

History and Agendas in Atlantic Canada

Sean Cadigan

Volume 43, numéro 2, été–automne 2014

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1062198ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Department of History at the University of New Brunswick

ISSN

0044-5851 (imprimé)

1712-7432 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cette note

Cadigan, S. (2014). History and Agendas in Atlantic Canada. *Acadiensis*, 43(2).

History and Agendas in Atlantic Canada

OVER 25 YEARS AGO, RUSSELL JACOBY identified the trend towards the academic cloistering of the professoriate; across North America, academics became preoccupied with the process of securing tenure and promotion by focusing on more specialized and arcane forms of research and by avoiding at all costs controversial engagement with wider audiences that might draw negative attention to themselves.¹ Provocative engagement by academic researchers with their communities is in short supply, particularly in Atlantic Canada and especially in terms of providing criticism that counters the hegemonic, chiefly neoliberal, essence of capital and the state. Recent scholarship on community economic development (CED) and the nature of capitalism in Atlantic Canada suggests that there has never been such a pressing need for historians to help create a public and counter-hegemonic agenda of research and dissemination – whether it be in the critical assessment of what works or what does not work in CED. In particular, historians have much to offer in their ability to analyze empirically the long-term structural challenges of CED, the underlying historical assumptions made by proponents of CED, and whether the results of evolving CED practices have been realizing their initial goals. Several recent books on CED and/or the state in Canada underline the need for constant critical analysis of the ongoing impact of capitalism on society and of CED as an agenda for scholarship in Atlantic Canada: Eric Shragge and Michael Toye's *Community Economic Development: Building for Social Change* (Sydney: CBU Press, 2006); Susan Hodgett, David Johnson, and Stephen A. Royle's *Doing Development Differently: Regional Development on the Atlantic Periphery* (Sydney: CBU Press, 2007); Donald J. Savoie and John G. Reid's *Shaping an Agenda for Atlantic Canada* (Halifax and Winnipeg: Fernwood, 2011); Santo Dodaro and Leonard Pluta's *The Big Picture: The Antigonish Movement of Eastern Nova Scotia* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012); and Don Nerbas's recent *Dominion of Capital: The Politics of Big Business and the Crisis of the Canadian Bourgeoisie, 1914-1947* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013).

As with most essay collections, the contributions to Shragge and Toye's *Community Economic Development: Building for Social Change* vary in quality, but the book is an important examination of the problems and opportunities in CED. The collection proposes CED as a means of addressing the impoverishment and marginalization of peoples and communities by capitalist development. Although some deal with Atlantic Canadian case studies, Shragge and Toye have assembled essays that provide a pan-Canadian perspective. CED emerged as a popular, community-based – or “grassroots” – response to the social and economic dislocations of neoliberal government policies in the 1980s.² Many Canadians turned to local community groups that tried to respond locally and in a decentralized manner to growing poverty and unemployment.

1 Russell Jacoby, *The Last Intellectuals: American Culture in the Age of Academe* (New York: Basic Books, 1987), 5-15, 118-19.

2 Neoliberalism, one of the most prominent ideological responses to the economic and social crises associated with globalization since the late 1970s, emphasizes the importance of communities,

The problem for CED, Shragge and Toye point out, is that while government retrenchment, trade policies, and other neoliberal initiatives forced community groups to attempt local solutions to social and economic problems that were national and international in scale, the inadequacy of their resources to meet their goals exposed CED groups to the risk of being enveloped within the neoliberal agenda.³ CED groups often turned to governments for recognition and funding to assist them, but these were the very same governments that pursued neoliberal objectives. The federal and provincial governments often saw CED as a way to develop a “social economy,” the purpose of which was to allow these same governments to retreat further from the financial responsibilities of social welfare. The social economy was supposed to comprise a third economy – the work of non-profit organizations, cooperatives, and other CED groups that lie between the private sector and government. Most of the social economy in Canada proved to be service sector work by poorly paid and often self-employed people who provide what had been domestic work. They provide these services to other workers who have also fallen victim to the “destandardization of work,” or the erosion of usually unionized work with standard hours, benefits, and job security, that had marked the post-war settlement in Canada. Such victims had little choice but to work much longer hours, often in insecure self-employment with little time left for the care of the dependent members of their households.⁴ Over time, CED groups have come to depend on small numbers of government funding sources and to work on achieving government objectives. Such funding is never available to meet the original needs of the CED movement: providing communities with the power to challenge the private sector in making decisions about how society’s economic resources may be used.⁵ To the contrary, government support usually is at the expense of democratic participation by people who originally created the CED groups. In Montreal, for example, les corporations de développement économique communautaire (CEDCs), originally developed by local residents in the mid-1980s to reverse economic

