could have used a mode, but I felt this would have been misleading: a modal average would have placed the number of his children at zero.

Throughout the essay I have in most cases rounded off statistics with decimals to their appropriate whole number. For exact figures, see Appendix III.

APPENDIX III
SOCIOECONOMIC DATA

OCCUPATIONS (Reason for Inclusion)

	<u>1931</u>	<u>1953</u>
Professional	25.3	38.6
Business	22.6	34.6
Military	20.0	2.6
Political	12.0	20.0
Social	9.3	1.3
Sports	2.6	—
Other	8.0	2.6

PLACE OF BIRTH (Ethnic Origin)

	<u>1931</u>	<u>1953</u>
Canada	42.6	62.6
England (incl. Wales)	42.6	22.6
Scotland	16.0	1.3
United States	4.0	6.6
Other	10.6	6.6
B. C.	10.6	28.0
Prairies	2.6	9.3
Ontario	12.0	18.6
Quebec	6.6	2.6
Maritimes	10.6	4.0
	42.6	62.6

MARITAL STATUS

	<u>1931</u>	<u>1953</u>
Married	85.3	83.6
Single or Not Given	12.0	13.3
Widowed	2.6	—

RESIDENCE

	<u>1931</u>	<u>1953</u>
Victoria	52.0	37.3
Vancouver Is.	21.3	1.3
Vancouver	14.6	50.6
Other	12.0	10.6

APPENDIX III (continued)

WAR SERVICE

	<u>1931</u>	<u>1953</u>
Service	43	60
No Service	57	40

POLITICS

	<u>1931</u>	<u>1953</u>
Conservative	16.0	2.6
Liberal	2.6	5.3
CCF	—	4.0
Socred	—	8.0
Not Given	81.3	84.0

EDUCATION

	<u>1931</u>	<u>1953</u>
Degree	25.3	26.6
Some University	36.0	29.3
Uncertain	38.6	44.0

RELIGION

	<u>1931</u>	<u>1953</u>
Protestant	64.0	68.0
Roman Catholic	1.3	5.3
Jewish	—	1.3
Not Given	34.6	25.3
"Protestant"	2.6	12.0
Anglican	12.0	25.3
Church of England	29.3	8.0
United	9.3	14.6
Presbyterian	8.0	6.6
Lutheran	—	1.3
Baptist	1.3	—
Methodist	1.3	—

CHILDREN

	<u>1931</u>	<u>1953</u>
None	33.3	20.0
One	18.6	10.6
Two	10.6	13.3
Three	16.0	25.3

APPENDIX III (continued)

CLUBS

	<u>1931</u>	<u>1953</u>
Union	24.0	16.0
Colwood G&C	6.6	---
AF and AM	10.6	10.6
Vancouver	6.6	20.0
IODE	4.0	---
Can. Women's	4.0	---
Brit. Public Schools	4.0	---
Victoria Golf	4.0	4.0
Pacific	6.6	5.3
IOOF	4.0	---
Victoria	5.3	---
Mason	2.6	4.0
Royal Van. Yacht	2.6	8.0
Royal Vic. Yacht	2.6	4.0
Shaughnessy	1.3	6.6
Rotary	1.3	9.3
Can. Legion	2.6	5.3
Laurier	---	4.0
Kiwanis	---	5.3
Vancouver Board of Trade	1.3	8.0

RECREATION

	<u>1931</u>	<u>1953</u>
None	49.3	34.6
Hunting	10.6	10.6
Fishing	20.0	21.3
Golf	29.3	26.6
Riding	2.6	8.0
Gardening	4.0	5.3
Yachting	6.6	9.3
Motoring	5.3	1.3
Sports	6.0	4.0
Hiking	2.6	2.6
Music	1.3	5.3
Photography	---	4.0