

Canada and the United States: The Civil War Years. By Robin W. Winks. (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins Press, 1960. Pp. xviii, 430. Bibliographical note, index. \$6.50.)

Americans seem strangely reluctant to study the history of their northern neighbor, for the bulk of writing on this subject is still done by Canadians. But American scholars slowly are becoming aware of research possibilities north of the border; and in these years of the Civil War centennial, it is inevitable that at least one aspect of Canadian-American affairs will undergo careful scrutiny. This work by Robin Winks is an extensive study of Canada's relations with the United States during the tension-filled Civil War years.

By utilizing unexploited sources—especially consular correspondence—the author has arrived at some unconventional conclusions that will force modification of many time-honored clichés, including the traditional picture of a “century of peace” along the border. From 1861 to 1865 the two countries were not good neighbors, and relations were marred by several ugly incidents. Winks lights up the triangle of Anglo-American-Canadian affairs and the effect of Confederate diplomacy on them. He explores Canadian enlistment in the Union army and demolishes another historical myth; according to him the number was fewer than commonly supposed. He also examines the attitude of the Canadian press toward the war, gives full details on the *Chesapeake* and St. Albans affairs, and shows the ineptness of Confederate efforts to embroil England in war with the North through Canadian-based raids on Union territory.

This volume grew out of the author's doctoral study at Johns Hopkins and is subject to the virtues and vices of dissertation-inspired books. Ideally all research should be publishable, but the transition from thesis to book requires modification in form and content. A pruning of an overladen foreword (including some ill-calculated wit), of obtrusive footnotes, extraneous text, and greater attention to style (the author has a penchant for misplaced modifiers) would have made the book more readable. Moreover, the work is marred by numerous factual mistakes. After an excellent rundown of the literature on the *Trent* affair, Winks makes the elementary mistake of stating that the *Trent*, after its release by Captain Charles Wilkes of the *San Jacinto*, “continued her voyage to England” (p. 70). Actually the ship was a mail-packet engaged in the Caribbean area and went to St. Thomas in the Danish West Indies. There is some inconsistency as to when the British government seized the *Laird* rams; Winks gives the date incorrectly on page 125, correctly on page 358. Lincoln's renomination is wrongly assigned to May, 1864. Many readers will question the relative importance that Winks assigns the *Trent* affair and the St. Albans raid (in which Confederates from Canada attacked a Vermont town). His emphasis on the raid as a possible cause of war with Britain is not convincing.

But it is difficult to write a book and easy to find fault with one. In many ways the present volume, despite the above comments, is a noteworthy effort in a neglected field. Winks has written a good book, but one that easily could have been improved by careful editing. Its failings are minor, its conclusions fresh and helpful to students of the Civil War years.