regions, and/or nation-states becoming more competitive in the global economy. Neoliberals extol the free market, apply pressure for the privatization of government services and deregulation, demand that social welfare be limited, and want government to restrict union rights under industrial legality. See Susanne Soederberg, George Menz, and, Philip G. Cerny, “Different Roads to Globalization: Neoliberalism, the Competition State, and Politics in a More Open World,” in their edited collection *Internalizing Globalization: The Rise of Neoliberalism and the Decline of National Varieties of Capitalism* (Houndmills and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 3; Thom Workman, *Social Torment: Globalization in Atlantic Canada* (Halifax: Fernwood, 2003), 29-54; and Leo Panitch and Donald Swartz, *From Consent to Coercion: The Assault on Trade Union Freedoms*, 3rd ed. (Aurora, ON: Garamond Press, 2003).

- 3 Shragge and Toye, “Introduction: CED and Social Change,” *Community Economic Development*, 9-20.
- 4 Andrea Levy, “Taking Care of Business?” in Shragge and Toye, *Community Economic Development*, 55-107. The post-war settlement in Canada is usually associated with Fordism: the commitment to capitalist development through mass production and mass consumption abetted by the welfare state and the constraints of industrial legality. There is a huge literature on the settlement, but a good place to begin is Peter S. McInnis, *Harnessing Labour Confrontation: Shaping the Postwar Settlement in Canada, 1943-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002).
- 5 Michael Toye and Nicole Chaland, “CED in Canada: Review of Definitions and Profile of Practice,” and John Loxley and Laura Lamb, “Economics for CED Practitioners,” in Shragge and Toye, *Community Economic Development*, 21-41, 42-54.

decline in their neighbourhoods, became much less democratic and community-based, and much more focused on fostering private-sector entrepreneurs, as they accepted federal and provincial funding and municipal assistance through the 1990s.⁶

Some of the contributors to *Community Economic Development* believe that CED can make good use of the neoliberal impulse that accompanies dependence on government support. Wanda Wuttunee, for instance, suggests that their cultural values of love, respect, and caring for creation and each other will enable Aboriginal peoples to develop an “economic warrior” culture that would sustain community capitalism. David Newhouse, on the other hand, is doubtful, arguing instead that capitalism is Borg-like – as all-assimilating in its imperatives as the fictional culture of television’s Star Trek franchise; even Aboriginal values will likely fall before capitalist market imperatives.⁷ The manner in which such assimilation works is also applicable to non-Aboriginal cases, as well illustrated in Gayle Board and Linda Savory-Gordon’s analysis of the United Steelworkers’ experiment with ownership of the Algoma Steel plant in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, that was set to close in the 1990s. Although initially considered by workers as a successful extension of their democratic control of a mainstay of the local economy, the plant’s continued capital requirements meant that worker-owners had to rely on private sector financing. Amidst the lacklustre government support for the experiment, such financing encouraged more top-down management and worker disillusionment.⁸

The contributors to *Community Economic Development* describe many obstacles that face CED practitioners, but their essays are not hopeless in tone or argument. There is promise in the future, Shragge and Toye argue, if CED groups concentrate on developing their “capacity to oppose ever-expanding neoliberalism.” Such a capacity is necessarily political and radical, the editors argue, and must preserve the CED movement’s commitment to democratic decision-making, capacity for critical analysis of the ongoing dynamics of their relationships with the wider world, and sustainable relationships between communities and the environments in which they exist.⁹ To be truly community-oriented, CED groups have to be democratic and committed to the economic well-being of all of the peoples in their communities. In addition, the editors suggest CED groups must maintain a commitment to self-education and education of their communities if they are to build mature organizations able to withstand the pitfalls of government funding. Shragge and Toye’s effort in bringing together the essays in *Community Economic Development* suggests that they feel that the scholarly community can play a vital role in the educational process of CED.

