

Intellectuals and the Canadian State

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[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

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from the party's leadership.

In 306 pages of well written text, Conrad has given us a thoroughly researched study of a significant Maritimer, whose efforts to serve his region were constrained neither by a lack of commitment, energy, political power or skill, but a man who remained a captive of his constricted perception of his region and a federal and capitalist structure, which he was not prepared to challenge.

CARMAN MILLER

Intellectuals and the Canadian State

“OCCASIONALLY A QUESTION OF PROFESSIONAL ETHICS has been raised”, O.D. Skelton noted in 1932, “— how far is the economist working for a government or a business corporation to find his model in the lawyer, accepting and arguing a brief, or in the priest, dedicated to the advancement of an accepted belief?”¹ What conflicts, in other words, might arise between the opinions and advice of “experts” and either political expedience or corporate profits? When Skelton raised this question, at the nadir of the Great Depression, nothing was more desperately sought by government or by business than professionally measured and rational reactions to economic realities. For politicians and board directors alike, macroeconomic remedies for the chronic ailments of the Depression became the enticing but elusive panacea of their time. The short answer to Skelton’s question was that few, if any, constraints would be imposed on viable approaches to a seemingly insolvable economic crisis either by the state, which feared social collapse, or by private enterprise, which had collapsed. A long answer to this question, in terms of the growth of intellectual participation in the “inner councils” of Canadian government, forms the basis of Doug Owrām’s *The Government Generation: Canadian intellectuals and the state 1900-1945* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1986), an important new work on the history of ideas in statebuilding.

While no single thesis emerges from this study, Owrām does pursue as a central theme the professionalization of Canada’s emerging interventionist state during the first half of the 20th century. In an engaging narrative, which Owrām himself describes as a “mid-range synthesis” resting halfway between a sharply focussed monograph and a sweeping survey, we are introduced to an eclectic range of Canadian intellectuals who, by the sheer force of their ideas and convictions, collectively shaped the contours of the modern Canadian state. Using a wide range of both printed and manuscript sources, Owrām argues that

1 O.D. Skelton, “Fifty Years of Political and Economic Science in Canada”, in *Fifty Years Retrospect*, Royal Society of Canada Anniversary Volume 1882-1932 (n.p., 1932), p. 89.

the participation of Canada's intellectual community in the political process has passed through three fairly distinct though overlapping phases of activity — social criticism, a policy advisory role, and finally, direct participation in senior bureaucracy.

Close attention is paid in each chapter to establishing a link between changing historical circumstances and new conceptions of an expanded role for government. During the prelude and trauma of the First World War, Ooram reminds us, Christian idealism, which to a large degree provided a philosophical underpinning for the war effort, gradually became transformed into reform as either a “social passion” within the social gospel movement, or as a “social science” within the progressive movement. And yet, by the time this tumultuous period finally ended with the armistice declaration, social criticism had become a remarkably unified force in terms of its demand for greater consensus and efficiency within Canadian society. Whether it was the conservative imperialist Stephen Leacock arguing in favour of conscription or radical social gossellers such as Salem Bland or J.S. Woodsworth demanding greater assurances of social welfare for all citizens, a widespread call had been raised for increased state intervention in the interests of society as a whole. To become effective in taking a larger management role in economic and social affairs, the federal government needed the advice of experts, particularly services provided by graduates from growing departments of political economy at the universities. “By the 1920s”, Ooram observes, “political economy, defined variously as economics, political science, sociology, or a combination of all three, had become a mature discipline and a standard offering in most Canadian universities” (p. 122). Civil service reformers demanded the elimination of patronage in favour of appointments and promotions based on specialized training and merit. Quoting from a report on Canada's civil service completed by R.M. Dawson in 1929, Ooram restates that “‘Men of little ability and ordinary intelligence are unequal to the task.... The growth of a complex civilization and new conception of the state's place in that civilization' made guidance of government by experts absolutely essential” (p. 128).

The stage was then set, at the beginning of the 1930s, for the entry into the civil service of Ooram's “government generation” who were, in part, comprised of that same group of federal mandarins J.L. Granatstein has called “The Ottawa Men”.² The Lester Pearsons, the Norman Robertsons, the Arnold Heeneys, or the J.W. Pickersgills were, as both Granatstein and Ooram point out, men of similar experience, training, and outlook: most were still quite young, the average being about 35; most had advanced university degrees, many having been to either Oxford or one of the leading American schools for post-graduate training; most had grown up in a religious atmosphere, although secularism had begun to dominate their shared views; and, as Ooram states, the “most

