

## *Never Rest on Your Ores: Building a Mining Company, One Stone at a Time* by Norman B. Keevil

Mica Jorgenson

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thor's handling of the relationship between taxes and racism is one of the most intriguing but ultimately unsatisfying aspects of the book. For instance, the chapter on the tax history of the recently-created province of British Columbia is an important addition to the Pacific province's historiography, moving beyond the earlier insights on racism in BC by Patricia Roy. Heaman's argument that BC politicians in the 1870s "tried, as much as possible, to tax by race" is convincing (97). So too is her assertion that during the war income tax was introduced in a manner that aimed to protect the property interests of the Anglo wealth community rather than those of French Canadians. But I do wonder how germane the question of racism is to the central argument of the book.

Quibbles aside, *Tax, Order, and Good Government* represents a powerful addition to the developing field of "new political history." In particular, it helps to define the field in two ways. First, along

with Shirley Tillotson's recently-published *Give and Take: The Citizen-Taxpayer and the Rise of Canadian Democracy* (2017) it challenges readers to consider how the tax system mediated relations between citizens and the Canadian state. Heaman's emphasis on the creative function of municipal and provincial tax policies, and the need to understand how thinking about taxes encompasses all levels of the state, is an important contribution to the development of Canadian political history. In addition, *Tax, Order, and Good Government* reminds us that there is much more to be said about the relationship between wealth, poverty, and political power in Canadian history. Heaman has written an outstanding book that, while too long, is consequential. It is a book that *Ontario History* readers will find provocative and rewarding.

Robert A.J. McDonald  
Department of History  
University of British Columbia (Ret.)

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### *Never Rest on Your Ores*

#### *Building a Mining Company, One Stone at a Time*

By Norman B. Keevil

Montreal & Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017. 474 pages. \$39.95 cloth. ISBN 978-0-7735-5155-8. ([www.mqup.ca](http://www.mqup.ca))

With *Never Rest on Your Ores*, Norman B. Keevil of Teck-Hughes Gold Mines Ltd. adds his family's story to a stack of popular mining histories written in Ontario since the 1960s. In the tradition of the genre, *Never Rest on Your Ores* celebrates liberal corporate ascension while erasing Indigenous people. Despite some serious problems, readers may find some useful material here: Teck-

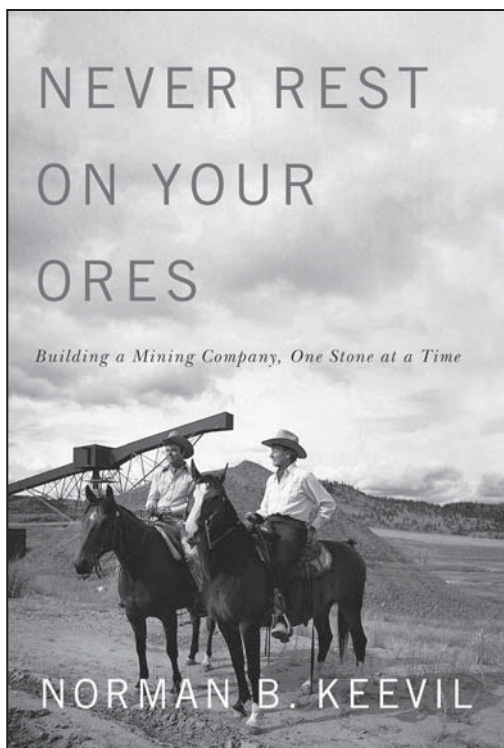
Hughes is of a newer generation than the usual subjects of popular business storytelling (i.e. the long-dead behemoths of the early twentieth century industry). *Never Rest on Your Ores* portrays an agile, connected, and responsive company which successfully navigated the cyclical nature of its industry and continues to shape the world in the present.

Keevil's portrayal is rooted in his ca-

noeist/geologist father's exhortation to "never rest on your oars," which Keevil extends as a metaphor for Teck-Hughes' business model writ large. The mining company jumped from deposit to deposit across Canada and around the world, experimenting with a variety of products and strategies. From humble origins in Ontario, the company experimented with oil, gold, silver, and copper in British Columbia, the

Arctic, and Chile. At first, such acquisitions were a method of survival. Norman Keevil Senior impressed his son with the fundamental understanding of the ephemeral nature of a mineral deposit: A successful company must constantly seek out its next mine or risk fading with the last of its ore. Mines are made, not found, so success comes from imaginative financial maneuvers which allow a deposit to be mined profitably regardless of its quality.

