

Obituary: Stuart Marshall Jamieson (1914–2002)

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Stuart Jamieson taught economics and sociology at the University of British Columbia from 1945 until his retirement in 1980. His research career extended from the early forties to the nineties.

Stuart's best-known contributions were in the field of industrial relations. Many students were introduced to this field by his book, *Industrial Relations In Canada*, first published in 1957, which was the first book-length treatment of the subject. This classic work was renowned for its conciseness, its clarity of style, and its analysis of Canadian labour relations in the wider North American context. A second revised and updated edition was published in 1973.

Jamieson was especially interested in the status of minorities and of workers who are at the margins of a modern labour force. His research enabled him to document their condition, in the hope that society would be moved to improve it. He was also intrigued by industrial conflict in all of its manifestations: strikes, labour uprisings, and violence during labour disputes. Both of these interests are reflected in *Labor Unionism In American Agriculture*, a monograph based on his doctoral dissertation, published in 1945 by the U.S. Department of Labor.

This was a monumental study. Jamieson's data collection was painstaking and thorough. He filled the many gaps in official reports by estimates based on personal interviews and newspaper reports. The same thoroughness is characteristic of Stuart's research throughout his career.

The findings are reported in painstaking detail. The conclusions are valid generalisations, insightful predictions, and progressive recommendations. Stuart predicted that "widespread conflict in agriculture is likely to recur should the war-induced full employment prove temporary." This has turned out to be true. The well argued recommendations include the extension to farm workers of social security and labour relations legislation that already protected industrial workers and unions.

From agriculture Stuart moved easily into studies of the fishing industry in British Columbia. In 1950 he published two articles (with Percy Gladstone) describing for the first time the unique structures and practices of labour relations in that industry, in which fishers on boats had the legal status of independent contractors or partners in a business venture, but functioned in fact as the employees of packing houses. He built on this work in evidence before the Restrictive Trade Practices Commission, where he argued successfully against a proposal to treat collective bargaining by fisher unions as violating Canada's anti-monopoly legislation. His evidence skillfully combined economic analysis with the presentation of relevant statistics and an exposition of the tangle of provincial and federal legislation regulating this industry. Subsequent changes in federal and provincial legislation and administrative practice in essence adopted his proposals.

In the late 1960s, Stuart's book, *Times of Trouble: Labour Unrest and Industrial Conflict in Canada, 1900-1960*, was one of the most widely-read studies produced for the Prime Minister's Task Force on Industrial Relations led by H.D. Woods. It was an authoritative analytical history of the determinants of industrial conflict in Canada. Stuart observed that industrial conflict in Canada is unusually bitter, and attempted to document and explain this fact. The question he raised still has not been answered.

Jamieson's analysis was typically broad, incorporating history, politics, sociology and economics. No one before or since has gathered and analyzed so much data on strikes in Canada. He identified cycles in twentieth century strike activity, putting into perspective the strikes of 1965-1966 that gave rise to the Woods Task Force. His book appeared shortly before a phase of high strike activity occurred in the 1970s and 1980s. We are now in a period of relative labour peace, and students of Jamieson's work must ask whether a new cycle of unrest will occur.

Shortly before his retirement, Jamieson worked on an extension of *Times of Trouble*. He gathered data on violence, illegality and sanctions surrounding strikes in Canada. The results of this work were published in 1984 in a volume edited by A. Whipper.

Jamieson found that violence and illegal activity were consequences of inequities in the law governing employment in Canada. Reversing his earlier views he estimated that incidents of violence in strikes were more frequent in Canada than in the United States. Violence occurred more often in the frontier regions of Canada and among marginalized groups. He concluded that reports of the withering away of the strike were premature, though he found that violence and other illegal acts grew less common over time. That trend has continued, but the appropriate means for dealing with mass labour protests is still problematic.

Stuart's second major field of research was the economics and sociology of Canada's First Nations, formerly referred to as Indians. In 1954 he

joined anthropologists Harry Hawthorn and Cyril Belshaw in a research project commissioned by the Federal Department of Citizenship and Immigration, leading to the publication in 1960 of their monograph, *The Indians of British Columbia: A Study of Contemporary Social Adjustment*. In 1964 Hawthorn and Jamieson extended their research, with a new team, to the *Survey of The Contemporary Indians of Canada: A Report on Economic, Political, Educational Needs and Policies* commissioned by the "Indian Affairs Branch" of the Government of Canada (IAB) and published in 1966.

Stuart's contribution is easier to isolate in the latter study. Careful research undertaken and supervised by himself filled major gaps in survey material supplied by IAB. Based on this work he presented a painstakingly detailed account, free of professional jargon, of the complex sources of "Indian" poverty and social dysfunction. He also illustrated Indian poverty and dysfunction by statistical comparisons with "white" society. He showed how paternalism in the IAB interacted with dependency, poverty, and dysfunction to generate a vicious circle resembling those in other disadvantaged societies.

Reading these studies to-day one is surprised at white academics being asked by government agencies to advise them on what would be good for "the Indians", without much apparent input from First Nations themselves. It should be remembered that In the fifties and sixties it was believed that sound research was a sufficient condition for sound policy recommendations (a mistaken view), and that the "Indians" at that time lacked sufficient skilled manpower for such research (no doubt correct).

Stuart's research was motivated by a passion for social justice, a concern for the socially and economically deprived members of society, and a strong aversion to exploitation. Linked to these concerns was his conviction that economic research should be relevant to government policy formation. It is therefore not surprising that he was allied with left of centre political movements and research groups. Before joining the University of British Columbia he was the research economist of the CCF, the forerunner of the New Democratic Party. Throughout his career he contributed articles and research papers to left of centre books, journals, and research institutes.

In the nineties, in common with other progressive economists Stuart added worry about the impact of human activity on the world's natural environment to his concern for social justice. Here he showed that he was not only a researcher but also a political activist. Physical opposition to the entry of loggers into the pristine wilderness of Clayoquot Sound earned him a sentence of a brief period of house arrest.

Stuart was a one-man research engine that anticipated the currently fashionable inter-disciplinary institutes. His research and writing ranged over economics, sociology, political science, and psychology, and he did not recognize any lines of demarcation between these disciplines. He held

that the assumption of rational well informed individual self interest is not an adequate basis from which to analyse either what happens in the “real world” or what the policies of governments should be. He was imaginative and original in formulating hypotheses, and careful in his reasoning. He made his research accessible to non-specialists by avoiding technical jargon.

Personally, Stuart Jamieson was a kind and gentle man, devoted to his family. In many ways he was the quintessential absent-minded professor, carrying sheaves of papers in a file, but forgetting to bring a pen or pencil. His passion for social justice was deep but not intrusive. His worst fault was an addiction to outrageous puns and word play. His passing is a loss to his large family, his colleagues and friends, and his neighbours on Bowen Island.

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