2 J.L. Granatstein, *The Ottawa Men: The Civil Service Mandarins, 1935-1957* (Toronto, 1982).

important common experience of this generation was, of course, the war...most of those who would become the intellectual and bureaucratic leaders of the 1930s and 1940s had served overseas” (p. 141). The balance of Owram’s account of the impact of intellectuals on public policy focusses on their prominent role in addressing the two great challenges of the 1930s and 40s — the Depression and the Second World War. “Economics in Canada”, Owram states, “came of age in the 1930s” (p. 192). Not only was the Bank of Canada established under the stewardship of Graham Towers, a young banker of demonstrated brilliance and vision but its research department was headed by Alex Skelton, the son of O.D. Skelton and a Rhodes scholar who “would attempt over the next few years to ensure that the Bank was imbued with reformist zeal” (p. 216). Though during his first years as deputy minister of finance, William Clifford Clark maintained a fairly orthodox view of deficit spending, with a Keynesianist like R.B. Bryce later joining the finance department, the way would be cleared for more aggressive monetary policies. As the hardships of the depression years intensified, economists gained greater public attention becoming what Owram calls the “new millennialists” in an age of the economic apocalypse. One practitioner cynically remarked that his profession was expected to play the role of “Medicine Man” and “to cause the buffalo of peace and plenty to appear” (p. 199). But it was the demands of a wartime economy rather than Keynesian theory or social welfare strategies that finally pried open the public purse. To coordinate much of this effort the federal civil service grew in leaps and bounds from 49,000 in 1939 to 115,000 by 1945 with university intellectuals forming the leadership core of these new recruits.

And yet, ironically, the dramatic increase in the size of ministerial departments partially contributed to a decline, already underway, of the so-called “golden age” of bureaucratic plutocracy. Slowly, almost imperceptibly, the social and educational exclusivity of the Ottawa mandrinate began to erode when, on one side, an increasingly fragmented civil service continued to expand and, on the other, labour unions, lobby groups and, of course, provincial governments began to press their respective demands on Ottawa with equal competence and expertise. The past success of Canada’s state intelligentsia during the previous decades, Owram concludes, was based on a combination of their genuine abilities as competent state managers and a historical conjuncture of economic and social forces which lent a degree of feasibility to bureaucratic state management which has since been largely reduced. Speaking at a commemorative dinner which reunited many of the Ottawa mandarins of the depression and war years, John Deutsch summed up the climate of optimism and self-assurance that he and his colleagues had enjoyed in their heyday: “There was a very large [body of] thought that those kinds of things [high and stable employment levels] could be done over what they now call the levers, and you could push the levers and very quickly get the economy to react and if you go off too much in one direction, you pull the lever back a bit, it adjusts itself, and you do that, and you

keep nicely on this employment thing" (p. 334).

Today's government technocrats, as Deutsch conceded, face a far more complex world of comparatively more constrained policy options. Social theorists could envisage a wider range of possibilities for change in the midst of the Great Depression or within the throes of global warfare than they can today given the banal complacency of western democracies in the post-war era which accept, indeed promote, both the enduring inequities of industrial capitalism and the wearisome stalemate of the Cold War. So many of the policy options first considered in the 1920s, 30s and 40s have either been tried, rejected, adopted, or adapted by western governments that party-policy gatherings in Canada and elsewhere typically degenerate into a frantic backroom search for some sort of "issue" with which the party faithful pray that their leader, selected more for charismatic appeal than for sound policies, may excite the electorate. If the depression and war years can be described as a "golden age" of bureaucracy in Canada, then so too can it be called a golden age of political philosophy. Intense debates over issues dividing nationalists from imperialists, or capitalists from socialists created a climate of intellectual ferment, the intensity of which (with the exception of Quebec in the Quiet Revolution) has, since 1945, all but entirely abated. The explanation for this is simple enough: English Canadian society experienced a dramatic transition between 1900 and 1945. Granted, the entire notion of a "society in transition" has become somewhat cliché, but clearly, when we compare the scale of social and economic change brought about by the First World War, the Depression, and the Second World War to anything since, it can safely be concluded that only moderate shifts have subsequently occurred.

While it is possible to discern within these turbulent decades the changing relationship between the intellectual and the state from social critic to professional advisor to senior bureaucrat, it is unfortunate that no clear distinction is made by O'ram between the senior ranks of the public service and those who remained outside officialdom but continued to exert an influence on government policy. Though O'ram recognizes the importance of reform groups like the League for Social Reconstruction or new political movements such as the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, little assessment is made of the process by which ideas expressed by comparatively radical thinkers such as Frank Underhill or F.R. Scott were often accepted and implemented by the more moderate state intelligentsia. While the Ottawa men faced the difficult task of transforming innovative ideas into definite legislation and programs, it was often thinkers outside the realm of the civil service like Underhill and Scott who initially foresaw future directions for the Canadian state.

Fortunately, two works have recently appeared which shed further light on the role of both Underhill and Scott as members of Canada's avant-garde intellectual community. One is an engaging biography of Underhill by R. Douglas Francis, entitled *Frank H. Underhill: Intellectual Provocateur* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1986); the other, *A New Endeavour: Selected*

Political Essays, Letters and Addresses (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1986), is a selection of F.R. Scott's political writings edited and skillfully introduced by Michiel Horn. In both books we find that even as dissident radicals, often shunned or even censored by the University bureaucracies they served, Underhill and Scott were able to disseminate ideas and offer perceptive critiques of the status quo which influenced the views of the state intelligentsia. It is not going too far to assert that through the long and difficult years of economic depression and war, much of what they and their socialist colleagues in the LSR and CCF had long advocated as viable solutions to enduring problems were ultimately adopted by the federal government. Although, as Francis states, Underhill in 1932 "expressed little confidence in Mackenzie King as leader, he realized that the man was malleable enough, and sufficiently educated in liberal-socialist writings, to be pressured in a time of crisis like the present to move the party to the left. Certainly liberally minded intellectuals belonged to the party.... Underhill appeared initially quite happy for the league simply to provide the Liberals with ideas" (p. 87). That was until the beginning of August 1932 when the CCF was formed to promote the socialist tradition in Canada from directly within the House of Commons.

