

## Diversity at the Centre: Ontario Local and Political History

Elwood Jones

Volume 12, numéro 1, autumn 1982

URI : [https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/acad12\\_1rv01](https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/acad12_1rv01)

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

### Éditeur(s)

The Department of History of the University of New Brunswick

### ISSN

0044-5851 (imprimé)

1712-7432 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

### Citer ce document

Jones, E. (1982). Diversity at the Centre:: Ontario Local and Political History. *Acadiensis*, 12(1), 105–115.

# Reviews/Revue

## Diversity at the Centre: Ontario Local and Political History

Canadian historians rarely view Ontario as a region, for it is too easy to view its affairs as national. The site of the national capital, Ontario also has the largest and most cosmopolitan population and the largest and most important metropolitan area. The *Globe and Mail*, "Canada's National Newspaper", confirms the self-proclaimed importance of Ontario, presuming to articulate the national perspective. This burden of being national has made it difficult to discern what is really Ontario. Even at the avowedly local level, Ontarians assume they are typical Canadians. After all, surely everyone shares values such as thrift, hard work, honesty; why not expect that everyone would also value local control of local affairs, cheap sources of energy and the primacy of the English language? Consequently, Ontarians will continue to speak for the nation.

This is a heavy burden. Ontario is rarely studied for its own sake. Nevertheless, the study of local history is vigorously pursued. Most work is inspired by local interest and curiosity, but the effort to find wider national and world significance continues. The study of local history has been aided immensely by two continuing projects: the Ontario series of the Champlain Society, seeing Ontario as a region of regions, and the Ontario Historical Studies Series, viewing Ontario as a distinct region within Canada.

Local scholars are indebted to the OHSS for Olga Bishop's superb *Bibliography of Ontario History 1867-1976 Cultural, Economic, Political, Social* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1980). This is a comprehensive, accessible, thorough and indispensable tool providing quick access to bibliographical works, monographs, pamphlets, periodical articles and graduate theses. There are some unfortunate omissions, such as histories of individual schools and churches, but for the most part one cannot quarrel with the excellence of this work by Olga Bishop and a fine team. It also provides a landmark against which to review the recent literature, as it covers items available to 1976.

This does not mean the bibliography is without error. It was surprising, for example, to find omission of important local studies in the Peterborough area. The highly acclaimed volume, A.O.C. Cole, ed., *Illustrated Historical Atlas of Peterborough County 1825-1875* (Toronto, Hunter Rose for the Peterborough Historical Atlas Foundation, Peterborough, 1975), set high standards for accuracy, but was especially interesting because it strove to emulate the volumes of 100 years ago. Prepared as if it had been written in the 1870s, the atlas has been a great success in promoting interest in local history. The volume is also a fine example of the value of cooperation between professional and amateur historians. Other local examples of this cooperative approach include Elwood Jones, *St. John's Peterborough: The Sesquicentennial History of an Anglican*

*Parish* (Peterborough, St. John's Church, 1976), Ed Boland, *From the Pioneers to the Seventies: A History of the Diocese of Peterborough 1882-1975* (Peterborough, Maxwell Review, 1976), Clare F. Galvin, *The Holy Land: A History of Ennismore Township* (Peterborough, Township of Ennismore, 1978), Jean L. Graham, *Asphodel: A Tale of a Township* (Peterborough, Maxwell Review, 1978). All are fueled with the conviction that history lives when drawn with an emphasis on local people and institutions. The same quality infused the excellent local guide to archival resources, Robert Taylor-Vaisey's *Ontario's Heritage: A Guide to Archival Resources: Volume One: Peterborough Region* (Cheltenham, Boston Mills Press for the Toronto Area Archivists Group, 1978). One of the most encouraging signs of the cooperative spirit and the strong appeal of local history was the Kawartha Conference, a heritage festival aimed at the general public and supported by the Ontario Heritage Foundation and the Ontario Historical Society and a host of local organizations. The results have been published in A.O.C. Cole and Jean Cole, eds., *Kawartha Heritage: Proceedings of the Kawartha Conference, 1981* (Peterborough, Kawartha Heritage, Trent University, 1981), now clearly the best starting point for anyone interested in the history of this area. The articles cover a wide range of topics, from native and immigrant groups, the waterways and the literary scene to native plants and folk songs.

