

kept investors away, and the developers suddenly found themselves overextended. The activists in Milton-Park had gone through several permutations in the meantime and new combinations had emerged by the mid-1970s, now dedicated to co-op housing. With an angel in the person of Phyllis Lambert, the architect daughter of the Bronfman dynasty, the federal and provincial governments were pushed and prodded into putting up money for renovation of the surviving housing stock. The impending referendum of May 1980, for example, was skillfully used to persuade the federal Liberals that support would be rewarded. And by 1983 the new Milton-Park was in existence, a thriving community of 597 co-op houses restored at a cost of more than \$30 million in government funds and occupied by a mix of classes and occupations.

Claire Helman's book tells this story in a simple prose that is illustrated with some well-chosen photos. She has her heroes and villains, but she is not averse to noting the follies of the residents. What we don't find out, however, is how many of the original residents of Milton-Park were still there in the 1980s to move into the renovated co-ops. My guess is that a maximum of twenty per cent had survived death and change to reap the benefits of the generation-long struggle. But so what? We all work to make the future better. And in Milton-Park, the future happily turned out to be better. An instructive book, this; one that demonstrates that residents can sometimes outlast the developers and politicians.

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Carter-Edwards, Karen. *100 Years of Service*. Cornwall: Cornwall Electric, 1987. Pp. x, 335. Illustrations, bibliography, index. \$30.00 cloth.

100 Years of Service, is an official history Cornwall Electric, commissioned by the utility to commemorate its 100th anniversary. The book has all of the strengths and weaknesses of both an "institutional" history and a local history, that is one rich in detail but one that does not put Cornwall Electric into a wider context. To her credit, Carter-Edwards does give an interesting and colourful account of electricity's introduction and development in this Ontario town. With more such local studies historians may be able to understand the process of industrial development and public regulation of one of modern society's vital commodities: electricity.

Unfortunately, some problems mar the book. Besides spelling and typing errors, there are several confusing passages. For example, in discussing referenda in 1919 and 1921 to renew the electrical company's franchise, the reader is not given the number of eligible voters, only the margin of defeat

or victory. Nor is the criteria for eligibility made clear: in one place it is residents who vote and in another ratepayers. Clarity would be served by completeness.

The most serious flaw in the book, however, is its company bias. The story of this electric utility's relations with the municipal council, its employees, the Ontario Hydro Electric Power Commission and the public power movement, is presented entirely from the vantage point of the company, leaving important questions unasked. Public power activists are dismissed as a few isolated "cranks" who enjoyed little community sport: a marginal labour group looking for a platform from which to promote itself; or naive householders and businessmen looking for cheap rates, but who had little regard for the profit motive as an incentive to efficiency.

The conditions that produced this privately-owned utility, in the Ontario sea of public ownership, deserve greater attention than the author gives them. She implies Cornwall chose private ownership because, due to greater efficiency, its rates were lower than those of Ontario Hydro. Cornwall was tempted to join the new Hydro system in 1912, lured like many Ontario municipalities by the promise of lower rates and excitement over "people's power" had the Commission made a firm offer. By the time the matter came up for discussion again in 1919 and 1921 — when referenda to renew the company's franchise produced heated discussion between Hydro and anti-Hydro forces — the Hydro system was coming to be seen as a huge monopoly, impervious to local control. As well, experience had by the 1920s shown that low rates offered to a municipality upon joining the system were not always maintained. At the time Cornwall was reasonably happy with its private electrical utility. So long as abundant hydro-electric resources and the threat of public ownership helped keep rates down, there was no reason to switch to Hydro. Although the author dutifully praises the company for its contributions to the city through promotion of local industrial development, its "commitment to service" and its cultural and charitable activities, these public relations gestures are not assigned their real significance. Clearly good relations with the city was a crucial factor in warding off public ownership.

Accounts of labour relations are badly one-sided. Cornwall strikes are depicted as upheavals generated by outside agitators and the company is portrayed as a wonderful place to work. Carter-Edwards neglects to note here that the electrical utility business was in the forefront of the twentieth century policy of promoting employees stability through good employee benefits. Cornwall Electric was not exceptional nor does she give any recognition to the union's role in creating a good work environment. The company was not alone.

The company's history also provides an excursion into the relationship of utilities and financial institutions. For many years, Cornwall Electric was owned by Sun Life, of Mon-