Francis and Horn reveal many of the details surrounding the roles played by both Underhill and Scott in founding and guiding the CCF through its formative years. Francis asserts that the "contribution to the CCF that brought Underhill more fame and recognition than possibly any other event in his life was drafting the Regina Manifesto" (p. 89). The final version of this document, however, was the product of several revisions including, as Horn points out, amendments Scott made immediately prior to the opening of the new party's first national convention in Regina. In one of the latter selections in Horn's anthology entitled "FHU and the Manifestos", Scott recalls how the League for Social Reconstruction was formed. It all began when Scott first met Underhill at a political colloquium held in the summer of 1931 in Williamstown, Massachusetts: "FHU was sure of one thing", Scott relates, "and that was that Canadian politics had to change. He foresaw a realignment of movements and parties in Canada. This was not the topic of the Williamstown conference, but it became the principal, almost the sole matter for discussion one Sunday when Corbett,³ FHU and myself took the day off to climb Greylock, a mountain in the nearby Berkshires. On the way up, while eating our picnic lunch and on the way down FHU expounded and expanded his thesis: the old parties were bankrupt, a new party must be and obviously would be formed" (pp. 135-6). Following this seminal discussion, Scott and Underhill assumed leading roles in establishing the LSR, which ultimately provided a solid intellectual foundation for the new CCF party. In fact, as Francis states: "In its final form, the Regina Manifesto was a 'popularized' LSR Manifesto" (p. 89). As Scott recalls, "FHU did the first

3 Percy Corbett, then Dean of Law at McGill.

draft for Regina, but he started from the LSR base. It was a broad base and many individuals helped to form it" (p. 137). Indeed, a dynamic group of young reformers including Eugene Forsey, King Gordon, and David Lewis had collaborated with Underhill and Scott to provide an ideological basis for their new movement. But from the time of their first meeting, it was Underhill and Scott who remained the guiding lights of Canadian socialism during the depression years.

It comes as no surprise when Horn recounts that the two "immediately hit it off together" at the time of their first encounter. "They enjoyed each other's style, saw Canada's problems in much the same light, and were groping towards similar solutions" Horn states (p. xvi). Convincing portrayals of both men as passionate socialist critics who were fully prepared to climb down from the "ivory tower" of academia to take part in debates which occasionally jeopardized their university positions are reinforced both in Francis' illuminating study of Underhill and throughout the varied selections of Scott writings Horn presents. Casting him in the role of "intellectual provocateur", Francis presents Underhill as a potent catalyst for new ideas and theories in political organization. Clearly no staid academic satisfied with presenting scholarly analyses in specialized professional journals, Underhill often aired his views in newspapers or on radio in a kind of self-inspired intellectual resistance movement to stimulate controversial discussion and debate within a society he forced many others to recognize was stagnating in its own prejudices and conservatism. Always "resisting the mainstream of popular thought, challenging a prevailing viewpoint, theory, or interpretation, and throwing out contentious ideas for debate" (p. ix), Underhill's ideas are interwoven by Francis into a compelling life-story.

In his classic study of social class in Canadian society, John Porter aptly classifies the position occupied by Underhill and Scott within what he labels an "ideological system" professed to operate in any modern industrial society: "It is possible of course", Porter observes, "to find instances where avant-garde intellectuals have achieved fame and respectability because they have met established cultural standards in their work". Clearly, Scott as an outstanding student and teacher of constitutional law and Underhill as the same in Canadian history assumed such roles. Porter goes on to state that the "appearance of such rebels in the higher levels of the ideological system probably reflects underlying social changes and a search for new values".⁴ This aptly describes the context in which the ideas of Underhill and Scott were expressed and interpreted during the 1930s and into the war years. The title of Scott's collection, "A New Endeavour", which he himself chose from a line of his own poetry, appropriately symbolizes the underlying theme of the search for new values which unites the

4 John Porter, *The Vertical Mosaic: An Analysis of Social Class and Power in Canada* (Toronto, 1965), p. 493.

writings presented in this volume. Virtually all the works selected by Horn address this concern — what kind of new society and world should Canadians at that time have begun to work towards? Essays on the future of the legal profession, the efficiency of socialism, French Canadian nationalism, and a Bill of Rights for labour are featured along with letters to David Lewis and J.S. Woodsworth, all of which embrace and illustrate the ideals Scott upheld. In a passage which appears in his commentary on the October crisis of 1970, Scott sums up the highest ambition which shaped his views on man in society: “We need a new view of man’s place in a technological society which puts him first and mere growth second. We must put a more ‘human face’ on our uses of power” (p. 134).