The importance of the discipline of history is implied in the retrospective analyses of the CED experiences in *Community Economic Development* and even

6 Jean-Marc Fontan et al., “Urban Perspectives on CED Practice: The Montreal Experience,” in Shragge and Toye, *Community Economic Development*, 108-24.

7 Wanda Wuttunee, “Making Space: Aboriginal Perspectives of Community Economic Development,” and David Newhouse, “Aboriginal Economic Development in the Shadow of the Borg,” in Shragge and Toye, *Community Economic Development*, 138-57, 158-68.

8 Gayle Broad and Linda Savory-Gordon, “Worker Ownership as a Strategy for Community Development,” in Shragge and Toye, *Community Economic Development*, 221-36.

9 Shragge and Toye, “Introduction: CED and Social Change,” in Shragge and Toye, *Community Economic Development*, 14.

more so in *Doing Development Differently: Regional Development on the Atlantic Periphery*, edited by Susan Hodgett, David Johnson, and Stephen A. Royle. A collaboration of scholars of Ireland and the Maritimes, none of whom are historians, this essay collection reviews the nature of development through case studies in Ireland, Halifax, Cape Breton, Prince Edward Island, and New Brunswick. The essays on Ireland focus on geographical analyses of the regional dimensions of capitalist development, and argue that it is important to understand the centripetal force of capitalism in drawing resources from more peripheral areas. Proinnsias Breathnach, for example, contextualizes historically the decline of Northern Ireland's status as a core industrial area as its shipbuilding and textiles industries failed, and reveals the manner in which the economy of the Irish Republic to the south remained essentially marginalized as a peripheral area of the global economy even in its heyday as the "Celtic Tiger" between 1992 and 2002.¹⁰ In another exceptional paper, James Bickerton and Teresa MacNeil use the concepts of "core" and "periphery" to assess the manner in which policymakers have sought to redress Atlantic Canada's economic and social problems on the margins of capitalist development. Bickerton and MacNeil categorize development policies as having been either endogenous or exogenous in nature. Exogenous policies assumed that some form of local barriers prevented outside capital and other factors from migrating from cores to peripheral regions. The duty of policies, usually imposed from external regions, was to break down these barriers and allow the market to facilitate factor flows to peripheries. Endogenous policies assumed that all of the factors required for stronger development were present in peripheral regions, but required some sort of extra nurturing or jump-starting through different kinds of development stimulants such as subsidies or special tariff arrangements. Beginning in the 1950s, governments applied various combinations of exogenous policies to Atlantic Canada. While almost all of these policies were private sector-oriented, the market also reigned supreme in the exogenous policies of the Mulroney-era Enterprise Cape Breton and the neoliberal modification of programs in agencies such as the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency.¹¹

Bickerton and MacNeil note that most policies have been lacklustre at best in encouraging regional development because, especially in the case of initiatives in the 1980s such as the Cape Breton Investment Tax Credit and Enterprise Cape Breton, they focused on modifying abstracted things, such as entrepreneurship or the state, while neglecting the actual development capacity among the peoples and communities of the region. The authors suggest that better results may come from more recent CED policies, which are inherently endogenous and emphasize the process of development with local people as full partners who, with enhanced skills, education, and associations, can find their own paths to "well-being and self-reliance."¹² Susan Hodgett agrees, noting that most of the contributors to the volume

10 Proinnsias Breathnach, "Ireland: The Celtic Tiger and the Black North," in Hodgett, Johnson, and Royle, *Doing Development Differently*, 72-88.

11 Bickerton and MacNeil, "Models of Development for Atlantic Canada," in Hodgett, Johnson, and Royle, *Doing Development Differently*, 42-71.