This impressive array of activities and publications is not a Peterborough monopoly. The heritage conferences, often initiated by the Ontario Heritage Foundation, have been held in Windsor, Arnprior and Timmins.<sup>1</sup> The annual meetings of the Ontario Historical Society are a movable feast, and there are dozens of historical societies, genealogical societies, Women's Institutes, antique clubs and special groups throughout the province. Although it is not as evident that the professional historians always work as well with amateurs elsewhere, there has been a breathtaking array of publications in the past seven or eight years.

Royce MacGillivray and Ewan Ross proved an able team in writing *A History of Glengarry* (Belleville, Mika Publishers, 1979). This is a well-researched book aimed at Glengarrians. The book makes very few concessions to the non-Glengarrians, and one is left with the impression that Glengarry has no relevance to life elsewhere, even though contemporary habits have invaded its borders. Interestingly, the authors go beyond their research to create an imaginary biography of a typical Glengarrian, which represents a golden age view of life in Glengarry "where everyboy had a place in the community and the community made a place for them". The authors are proud of Glengarry's Scottish-

1 So far the proceedings of the Arnprior conference have been published: *Exploring Our Heritage: The Ottawa Valley Experience: Proceedings* (Arnprior, Ontario Government Bookstore for Arnprior and District Historical Society, 1980). Proceedings from the Western District conference, held in Windsor in 1979, and the Timmins conference, 1981, will also appear in due course.

ness, high respect for relatives and Ralph Connor, and Glengarrians should enjoy it.

Leo Johnson's highly-regarded *History of the County of Ontario 1615-1875* (Whitby, County of Ontario, 1973) and the *History of Guelph 1827-1927* (Guelph, Guelph Historical Society, 1977) both involved working with local groups. Some of the members of these groups were probably upset he stopped so far before the current generation, and his anti-business animus did not help. He has a compelling and convincing tone as he explores changing strategies of development and the accompanying exploitation that occurs, and he tackles local elites, often in the guise of the Family Compact. His logic is tight and his research solid, and the reader is never in doubt about what he should consider important. His muckracking, particularly in the Guelph volume, rests uneasily with the boosterism of adjacent chapters, but by and large, Leo Johnson is a writer to emulate, and his Ontario County volume is without doubt one of the finest local histories to appear in Ontario.

Kingston has been well-served by an excellent collection of essays, Gerald Tulchinsky's *To Preserve and to Defend: Essays on Kingston in the Nineteenth Century* (Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1976). The political essays are stronger than those on social and economic issues with the result that this is the Kingston of John A. Macdonald, the Family Compact and the military. All three were very significant in the history of Kingston; a city that refused to acknowledge its declining importance, Kingston was rescued with military, penal and educational institutions. Two of these institutions have been the subject of excellent studies. Hilda Neatby drew upon her strong background in education, her deep-rooted interest in Presbyterianism and her lifelong study of Canadian politics to produce the excellent *Queen's University: Volume I: 1841-1917: And not to yield* (Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1978). Neatby was particularly sensitive to intellectual currents and made great efforts to see the university from a variety of perspectives. George Rawlyk and Kevin Quinn went a step further in their volume, *The Redeemed of the Lord Say So: A History of Queen's University Theological College, 1917-1972* (Kingston, Queen's Theological College, 1980). Rawlyk and Quinn sent questionnaires to the alumni; this was an encouraging effort to broaden the base but the perspective seemed to show that the most interesting and important things really did happen around the principal's chair.