The state’s inability to respond to essential human needs became the keynote of much protest and social criticism during the depression years. From moving accounts of the severe hardships experienced in the American Southwest, perhaps best epitomized in John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath*, to extreme political solutions sought through either communist or fascist movements in Europe, the massive dislocations suffered by large sectors of society typically found expression in reactions against the traditional *laissez-faire* approach to government as practiced by most western-liberal democracies. In Canada, provincial-based populist movements were afoot, most notably in the west where William Aberhart’s Social Credit party and later, Tommy Douglas’ CCF party made gains based on what Peter Sinclair has called “the appeal of their populist ideologies to the *petit-bourgeois* population”.⁵ At the federal level, however, government seemed unmoved by the Depression, in part because its bureaucratic machinery had, for all appearances, suddenly become obsolete.

This story of stagnation at the highest state echelons during the early years of the Depression is given vivid clarity in Robert Bryce’s new history of the Department of Finance, appropriately entitled *Maturing in Hard Times: Canada’s Department of Finance through the Great Depression* (Kingston, McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1986). While Underhill and Scott were discussing Canada’s political future from the top of Mount Greylock, the Department of Finance, as Bryce relates, was languishing in mismanagement and scandal. During the 1920s, the department had been headed by deputy minister John C. Saunders who knew little about monetary policy and whose competence for the job was frequently questioned. In January 1930 he took ill while criminal charges were being laid against the assistant deputy minister, G.W. Hyndman, for stealing bonds and money from the department. Until William Clifford Clark took over in October 1932, as Bryce states, the “department and the government had no policy except to let the Canadian dollar float” (p. 232).

5 Peter R. Sinclair, “Class Structure and Popular Protest: The Case of Western Canada”, *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 1, 1 (1975), p. 15.

Following several detailed chapters covering much new ground on the evolution of the finance department, from its inception at Confederation to the beginning of the particularly challenging depression period, "Dr. Clark", as he was referred to in the department, is at last introduced by Bryce into his role as the chief architect of the ministry's subsequent reorganization along modern lines. Prior to Clark's arrival, as Bryce states: "No one in the department questioned the economic wisdom (let alone the social justice) of the severe austerity in expenditure that Bennett and Rhodes [then Minister of Finance] enforced" (p. 232). *Maturing in Hard Times* examines the transition which took place within a bureaucracy that had entered the Depression with its back turned to almost any conception of social justice as primarily a state responsibility to arrive finally, at the end of a long decade of suffering, with a positive approach to Keynesian experimentation. Bryce provides a fascinating glimpse into the inner workings of the state apparatus to reveal what was happening on the inside while, on the periphery, the likes of Underhill and Scott were clamouring for social justice.

Clifford Clark emerges in Bryce's study as the chief innovator in the finance department of programs and policies designed to address the needs of Canadians hardest hit by the Depression. In the countryside, when widespread foreclosures threatened to devastate Canada's farming community, Clark devised a scheme which allowed farmers to arrange for payments through a new body of official receivers convened to formulate proposals acceptable to creditors. In cities, when the deplorable housing situation caused by the Depression finally led to calls in parliament for a national housing program, Clark set up a new departmental body responsible for administering a \$10 million loan fund made available to assist in new housing starts. The Farmers' Creditors Arrangement Act of 1934 and the Dominion Housing Act of 1935 clearly reflected at least the spirit of what the Underhills and the Scotts were advocating. When Underhill charged in a 1933 radio address that the "system of rugged individualism has worked out in our generation so as to distribute the individualism to a small privileged minority and to leave the ruggedness for the masses of the population" (Francis, p. 93), and when Scott wrote two years later that "it is reasonable to expect enough honesty to make national planning workable" (Scott, p. 24), it was apparent, at least to them, that measures which recognized a new and viable role for the Canadian state were long overdue. While Underhill and Scott called themselves socialists, and were often ostracized for their beliefs, Bryce reminded us that, even under the Bennett government, small but steady steps were being taken by bureaucrats like Clark to respond to the economic inequities identified by many socialist critics.

It should be noted that Bryce is uniquely qualified to present his study of Canada's finance department. He joined the department in 1938, bringing with him perspectives gained through advanced graduate work in economics, including study under the direction of John Maynard Keynes. While at

Cambridge in the early 1930s, as Granatstein has noted, Bryce “began to immerse himself in Keynesian economics. He became a member of the Political Economy Club and a regular attendant at its sessions, an admirer of Keynes’s analytical skills and of his understanding of the way institutions truly operated”.⁶ The Keynesian approach to fiscal policy did not, however, influence thinking in the finance department until near the end of the Depression. As Bryce relates, Clark “remained a hard-liner on fiscal policy” until 1938, when the National Employment Commission released its report recommending an extension of federal responsibility for unemployment relief. Not only was this report heavily influenced by Keynes’ *General Theory*, but the budget of April 1939 “must have been”, Bryce points out, “one of the first clearly Keynesian budgets in any country” (p. 232). But the war, of course, changed everything and it, more than innovative fiscal policies, brought Canada out of the Depression. We can only lament at the fact that Clark did not experiment with Keynes at an earlier date.

Nevertheless, it was clear right from the time Clark assumed his duties in the department of finance in 1932 that new approaches to macroeconomic management would be tested. As the new deputy minister of finance, he moved quickly to edge down interest rates, using a peculiar economic tool known as “moral suasion”. Through this unwritten understanding between the state and the banking system, the government was able to apply pressure on private financial institutions to increase their cash reserves and reduce the interest charged on new loans to borrowers, many of whom were farmers hard-pressed for operating capital. It was rapidly becoming apparent, however, that under existing institutional arrangements, the federal government lacked the means to exert more direct control over the money supply. Submissions received by the Macmillan Commission (a Royal Commission on Banking and Currency appointed by the Bennett government in the summer of 1933) indicated growing support for the establishment of a central banking institution for Canada. Not only did Clark favour this proposal, but when the government announced shortly after its intention to create the Bank of Canada, he largely drafted the enabling legislation with assistance from the Department of Justice.