This pillar of Teck's business model is perfectly embodied by the company's "annual mine opening golf tournament," whereby managers, owners, and investors would come to the newest site to play golf, socialize, and raise money. These annual tournaments feature in every sec-



tion of *Never Rest on your Ores*, each time marking a turning point in the company's history – and providing an opportunity for Keevil to regale his reader with a new tale of business (or athletic) acumen.

Thus *Never Rest on Your Ores* roughly outlines the way the business of mining changed in late twentieth century. Teck came to power in the middle of Canada's mining ascendancy, and this book is a micro-history of broader trajectories in the country's business,

environmental, and mining history.

Yet Keevil shows little awareness of Teck's context. The story jumps backward and forward in time, derails itself with unrelated side-notes, and switches unpredictably from dry accounts of stock division to juicy personal anecdotes (altered to an unknown extent with exaggeration, memory, and wishful thinking). Keevil's narrative reads like a long afternoon spent listening to an old-timer's stories: conversational, meandering, and periodically offensive.

One of the most confounding aspects of the book are the arbitrary quotations at the top of each new chapter. These are inconsistently dated and attributed. They range from sources as diverse as George W. Bush, Albert Einstein, Hernando de

Soto, and Yogi Berra. The quotes and their originators bear questionable connection to the topic at hand, and some of them actually undermine the authority of the book. At the beginning of chapter 2 for example, Keevil quotes a Wikipedia page on a distant Keevil ancestor (22). Such additions provoke more questions than they answer.

More troublingly, *Never Rest on your Ores* is a new chapter in an old tradition of half-mythologized hyper-masculine stories in Ontario's north which depends on the erasure of Indigenous people, women, and working-class people. The cover image shows the author and his father on horseback dressed in classic cowboy attire. The photograph neatly summarizes Keevil's perception of himself and his company. In erasing inconvenient parts of mining's story, Keevil frames development as inherently progressive and good.

In his version of events, the Keevils came over from England and staked their claim on empty land—Keevil calls it a landscape “populated mainly by blackflies and the occasional moose” (10). Keevil eats up and then uncritically reproduces the old stories of “discovery” on the land around Teck's first mine (19), adding his own single white male discoverer to the ranks—James Hughes, “who may or may not have been grizzled” (3). The rest of the origin story revolves around Keevil's suburban upbringing in which hardship is measured by the coming and going of his father's Cadillac (39). Female characters appear fleetingly, making foolish investments (116), being married off (116), or accompanying their husbands on business. Only on one memorable occasion does a woman actually prospect for gold (32).

Otherwise, Keevil's world of mine-making is passed down from father to son. All the major characters are men—educated, upper class, and (with the exception of his Japanese investors), white. In the aftermath of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, ongoing debate around Indigenous sovereignty over land and resources in Canada, and a considerable body of Indigenous scholarship, Keevil's adherence to an out-of-date colonial mythos of empty land and benign industrial development is inexcusable. Unfortunately, such selective versions of the past remain institutionalized at the highest levels of Canadian mining. Reading *Never Rest on Your Ores* makes it easy to imagine how Canada has come to be reviled and distrusted by Indigenous people the world over.

As frustrating as it is to see the old out-of-date mining mythos revived in 2017, this book is valuable as an insider account of the industry. With a bit of sleuthing, scholars will find a complete and detailed story of an obscure part of Ontario's northern history—one which has gone on to shape the world. Keevil is open about his feelings and exhaustive in his detail. *Never Rest on your Ores* provides a rare glimpse behind the doors of corporate board rooms, into the offices of legislators, and onto the corporate golf green. Lengthy excerpts from personal letters, accounts of conversations, and Keevil's distinctive (if problematic) story may be a useful primary source for those in business, mining, Ontario, or Canadian history.

Mica Jorgenson  
Post Doctoral Fellow, Sherman Centre for  
Digital Scholarship, McMaster University.