One can only hope that Ottawa will be better served than it has been in the past. David Knight's *A Capital for Canada: Conflict and Compromise in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago, University of Chicago Department of Geography, 1977) is narrow in focus and not readily accessible. The most recent local history is Shirley E. Woods, Jr., *Ottawa: The Capital of Canada* (Toronto, Doubleday, 1980). This is not the definitive history the publishers promised. The author, writing firmly in the booster tradition, strives to be

“accurate without being academic”. The result is much like a scrapbook of clippings. Work on the violence of the 1840s is treated as laying the base for harmonious race relations from that point. The chapter on the First World War, which gives a good indication of the author’s method, is restricted to a discussion of the early history of the Princess Patricia Canadian Light Infantry, a description of the parliamentary fire and an incomplete story on the flu epidemic. The book scarcely discusses municipal politics and the author seems unaware of the wide range of issues pursued in the urban history literature. Unfortunately, the author has no internal standard for discerning significant issues and has no desire to use external standards.<sup>2</sup>

The Ontario series of the Champlain Society continues to produce fine collections of documents. Barbara Wilson’s examination of *Ontario and the First World War* (Toronto, Champlain Society, 1977) treats the Ontario experience as exemplary of the Canadian experience. Her look at life on the home front is particularly emotive, and the book captures in subtle ways the changing pace of Ontario, or should it be Canadian?, life. The most recent volume in the series has the narrowest focus of any volume in the series. R. Alan Douglas’ *John Prince 1796-1870 A Collection of Documents* (Toronto, Champlain Society, 1980) includes pitifully brief excerpts from the extraordinary diary of this local Essex County politician. Whatever the reasons for this tight editing, the consequence is a volume that is significant only in regional terms, confirming what we have come to expect from the Champlain Society: Ontario’s experience is only understood in very local terms, for Ontario is a place of many regions.

For a political study of the mid-19th century, the reader is better advised to read Brian Dawe’s *Old Oxford is Wide Awake! Pioneer Settlements and Politicians in Oxford County, 1793-1853* (Woodstock, Oxford Museum, 1980). This slim volume is a commendable effort to explore the relationship between local and provincial politics. Dawe has probed the archival sources, including poll books and assessment rolls and has an excellent opportunity to explore localism in Oxford County politics. However, he seems more fascinated by what is happening in Toronto, and fails to explore the local tensions he uncovers. Nonetheless, this is an excellent study of pre-Confederation politics and it does give us fine information about Oxford County.

But Ontario local history extends beyond the political scene. Social and economic issues are pursued most successfully in several studies relating to Hamilton and Toronto. Michael Katz’s *The People of Hamilton Canada West: Family and Class in a Mid-Nineteenth Century City* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1975) is a significant work by any standard. Many

2 However, John Taylor’s study for the History of Canadian Cities series promises to be excellent. And the Mikas of Belleville have just released *Bytown, The Early Days of Ottawa* (Belleville, 1982) as part of a continuing effort to publish items related to Ontario local history.

Canadian historians lament that the underpinnings of the book are more international than Canadian. Katz did rely on some work by Canadian historians, but none more so than Douglas McCalla's *The Upper Canada Trade, 1834-1872: A Study of the Buchanan Business* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1979). McCalla provides a lucid account of the credit system and the insecurity facing entrepreneurs even at the height of their success. This added an important dimension to Katz's conclusions on the widespread transiency and inequality that characterized Hamilton, and probably other Canadian centres as well.

Finally, Katz is not interested in Hamilton, as such. In one respect, this protects him from the antiquarianism that could easily result from the generation of masses of historical detail, which this project did for the short time span of the 1850s. Katz wants to establish the extent to which Hamilton is typical. Its experience matches that of the several American cities for which it is possible to make comparisons, but that might only mean that Hamilton in the 1850s and 1860s was a typical American city, despite its different ethnic composition, a city full of immigrants moving further west. What makes Katz's book so valuable is the questions it raises, and the hypotheses it proposes. Katz is extraordinarily adept at drawing every ounce of significance out of the figures he examines, and he is thoroughly conversant with the theoretical and comparative literature.