The story of the founding of the Bank of Canada, and of its first governor, is brought into sharper focus in Douglas H. Fullerton’s *Graham Towers and His Times* (Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1986). Like Bryce, Fullerton’s knowledge of his subject has been enriched through his own experience in the field which began in 1940 when he joined the Foreign Exchange Control Board and first saw Towers at work. Fullerton did not actually meet Towers until 1957 when, as treasurer of the Canada Council, he “had the good fortune to work with him and to get to know him. There was a quality of magic about the man”, Fullerton relates, “and I fell under his spell. Most friends of Towers to whom I

6 Granatstein, *The Ottawa Men*, p. 257.

have talked had a similar experience, and all of them shared the same feelings about him, a blend of respect and affection accompanied by an appreciation of his quality of greatness” (p. 9). Though, by his own admission, some overlapping with Bryce’s work appears, Fullerton provides much useful information on the early history of Canada’s central bank. We learn, for example, that following the ominous decision of Alberta’s Social Credit government to default on its bond payments, Towers met with William Aberhart at the Chateau Laurier where, as he records in his diary, he “tried to disabuse Aberhart’s mind” of suspicions that other western provinces had received preferred treatment from the federal government. The following day, the two met at Clifford Clark’s for dinner. Facing the charismatic Alberta premier and his associates there, Towers recalls that he tried “to set them right on some very simple matters. God knows if we did, but atmosphere helpful [sic] (pp. 79-80)”.

Fullerton’s approach to Towers is shaped by an intent to portray the Bank’s first governor as a “teacher” who set out to demonstrate in speeches, reports, and parliamentary committees, the value and necessity of a central bank for a country facing the challenges of a modern economy. In his conclusion, Fullerton employs the terms “duty”, “excellence”, and “the instincts of a teacher” to describe the salient attributes of Towers’ personal character. “Throughout his career”, Fullerton states, “Towers excelled at explaining to others the ways things really worked.... Rarely if ever has any Canadian expert put so much complex economic and financial information into simple terms for the benefit of Parliament, the press, and the public” (p. 304). Clearly, this is a fitting and apt portrayal, entirely in keeping with a biographical project unofficially sanctioned by the fourth governor of the Bank of Canada, Gerald Bouey, to mark the 50th anniversary of the Bank’s inception. At times, however, we are left with a rather bland, arid description of the long road traversed by the Bank’s first governor through the difficult years of the Depression, when western provincial governments stood on the brink of default; the war years, when the Bank, under Towers’ astute direction, provided the instruments needed to finance Canada’s war effort; the post-war reconstruction period, when loans to Britain redefined Canada’s economic position within the Atlantic triangle; and finally, the early 1950s, when interrelated questions concerning the strength of the Canadian dollar, the exchange rate, and monetary policy forced Towers to defend the Bank’s policies. Though Fullerton covers much ground, he offers little analytical insight beyond a mainly descriptive chronicle of the key events and notable personalities surrounding each of these periods. In most respects, the book presents more facts than interpretation. Nevertheless, we are introduced to many fascinating aspects of one of the most capable and resourceful of Canada’s public servants who made an invaluable contribution to the country’s economic development.

It is interesting to observe that many Ottawa mandarins like Clark and Towers actually began their work during the Bennett years, a period many historians

view as politically unprogressive. Although most observers would agree that the necessity and desire for change had become painfully apparent during the Bennett regime, Bennett viewed all rival political movements with overwhelming alarm. He was, as if by impulse, inclined to paint Liberals, socialists, and communists all with the same damning brush. As Horn points out in his illuminating introduction to Scott's writings, after Bennett had read the challenging political manifesto of Underhill and Scott's new League for Social Reconstruction, he angrily charged Vincent Massey, of all people, with the authorship of this "subversive" document. While, as president of the National Liberal Federation, Massey was then attempting to forge a "new liberalism" by organizing a series of "summer school"-styled study groups, his reformism was clearly guided by a much more moderate view of politics than that of Underhill and Scott. Yet even for King, and several MPs who stood on the right of the Liberal Party, Massey's attempts to bridge progressive ideas with party policy raised serious concerns. When King learned that Massey had delivered a speech welcoming the "protests against abuses and evils in modern society" voiced by the emerging CCF alternative, the Prime Minister was reported to have remarked disparagingly: "He thinks he knows more about politics than anyone else, and is always driving ahead", later adding, "Massey has made no end of trouble for me trying to force the pace" (Owram, p. 188).

