SELLING OUT OR BUYING IN?

Debating Consumerism in Vancouver and Victoria, 1945–1985

In the late 1950s, residents of Vancouver and Victoria negotiated a shopping landscape that would be inconceivable to today's consumers: most stores were closed for at least half the day on Wednesdays, prevented from opening during the evenings, and banned from operating on Sundays. Since that time, however, British Columbians, and Canadians more generally, have made significant strides in gaining greater flexibility in shopping regulations.

Selling Out or Buying In? is the first work to detail the process by which consumers' access to goods and services was liberalized and deregulated in British Columbia in the latter half of the twentieth century. Dawson's in-depth exploration of the debates between politicians and everyday citizens regarding the pros and cons of expanding shopping opportunities challenges the sense of inevitability surrounding Canada's emergence as a consumer society. The expansion of store hours was a contingent and highly contested development that pitted employees, owners, and regulators against one another. Dawson's nuanced analysis of archival and newspaper sources reveals the strains that modern capitalism imposed on the established rhythms of daily life for British Columbians during the post-Second World War period.

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