David Gagan's *Hopeful Travellers: Families, Land and Social Change in Mid-Victorian Peel County, Canada West* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1981) draws upon Katz's experience and asks similar questions about a rural county not too distant from Hamilton. The book, representing a new tack for the OHSS, explores how ordinary people reacted to major changes and uncertainty in society and the economy. Drawing primarily upon the manuscript census and land records, Gagan discovers a marked contrast between families in motion and families that persist, which "represents the essential face of inequality" (p. 148). Gagan sees the decades from the 1850s to the 1870s, the years of his study, as ones of transition. Agriculture became more market-oriented and moved from wheat specialization to mixed farming. Brampton grew rapidly for the last half of this period, the direct consequence of the railway. There was a movement to larger farms and to smaller farm families. And in this period of transition, the people of Peel, not unlike people elsewhere, responded pragmatically, and changed as little as possible. Perseverance was the "key to success" (p. 141). Gagan writes with confidence based on ten years close work with the sources and the theoretical and comparative literatures. The reader will be less confident, partly because of the difficulty of the sources and the language. There is a determinism in the book that is hard to pinpoint; everything seems to be explained by the search for material improvement (primarily in land ownership) or for family cohesiveness.

Bryan Palmer's *A Culture in Conflict: Skilled Workers and Industrial*

*Capitalism in Hamilton, Ontario, 1860-1914* (Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1979) also relies on the typicality of Hamilton. Palmer considers his work to be in the tradition of empirical Marxism, as practised by E.P. Thompson, in which history has primacy over the social sciences in efforts to test and reformulate theory. He concludes that there are elements of continuity and change in the battle for the control of the workplace, that Hamilton has no labour aristocracy but that Hamilton was not as conservative as has sometimes been imagined. This is an impressive, possibly overargued, book. It complements the study of Katz even though its sources, approaches and point of view are quite different.

Greg Kealey's *Toronto Workers Respond to Industrial Capitalism, 1867-1892* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1980) shares much with Palmer's work, including the concern to document the class conflict, and its emphasis on continuity. Kealey's description of Toronto's industrial revolution is well-balanced, pointing out the length of time and the unevenness of the process involved, and unlike most historians, he relies heavily on the census manuscript data for analyzing change on the occupational scene. Kealey convincingly demonstrates the centrality of the struggle for control of the workplace. He also captures the significance of organizations such as the Orange Order, which provided trained leadership and a tradition of activism for the growing labour movement. By the 1890s Kealey sees the emergence of working class organizations with considerable strength. The labour movement has an ability to engender public discussion, organize workers and provide a basis for working class advances, both in the workplace and in politics. Kealey is particularly sensitive to the significance of place, and while he wants to imply that his observations and conclusions have wider applicability, the importance of Toronto makes it easier for him to let the argument rest on the evidence that he presents so ably. This is a first-rate book by any standard, and a model of fine local history.

Kealey's emphasis on the Orange Lodge as a bastion for the working classes has been challenged by Cecil J. Houston and William J. Smyth in *The Sash Canada Wore: a Historical Geography of the Orange Order in Canada* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1980). The authors stress the leadership of the Order in Toronto politics and government administration. While agreeing with Kealey that two-thirds of the Orangemen belonged to the labouring and artisan classes, they argue that in Toronto there was no "recognizable association between religion and socio-economic strata" (pp. 104-5). They also disagree with Kealey's view that a sense of territoriality explains Catholic-Protestant riots. Houston and Smyth are clearly more interested in the elite, and conclude its power came from association with the Order: Professor Senior had argued the reverse some years ago.<sup>3</sup> Even if the assertions of Houston and Smyth are

3 Hereward Senior, *Orangeism: The Canadian Phase* (Toronto, 1972).

correct, they do not really address the core of Kealey's argument. Their main interest is to demonstrate the growth and decline of Orangeism as an institution, largely by mapping new lodges and membership. This task they perform well, although one might disagree with the conclusions they draw from such correlations.