Although King and Massey found their first years of political association occasionally vitiated by disagreements over party policy and direction, upon King's return to power in 1935 relations between the two had warmed considerably. The second of Claude Bissell's eloquent two-volume biography of Massey, *The Imperial Canadian: Vincent Massey in Office* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1986) resumes the story of Massey's career at this juncture when the president of the victorious Liberal party finds himself re-appointed as Canada's High Commissioner in London. Massey derived great satisfaction in returning to a role which he considered as much political as diplomatic in scope. While Bissell's assessment of Massey's accomplishments during these years is exceedingly complimentary, his biography does attempt to strike a balance between praise and criticism. Bissell deals frankly with Massey's anglophilia and love of the symbolism of British Royalty: "Nothing in his responsibilities as high commissioner have given him more pleasure and satisfaction", Bissell writes, "than his royal associations" (p. 7). Bissell also directly addresses Massey's timid acquiescence to the tragically insensitive policy of Canadian officialdom towards Jewish refugees immediately before and during the Second World War. "It would have taken a man in London who was both incautious and heroic to go counter to this formidable and dedicated bureaucracy", Bissell states, only to add in a direct judgement of Massey's character: "Vincent Massey was not such a man" (p. 104).

Bissell's biography fundamentally stands as a tribute to a remarkable life and career of one of Canada's most colourful public figures. Bissell is most

comfortable dealing with Massey's positive accomplishments — his exemplary service as High Commissioner, his leadership in the planning and implementation of the vital British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, his contribution to the arts and education in Canada, and, lastly, his dignified tenure as Governor General. In terms of Massey's role as a critic, advisor or full participant in the evolution of the Canadian state, however, Bissell makes it clear that Massey did not belong to the Canadian intelligentsia in strictly the same way that both Underhill and Scott did. "Vincent Massey was not an intellectual", Bissell states in his introduction, "although contemporaries invariably described him as such. He was not a scholar, but he admired scholarship, and made use of it in speeches and books. He was not an artist, but he valued artistic achievement beyond any other" (p. x). Thus cast by Bissell as a supporter, advocate, and facilitator of Canadian Culture, Massey's life is portrayed as having touched the political, intellectual, and cultural currents of his time, leaving the imprint more of a founder, especially in his role as chairman of the Royal Commission in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, than that of simply an eminent patron or faithful servant.

It is worth pausing at this point to consider the context in which ideas have transformed themselves into government policy in Canada during the 20th century. Considering the wide assortment of individuals who appear in the literature under review, it becomes apparent that all that is implied in being an "intellectual" in the political system is possession of a capacity to generate ideas which ultimately, in one form or another, contribute to the development of government. When Owram sets out in the preface of his work to consider a definition of the term *intellectual*, he concludes that the "intellectual community", especially in the period before the First War, was a product not only of education and profession, but also of social connections and outlook" (p. xii). Even when the university community increased in size with subjects such as political economy or economics forming the basis of professional training for many government reformists, "there were always those", as Owram states, "who fit the mould of intellectual reformer, though they might not possess a doctorate and had never taught in a university. Vincent Massey, one of the last of the gentlemen reformers, provides one obvious example" (p. xii).

The nature of an individual's participation in the evolution of the Canadian state was ultimately determined by one's particular position in the political process. Commitment and dedication to improving the role of the state in Canadian society were, of course, universally upheld by all the key players we have considered thus far. But that alone, any more than education, did not open the gates to their ideas. It is true that as prominent academics, Underhill and Scott were able to provide part of the informed criticism which caused those working on the inside of parliament hill to re-examine their policies; yet, their voices were most clearly heard when they, as Francis puts it, "climbed down from the ivory tower" to speak on issues which captured their sense of duty to a wider

community. As senior civil servants, Clark and Towers enjoyed more direct access to the levers of power and decision making. But even they administered programs which first had to receive political legitimacy in parliament. And likewise, as our next work makes clear, even from within the House of Commons itself, being a member of either the official opposition or of the government limited and defined one's role in the formation of policy.

In *The Road Back: By a Liberal in Opposition* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1986), J.W. Pickersgill resumes his political autobiography beginning with the surprising Liberal defeat in 1957, the point to which he had taken his story in *My Years with Louis St. Laurent*. Following John Diefenbaker's upset victory in '57 and his landslide in '58, Pickersgill, as a prominent Liberal who had managed to hold on to his seat, was forced to adapt quickly to a new and, for a Liberal MP, unfamiliar position in the House of Commons. As members of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, Pickersgill and his few surviving fellow-Liberals now faced a long journey back to the government benches that would succeed largely on the basis of Diefenbaker's failure, a downfall Pickersgill anticipated. To the best of his abilities, as he recounts in an engaging set of anecdotes, Pickersgill promoted, assisted, and hastened the Conservative collapse in every way that he could. This new memoir is largely based on recollections of his role in this process: "I welcomed every chance to clash with Diefenbaker", Pickersgill boasts, "and even created a few" (p. 35). Pickersgill indeed set up more than a few chances to bring down the chief as his recollections of a number of crises faced by the Diefenbaker government make clear. No sooner was the honourable member from Bonavista-Twillingate back in Parliament following Diefenbaker's first slim victory when he began distributing copies of juicy press clippings he had mischievously bound together in red cardboard volumes under the heading "Diefenbaker's Promises, 1957". These were given "to every Liberal member and to anyone else who was interested", Pickersgill recalls. He did the same following the 1958 campaign. "Most of us kept these volumes in our desks in the House of Commons", he delights in relating, "and took them out on every appropriate occasion. They proved to be one of the most effective tools of Opposition for the whole period the Tories were in office" (pp. 33-4). The most damaging promise Diefenbaker made on the campaign trail, Pickersgill suggests, was that *no one under a Conservative government would suffer from unemployment*. Seizing the opportunity increased layoffs presented, "through the next four years, the Liberal Opposition made unemployment the basic issue" (p. 34).