12 Bickerton and MacNeil, "Models of Development for Atlantic Canada," in Hodgett, Johnson, and Royle, *Doing Development Differently*, 67.

propose that the gulf between what policymakers – whether in Ireland or Canada – hold as the core of the problem in peripheral regions is at odds with the lived experience of those people who reside in those regions. The key, she argues, is to find ways in which local people may be empowered to take charge of their own economic and social destinies. With David Johnson and Stephen A. Royle, she further suggests that CED is the most likely means of doing so.¹³

The editors of *Doing Development Differently* see the strengths of CED in essentially the same terms as those of the editors of *Community Economic Development*: it is local, democratic, participatory, and primarily interested in the well-being of the people who are fellow members of a community. The editors of *Doing Development Differently* feel that scholarship has an important role to play in vitalizing CED, and most of the essays – particularly those on Ireland – suggest that a historical perspective on the nature of capitalist development is important. Edel McLean, for example, provides a fascinating analysis of the challenges of including communities in waterfront developments in Belfast and Halifax. McLean’s analysis suggests that while popular concerns about exclusion surfaced in the waterfront revitalization of Belfast’s Laganside Development Area in the 1980s the Belfast case has been more inclusive than the earlier Waterfront Development Corporation (WDC) of the 1970s in Halifax. The Laganside project had emphasized meaningful community participation in development to address problems such as local poverty while the WDC concentrated on the public relations of containing and managing community concerns. McLean locates the difference in the historical trajectories of both cities, particularly in the more industrial nature of Belfast and its sectarian-coloured “Troubles.” In the latter case, the peace process gave a higher priority to quieting public concerns through involvement in development projects that might give the people hope for a better future.¹⁴

Community economic development in rural areas is a central concern of Donald J. Savoie in his contribution to the essay collection that he has edited with John G. Reid: *Shaping an Agenda for Atlantic Canada*. Savoie encourages us not to give up on the importance of rural communities because they are sources of so much of the economic and cultural resources on which the development of Atlantic Canada and Canada more generally depends. Savoie acknowledges that very few governments, especially in their bureaucratic components, have had much time for rural development, but he sees hope in the fact that elected officials must respond to their constituencies; so it is up to the latter to force a greater commitment from politicians.¹⁵ The question that remains is how to mobilize popular consciousness and translate it into an effective political message that would pressure governments to be more sympathetic to the development needs of the rural communities of Atlantic Canada.

13 Susan Hodgett, “Daring to Do Development Differently,” and Susan Hodgett, David Johnson, and Stephen A. Royle, “Regional Development and the Development of Theory,” in Hodgett, Johnson, and Royle, *Doing Development Differently*, 7-16, 17-41.

14 Edel McLean, “Regenerating Belfast and Halifax: The Challenge of Inclusive Waterfront Development,” in Hodgett, Johnson, and Royle, *Doing Development Differently*, 89-111.

15 Donald J. Savoie, “Reflections on Rural Development: An Atlantic Canada Perspective,” in Reid and Savoie, *Shaping an Agenda for Atlantic Canada*, 324-38.

Answering such questions is one of the reasons why Reid and Savoie brought together people from regional academic, business, and government circles for a conference in Halifax in 2010. Arguing that Atlantic Canada was, yet again, “at a crossroads” of poor economic development relative to Canada as a whole, growing political marginalization, a weakening financial position, and a small and aging population, the editors suggest that, despite such problems, “Atlantic Canadians were not sufficiently debating the complex issues that arise from the past and stretch into the present and the future.” By organizing a conference, Reid and Savoie hoped to “identify those considerations that would enable Atlantic Canadians to shape an agenda” through two approaches: considering the past, and memories of it, and, based on such consideration, determine “the considerations that will enable Atlantic Canadians to design a road map leading into the future.”¹⁶ These are laudable goals, but the essay collection that emerged from the conference, despite the editors’ yeoman efforts, lacks the coherence that might allow an agenda for the future to emerge.¹⁷

The collection provokes little debate, although many of the academic essays constitute interpretations of research that would be worthy of any peer-reviewed academic journal. Andrea Bear Nicholas, for example, provides a superb analysis of how colonial cartography was an essential element of settler imperialism in the dispossession of the Maliseet in the mid-18th century. Wade Locke’s examination of economic data provides a sensible caution against assuming that Atlantic Canada even exists: a shared regional identity in some areas has to be considered alongside sharp political and economic divides and rivalries in others. James Bickerton’s review of differing concepts of federalism in Canada – from “status quo skeptics” to “Québec autonomists” to “progressive pan-Canadianists” to “collaborative disentanglers” to “networked globalists” – suggests that however peoples and provinces may differ in Atlantic Canada we will likely be united in a continuing desire to get more from the federal government to assist in funding our development. Dobrowolsky and Tastsoglou’s work on the manner in which neoliberal objectives have entrenched market values and gender inequality in federal and provincial approaches to immigration policy should, though, caution Atlantic Canadians that their desires will face sharp limits without public demands for fundamental change.¹⁸

The individual chapters are substantial contributions to the scholarship on Atlantic Canada, but they are stronger parts than the whole. One of the problems might have been the publicly unengaged nature of the original enterprise: a largely academic group of papers delivered with staged commentaries in a university

16 John G. Reid and Donald J. Savoie, “Introduction: Shaping an Agenda,” in Reid and Savoie, *Shaping an Agenda for Atlantic Canada*, 1-2.