Other historians have tried, with less success, to use the importance of Toronto to add significance to their study. Michael Piva's *The Condition of the Working Class in Toronto 1900-1921* (Ottawa, University of Ottawa Press, 1979) was inspired by Terry Copp's *Anatomy of Poverty*.<sup>4</sup> Piva stresses the weakness of the working class, in particular its inability to earn a living wage, to create strong organizations, to improve physical conditions at work or at home, or to share in the increased productivity of the economy. As did Copp, Piva stresses that the major source of poverty was unemployment, and that government was unable to make headway against either poverty or unemployment. Given that Montreal's experience was even worse in these respects, we are left with the difficulty of trying to reconcile Piva and Kealey. An easy exit would be to assume that Kealey concentrated on labour organization where it was strongest, in craft unions for shoemakers, printers and iron moulders. All workers, even in Toronto, did not share the same experience or degree of success.

Michael Bliss' superb biography of Sir Joseph Flavelle, *A Canadian Millionaire: The Life and Times of Sir Joseph Flavelle, Bart., 1858-1939* (Toronto, Macmillan, 1978) provides excellent insight into another aspect of the Toronto working scene. Like most of the financial leadership of Toronto in the late 19th century, Flavelle was a product of smalltown Ontario, and his leadership in the pork-packing industry helps to explain why Toronto is called Hogtown. Bliss' careful analysis of business organization and practices is thorough, clear and useful at every turn. Bliss attaches some significance to the idea of accountability, deeply ingrained in Methodism, and to the importance of having like-minded business associates. Flavelle's philanthropy flowed from similar impulses. The net result is a book that stresses individualism rather than class, and sound business management rather than rhetoric, in the rise of Toronto as the dominant metropolitan centre of Canada.

Christopher Armstrong and Viv Nelles are also interested in the rise of big business in Toronto, although more with its impact on local politics. *The Revenge of the Methodist Bicycle Company: Sunday Streetcars and Municipal Reform in Toronto, 1888-1897* (Toronto, Peter Martin Associates, 1977) is a book in the muckraking tradition, poking fun at the political activity of the financial elite and at the crusades for clean government. The fight for Sunday streetcars is a convenient issue to illuminate these theses, and there is the

<sup>4</sup> Terry Copp, *The Anatomy of Poverty: The Condition of the Working Class in Montreal 1897-1929* (Toronto, 1974).



pleasant irony that the bicycle craze undermined the profitability of Sunday streetcars. While Armstrong and Nelles take rather too much delight in attacking straw men, they address some very significant issues and help to clarify the dynamics of local politics.

Much of the recent literature has stressed the importance of immigration and ethnicity in political organization, and Stephen A. Speisman's exhaustive study of *The Jews of Toronto: A History to 1937* (Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1979) is most welcome. Speisman focuses on the institutional development of synagogues and other organizations. The central difficulty faced by Jewish leadership was to establish strong community identity in a minority when society as a whole celebrated voluntarism and the place of the individual. The challenges of the Depression and the Holocaust, Speisman argues, did much to change that. The story has links, of course, with the economic themes in Kealey and Bliss, but it is surprising how little these are pursued. The discussion of the Cloakmakers' Union and its fight to remain independent of the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union and to get recognition at Eaton's is an interesting case in point, but Speisman stresses only the impact upon the Jewish community. Nonetheless, the book establishes quite convincingly that religious and ethnic differences are key to understanding Jewish participation in the workplace and in politics.

No Ontario institution has been as well studied as the educational system. Alison Prentice's *The School Promoters: Education and Social Class in Mid-Nineteenth Century Upper Canada* (Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1977) is a tightly-argued monograph that underlines the pessimism of educators and politicians who believed that Upper Canada was obsessively materialistic, illiterate and idle, prone to juvenile crime and lacking in public spirit. On this weak base they had to build respectability, opportunity and discipline, and however altruistic, the school reformers were promoting social inequality. This social control thesis continues to hold the field despite occasional emphases on altruism and religious influence in such works as Neil McDonald and Alf Chaiton's *Egerton Ryerson and His Times: Essays in the History of Education* (Toronto, Macmillan, 1978). In that same volume R. Gidney and D.A. Lawr note that local control and responsibility for many decisions limited the centralizing impetus of Egerton Ryerson and his friends. Even so, with schools in the control of the better classes, it is argued, education was still treated as a means of social control: in order to rise, the lower classes must assume the values and manners of the upper class.

