

## *The Constant Liberal: Pierre Trudeau, Organized Labour, and the Canadian Social Democratic Left* By Christo Aivalis

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during the first year-and-a-half of his journal, editor O'Sullivan described in detail and cogently commented on the "Canadian Question." He viewed the instigators of the Rebellion as the clear ideological descendants of the founders of the American republic. They were thus deserving active support—in the cause of the liberty of a free people—but not as way to expand the United States. (Yet, this same O'Sullivan coined the American phrase "manifest destiny" a few years later while advocating the annexation of Texas.) In the last essay, "Canadian Interference in American Politics: The 1840 Presidential Election," Julien Mauduit carefully canvasses the contest between Van Buren and Harrison, between Whigs and Democrats. He views "the 1840 election through a Canadian lens"—a perspective rarely considered by historians on either side of the border. It is an intriguing notion: that active Canadians and Canadian sympathizers might effectively influence the outcome of an American

election. The volume is brought to a close with an Afterword: "'The Practicability of Annexing Canada': Or, the Manifest Destiny of Canada, According to the United States" by Amy S. Greenberg. The oft-quoted "manifest destiny" phrase is here used to describe how and why Canada was *not* annexed by the US in mid-nineteenth<sup>h</sup> century. It thus adds another reminder of the value of considering the Rebellion in a larger American context.

As a whole, this compendium of cross-border studies in the 1838 (second stage) Canadian Rebellion, is indeed much to be admired. Alas, a comprehensive scholarly work on these incursions and their abiding importance to the whole of North America has yet to be published. Until that day, we can only hope that other scholars—encouraged perhaps by this fine volume—will offer their own related studies. The making of a new mosaic will require many tiles.

Chris Raible, Creemore, Ontario

## *The Constant Liberal*

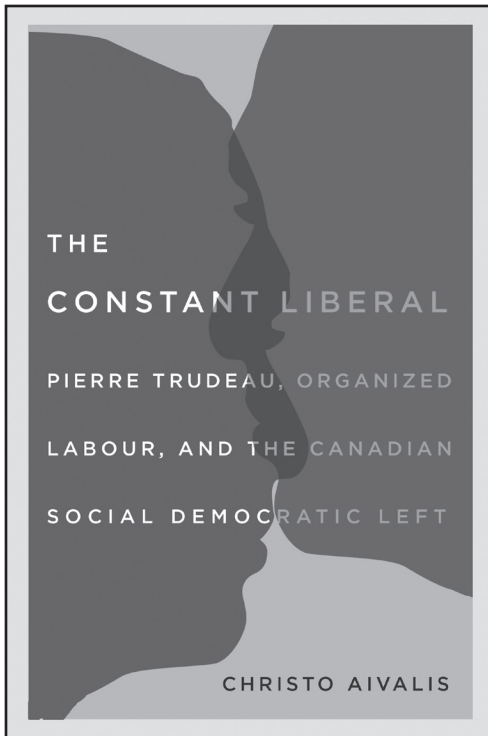
*Pierre Trudeau, Organized Labour, and the Canadian Social Democratic Left*

By Christo Aivalis

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Canada's fifteenth prime minister has inspired numerous works. It is protocol when writing about Pierre Elliott Trudeau to acknowledge the abundance of the body of work about him, a body that spans over fifty years. Trudeau was the subject of my own honours history graduating essay, and since completing my undergraduate degree a decade ago yet more books about him have been published, including two titled

*Trudeaumania*. So, it is with great interest that I read *The Constant Liberal*, Christo Aivalis's contribution to a crowded field. As Aivalis notes, "Early works on Trudeau, written while he was still governing, delved into his systems, policies, affiliations, controversies, and public image. Works written from his retirement to his passing gained greater historical focus yet lacked sufficient distance from his times" (ix).



Now with the benefit of distance, Aivalis offers a welcome critical look at Trudeau's policies that cuts through the myth surrounding the man.

In *The Constant Liberal*, Aivalis "challenges two key interpretations: that he was a socialist bent on destroying Canadian capitalism and that he was a pragmatic leftist who looked for ways to contain the negative aspects of capitalism toward his goal of founding a modern and progressive Canada" (xi). Aivalis convincingly argues that Trudeau was actually a classical liberal who used policies and ideas from the left when politically expedient to preserve a stable liberal-capitalist state in the face of the crises of the 1970s and 80s.

Aivalis's systematic examination of Trudeau's record is organized around case studies. The three chapters devoted to Trudeau's career and political activi-

ties from the mid-1940s until the early 1960s include the Asbestos strike and his organizing against Maurice Duplessis to modernize Quebec into a capitalist liberal democracy. This latter goal extended to a national scale once Trudeau entered federal politics, becoming the *raison d'être* of his political career according to Aivalis. The later chapters are devoted to Trudeau's policies in government and meticulously demonstrate his "consistent application of a liberalism across different political contexts" (68). Chapter 5 covers the limits of Trudeau's tax reform, guaranteed annual income, and commitment to the "just society;" here Aivalis finds little substance behind the rhetoric that fueled the optimism that accompanied his ascension to the prime ministership in 1968. Other chapters examine the Foreign Investment Review Agency (FIRA) and the National Energy Program (NEP), inflation, wage and price controls, and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Throughout, each chapter valuably parses the NDP and labour unions' positions and critiques of Trudeau's policies. In all of these case studies, Aivalis shows how seeming contradictions in Trudeau's legacy can be reconciled if viewed in the context of him defending the liberal-capitalist order.

It is nearly impossible to read *The Constant Liberal* without making connections between Trudeau *père* and his son Justin. In critically evaluating Pierre Elliott Trudeau's record, this book also tells the story of Canadian politics and federal policy in the twentieth century, helping us understand the history of debates that continue today. It is this contemporary resonance that makes this book a necessary and worthwhile addition to the formidable mountain of Trudeau scholarship.

Vanessa LeBlanc, M.P.P.