Many other political opportunities surfaced for Pickersgill and the Liberals to dig their teeth into and not let go until Diefenbaker's howls reverberated in the media. The notorious series of disasters which ultimately brought down the Conservative government are retold, with more than a hint of smug satisfaction, by a man who held deeply to the belief that his first duty lay in contributing "to the defeat of a prime minister I considered inadequate and unworthy to hold that

office" (p. 248). One by one, those infamous blunders which shook Diefenbaker's regime are candidly recalled from the Avro Arrow incident, Newfoundland's anger over decisions concerning the RCMP and term 29, and alleged political interference with the CBC, to unparliamentary conduct towards the Speaker's chair, the Coyne affair, and indecision over nuclear warheads. With the vigour of a spirited axman attacking a woodpile, each event is split open, exposed and thrown onto a growing heap by Pickersgill. In the end, he even goes as far as to suggest what proportion of the credit accrued to his party's hand in Diefenbaker's political fate: "Historians will never agree", Pickersgill concludes, "on how much the Liberals under Pearson contributed to the defeat of Diefenbaker in 1963 and how much of it was the work of Diefenbaker himself. I would give about 70 per cent of the credit to him and about 30 per cent to us" (p. 248).

Pickersgill recalls a very keen sense of his proper role in the political process as a member of the Opposition. During the Coyne affair, for example, he "could see no advantage to the Opposition in attacking Crown corporations or individual public servants. It was the government, not the public service, the Opposition wanted to discredit and defeat. My view was, and still is, that the government and individual ministers should be the only targets of a parliamentary Opposition" (p. 103). He was, after all, a former Ottawa mandarin himself. No doubt his many years of experience in the Prime Minister's Office and later as Clerk of the Privy Council gave him an appreciation of what divisions should exist between executive and administrative responsibility in government. That is not to say that Pickersgill had to cross a clear line, as he had defined it, between the civil service and the government when he officially entered political life in 1953 as a member of Louis St. Laurent's cabinet. Though he was to write to a Conservative confidante that "I have taken the plunge into the icy waters of the Atlantic, abandoning the security of a civil-service pension for the risks of politics",⁷ in many ways that plunge had been taken long ago when close partisan ties he had nurtured in the service of King and St. Laurent grew inescapable.

In Gérard Pelletier's *Years of Choice: 1960-1968*, translated by Alan Brown, (Toronto, Methuen, 1987), we find that the threshold crossed by an intellectual entering the turmoil of political life may, however, present a daunting challenge. As Pelletier states in his preface to this political memoir, a sequel to his *Years of Impatience*: "the reader may be surprised at the long internal debates that preceded our commitment to active politics. Some will see this a lack of daring verging on faint-heartedness. Others will find the proof that *intellectuals* are indecisive by definition because they see complications everywhere. Still others, men and women who have at some time taken the plunge into active politics, may recognize certain familiar states of near-anxiety that, to them, will not seem hard to understand". Happily, for Pelletier, the leap brought more rewards than

7 Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 223.

disappointments. In fact he concludes his opening remarks with a call for others to become involved in politics: “to tell the truth”, Pelletier states, “I had a fourth group of readers in mind when I was giving such a full account of the vacillations that preceded our adventure. I was thinking of those (and I hope there are many of them) who *today* are considering a commitment to politics, but who might believe themselves unsuited for that life because of some unexplained reluctance. I would like to think that this account may reassure them” (p. xiii). Indeed, for anyone contemplating an active role in Canadian politics, Pelletier’s words probably stand a better chance at accomplishing this aim than most political autobiography. His recent memoir is overtly preoccupied with the personal struggles preceding his shared decision with Pierre Trudeau and Jean Marchand to “take the plunge” into the baptismal pool of political life. But once they finally did decide to join the Pearson team, a positive sense is conveyed that there was no looking back and no regrets.

The road to Ottawa really began for Pelletier with Quebec’s sudden emancipation from the “the great darkness” of Maurice Duplessis. With the defeat of the *Union nationale* the province’s future beckoned. But would Pelletier and his friends lead others in shaping it? Despite the euphoria they felt on 22 June 1960 when Jean Lesage’s Liberals finally tasted victory, they remained apprehensive about going as far as their compatriot René Lévesque had in actually joining the new government. “The Quiet Revolution was well under way and our society was moving forward”, Pelletier writes: “Wasn’t it time to stand aside, with no regrets? Perhaps it was my duty to channel my energy in another direction, toward new goals, on untried paths” (p. 65). Trudeau was already hinting at participation in government as one possibility. In *Cité libre* he talked of the need for “men of action” to “support the Liberal party in its drive for electoral, social and educational reform” (p. 53). Yet, for the time being and for next three years, Pelletier held firm. “For intellectuals” working for a newspaper, he argued, “it was possible”, within Quebec’s new political order “to combine the roles of supporter and critic” (p. 53). At least this seemed to make sense for someone who had just been hired to run a major Montreal daily: “Since going to *la Presse* I felt more than ever out of circulation so far as *acting* in politics was concerned”, Pelletier explains. “My role as a journalist was to *talk* about political life, which suited me perfectly. I never even toyed with the idea of leaving my job as editor-in-chief of *la Presse* to become an MP” (p. 123). But he wondered why Trudeau and Marchand felt restless: “why were they themselves thinking of taking the plunge?” he asked. “Where did their sense of urgency come from? And why did I feel so strongly that they should act without delay?” (p. 123). This was 1963, three years after the defeat of the *Union nationale* and two years before the “three wise men” finally joined Lester Pearson’s Liberals. And yet already Trudeau and Marchand felt that their work was over in Quebec. “Now they were talking very specifically about the next federal election...”, Pelletier recalls, “and the possibility of launching in Ottawa a quiet revolution