The institutional approach in a much narrower sense, has been pursued by George Raudzens' *The British Ordnance Department and Canada's Canals 1815-1855* (Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1979). The British government remains an important factor in understanding the development of Upper Canada and Ontario, partly because British government grants were so

eagerly sought. Raudzens' study stresses the British subsidy to the Canadian economy arising from the placement of British troops, and employees such as those with Ordnance. In fact, he argues, this influence was asserted in many quarters to an extent rarely imagined and frequently resented. The close detail of the book is convincing but never exciting. The book has its own irony: the Ordnance department was poorly administered, a weakness that permitted larger expenditures in the colonies. One suspects that Colonel John By's strong standing with historians of Ottawa rests on precisely this quality. Poor communications with London were not always disadvantageous!

Every volume in the Ontario Historical Studies Series is essential reading. Peter Oliver's excellent *Howard Ferguson: Ontario Tory* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1977) has captured the essence of Old Ontario in the 1920s and in the ideological and values systems that survived industrialism and urbanization. Respect for moral reform was well exemplified in the battle for temperance, which Ferguson defused with liquor regulations; as well, an emphasis on job creation, ingrained localism and a cultural imperialism were among the features so identified. Oliver's effort to use biography to capture the spirit of the times was impressive and thorough and set a high standard for the series. The second volume in the subseries of premiers' biographies is far more diverse and less tightly knit. J.M.S. Careless, ed., *The Pre-Confederation Premiers: Ontario Government Leaders: 1841-1862* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1980) is a collection of five essays on five Upper Canadian political leaders who shared dual premierships in the governments of the Province of Canada before Confederation. There are interesting tensions in this volume. The decision to look only at those who held the position for a reasonable length of time means that Lord Sydenham, Sir Alan MacNab and George Brown are not covered. There is also the implicit assumption that the occupants of the premiers' offices revealed the emergence of Ontario's striking confidence and the fundamental features of the emerging political culture. However, the five men represent different political traditions, a fact that raises issues the book is not able to confront. Even at the outset of Confederation Ontario may have been more diverse, more internally regional, than historians have generally admitted.

George Metcalf's study of William Henry Draper stresses his role as an unwilling politician and as a buffer between British policies and Canadian politics, never able to contain the restless Toryism in the remnants of the Family Compact. J.M.S. Careless sees Robert Baldwin, the "Father of Responsible Government" and architect of the Ontario municipal system, as a man unable to rest on his laurels who left the Reform Party in increasing disorder. Bill Ormsby concludes that Sir Francis Hincks' most productive and most dynamic years were those before he became premier; as premier he was frustrated in his vision of a "prosperous, burgeoning railway age" (p. 192). Not so convincingly,

Ormsby also asserts that Hincks held the well-articulated values of mid-19th century Anglo-American liberalism, which Ormsby identified with a “politics of consensus and management” and the “use of the state to foster economic growth” (p. 193). Keith Johnson describes John A. Macdonald as a firm Ontarian who thought of Ontario as only part of a larger political and economic unit; he was the quintessential Ontario politician: a man with a strong political base and a conception of Canada as Ontario enlarged. Bruce Hodgins presents Sandfield Macdonald as a regional politician for central Canada, an independent and conscientious supporter of centralism, who shared with his successors a prescient opposition to federal interference in Ontario affairs. Each of the essays is commendable in its own ways, and yet what really holds them together? Is it significant that the first three did not thrive in office, and that only John A. Macdonald made a career of it? Is it curious that only John A. Macdonald is described in terms that capture the Ontario spirit, and yet the Liberal leadership from Baldwin to Mowat is more clearly identified with the dominant political sentiments of Ontario? Or is this very diversity the essence of Ontario?