inspired by the Quebec model" (p. 122).

While the prolonged debates which dominate these years take center stage, this is no tiresome account of internal turmoil and indecision. Pelletier is a master story-teller. His opening tale of a flight over a nuclear missile silo, for example, or his sojourns to the American South or to revolution-torn Algeria are gripping and cleverly constructed. We are brought back to the heady days of kitchen politics in Quebec when voices rose and fell until the wee-hours of the morning to the hubbub of furious debate calmed periodically by just plain conversation. Things carried on this way until the spring of 1965 when suddenly, though not altogether unexpectedly, Pelletier is fired from *la Presse*. Muddling around at free-lancing in middle age soon lost its appeal. "We had been critics for the last fifteen years", writes Pelletier. "We were practitioners of 'the art of saying'. But politics is the art of doing. Was it possible to move from one to the other at our age?" (pp. 157-8). And yet, along with Trudeau, he soon found the words to explain to their *Cité libre* readers why their step towards Ottawa now made sense. "Now, there are two ways of taking an active interest in public affairs:" they wrote, "from the outside, by a critical examination of the ideas, institutions and men, which all together constitute political reality; or from within, by becoming a politician oneself" (p. 179). Many of these scenes remind us of Underhill and Scott climbing the Berkshires or drawing up their manifestos: "Listen guys", shouts Marchand, "we have to decide. We can't wait any longer. When I leave Montreal in an hour or so I want to know if you're taking the plunge with me or not. Because I won't do it without you" (p. 168). That night, around the end of June 1965, as Pelletier recalls, they made their decision and soon all three were politicians.

Each of the works selected for this review explore the struggle individuals engaged in to carry their ideas into what Owsam calls the "inner councils" of government. Taken together, these books offer a starting base for historians seeking to explore the role of ideas in the evolution of the Canadian state. While this collection can be placed alongside a rich body of literature featuring works by Richard Allen, Paul Craven, John English, A.B. McKillop, and James Struthers, to name only a few, it is clear that much of this story remains unwritten. Owsam has taken a significant step forward but his approach is primarily narrative and further analysis of the process by which ideas become state policy is needed. Francis, Fullerton, and Bissell offer biographies which, along with Horn's introduction to F.R. Scott's political writings, provide useful studies of their subjects; yet, within the context of their approaches, the individual takes precedence over the movements and institutions they served. Bryce takes us inside the Department of Finance during the formative years of its modernization to offer only one of many possible institutional histories of the Canadian state. Political memoirs can and should be fascinating primary sources for historians and with both Pickersgill and Pelletier we are not disappointed. But it is not only the professional historian who might be

informed or inspired by this collection. All those who are interested in the formation of government policy may be given cause to reflect on whether or not a unique chapter in Canada's past has drawn to a close. Gregory S. Kealey and Rosemary E. Ommer have recently pointed out that historians seem less willing to offer their perspectives in public service. "How many historians", they ask, are today "willing to leave their comfortable and private studies to risk presenting a convincing brief on the historical dimension of an issue to a royal commission's public hearings?"⁸ How many for that matter are even asked? Even contemporary debates and issues appear to find little resonance in a once proud Department of External Affairs. As the editor of the Professional Association of Foreign Service Officer's journal laments: "As a professional institution, the foreign service has come under heavy and sustained assault. Yet it's as difficult to blame our political masters as it is to gather sympathies from the rest of the public service. We have an atrocious collective image and too few friends to spring to our defence. We have allowed ourselves to rest on past achievements, and we have failed to grow with time. As proud as we are of the acquired traditions and accomplishments of the foreign service, we need new roots anchored in contemporary realities".⁹ And, though debates over the Meech Lake accord and Canada-U.S. free trade have found their way into the media, the voice of the intellectual community seems to have grown fainter except for a brief outburst from one of Pelletier's former comrade-in-arms. Perhaps a new and more cynical answer to O.D. Skelton's question concerning the professional expert's role in the state has been found and Canada's intellectuals have now grown more comfortable or at any rate more confined to the quiet groves of academia.

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8 Gregory S. Kealey and Rosemary E. Ommer, "The Practical Historian" in "Notes and Comments", *Canadian Historical Review*, LXVIII, 3 (1987), p. 434.

9 Dan Livermore, "Editor's Notebook", *bout de papier*, 5, 3 (Fall 1987), p. 4.