Christopher Armstrong’s *The Politics of Federalism: Ontario’s Relations with the Federal Government, 1867-1942* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1981) finds that Ontario premiers, at least in their relations with the federal government, shared the same approaches. From 1869, they remained faithful to the compact theory, defended local autonomy, sought access to wider markets, and catered to private and bureaucratic interests. Ideology was not significant. This book is an ideal sequel to *Pre-Confederation Premiers* because it somehow suggests a close link between the views of premiers and of Ontarians, even if the link is not clearly translated in terms of votes. The premiers of the “big, rich and powerful” province of Ontario were leading crusaders for provincial rights; and as with the people of Ontario they “assumed that their wishes are the wishes of the national collectivity” (p. 238). The vantage point for this impressive book is the chair of the successive premiers of Ontario.

The questions raised in *Pre-Confederation Premiers* are not answered in Joseph Schull’s *Ontario Since 1867* (Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1978) which is also a volume in the Ontario Historical Studies Series. Never authoritative, the volume becomes increasingly less useful after the 1930s and stops in 1961. Through a series of vignettes on representative topics, Schull tries to capture the view of Ontario from the premiers’ office. Not surprisingly, certainly for readers in Atlantic Canada, Schull sees the cultural life of Ontario as largely coterminous with that of Canada.

Among other efforts to capture the general history of Ontario, probably the most satisfying is Roger Hall and Gordon Dodds, *A Picture History of Ontario* (Edmonton, Hurtig, 1980).<sup>5</sup> Like Schull, the authors believe Old Ontario died

5 Other noteworthy efforts of recent years include *Max Braithwaite’s Ontario* (Vancouver, 1974)

with the Leslie Frost government in 1961; from that point on there were no Ontarians, only people who lived in Ontario. But they find it difficult to say what they mean; their book, and its selection of pictures, evokes an image of change and variety. Their view of Ontario before 1961 finds agriculture at the centre, and they seem to share the view that "Contemporary Ontario is often labelled as conservative, stable, wealthy, smug and confident". But there is much more to the story than that.

To some, Ontario is still worth studying only to discern national significance. At the same time, there is a freshness to be unabashedly interested in things local, a freshness that even touches some academics. As historians become increasingly more interested in regionalism as the distinctive feature of being Canadian, Ontario historians discover regionalism within Ontario as its most distinctive characteristic. Either the Ontario series of the Champlain Society or the Ontario Historical Studies Series, or both, could appropriately be renamed Ontario and Its Provinces.

Probably more significant is the variety of approaches being pursued by Ontario historians. Strides are being made in quantitative history, institutional approaches, biographies and political studies. A political synthesis emerging from these works might stress the role of strong individuals with institutional or regional bases striving to overcome class divisions through appeals to economic or material progress. However, despite some passing indications, there has been no real effort to explore ethnocultural approaches to the understanding of politics. In truth, much remains to be done. Future work on Ontario assuredly will be more introspective and pessimistic, but it will continue to touch on those favourite themes: material progress, religious traditions and social control.

There is good reason to see Ontario as the most representative region of Canada. The unbending pride of Ontario emerges from this great outpouring. No single image does justice to Ontario, but there may be considerable truth in the proposition that Ontario made Canada. In a real sense, all parts of Canada are a part of Ontario's experience, partly because of the migration of its people, its institutions and its values. At long last historians are trying to understand Ontario on its own terms. Ontario's most enduring characteristics may be diversity and complexity as well as centrality.

ELWOOD JONES

and G.P. de T. Glazebrook *Life in Ontario: A Social History* (Toronto, 1968 and 1971). Recent collections of essays of interest are F.H. Armstrong *et al.*, eds., *Aspects of Nineteenth-Century Ontario: Essays Presented to James J. Talman* (Toronto, 1974), J.K. Johnson, ed., *Historical Essays on Upper Canada* (Toronto, 1975) and Bruce W. Hodgins *et al.*, eds., *Federalism in Canada and Australia: The Early Years* (Waterloo, 1978).