17 I participated in the conference, but declined the invitation to participate in the publishing project that followed.

18 Reid and Savoie, *Shaping an Agenda for Atlantic Canada*: Andrea Bear Nicholas, “Settler Imperialism and the Dispossession of the Maliseet, 1758-1765” (21-57); James Bickerton, “The New Federalism and Atlantic Canada” (205-31); Wade Locke, “Atlantic Canada: Myth or Reality?” (235-57); and Alexandra Dobrowolsky and Evangelia Tastsoglou, “Continuity and Change in Immigration Policy: Canada, Atlantic Canada and the Future of Citizenship” (263-91).

setting. There is reason to believe that history can be an important means of bridging the gap between critical perspectives informed by academic research and the “public,” especially if the latter term refers to people at the community level. Margaret Conrad and David Northrup’s presentation of findings from the *Canadians and Their Pasts* Alliance research project suggests that the peoples of Atlantic Canada almost uniformly value and pursue the histories of their families, communities, and provinces. The project interviewed Canadians about their interest in history, and the interviewees quoted by Conrad and Northrup often suggest a sense of the material struggles families had to engage in to ensure their well-being and of the need to build better futures. Respondents indicated a great deal of trust in museums, historic sites, and families as sources of historical knowledge, but much less trust in history teachers (it is not clear if this includes post-secondary teachers). The authors note that history has the potential for “legitimizing or destabilizing power relations, maintaining or undermining community identities, and challenging the way we see ourselves,” and they suggest that Atlantic Canadians “are long overdue for a major calibration of where our history might take us” although the nature of that recalibration remains to be seen. Nevertheless, it is unlikely to take place within academic cloisters and, if it is to be realized through public history institutions such as museums and historic sites, it is likely to be a minor and inoffensive adjustment in the ongoing hegemonic process of capitalism in the neoliberal age.¹⁹

In the case of the relationship between the Irish peace process and the approach to CED in Belfast’s waterfront development, it is clear that collective action and protest are important factors in shaping development that is more responsive to communities. It is so easy for responsiveness to slip into neoliberal cooptation that many of the authors in the essay collections on community development under review here have warned about. Constant and accompanying historical analysis would shed more light on the connections between popular protest and policy responsiveness. Such analysis would remind people of what the original aspirations of their community development plans were and what they risk sacrificing by modifying their plans to accommodate the contemporary neoliberal agendas of the state and private enterprise.

Many of the arguments made in the essays in these two books on CED would benefit from better historical analysis. For example, Gertrude Anne MacIntyre and Jim Lotz cite the precedent of the Antigonish Movement in their tribute to New Dawn Enterprises in *Community Economic Development*, a government-supported CED effort to cope with the many economic problems of industrial Cape Breton.²⁰

19 Margaret Conrad and David Northrup, “Fail Again, Fail Better: Atlantic Canadians and Their Pasts,” in Savoie and Reid, *Shaping an Agenda for Atlantic Canada*, 160. The hegemonic impulses of public history through museums and historic sites are well discussed in Veronica Strong-Boag, “Experts on Our Own Lives: Commemorating Canada at the Beginning of the 21st Century,” *Public Historian* 31, no. 1 (February 2009): 46-68. Such public institutions have the potential for presenting more critical and alternate understandings of the past. For a Canadian example, see Craig Heron, “The Labour Historian and Public History,” *Labour/Le Travail* 45 (Spring 2000): 171-97.

20 Gertrude Anne MacIntyre and Jim Lotz, “State of the Art: The Third Option,” in Shragge and Toye, *Community Economic Development*, 238.

Yet recent work on the history of the Antigonish Movement suggests that it was an early example of how community development may fail without a critical perspective on the problems of trying to work within the parameters of capitalism. For instance, in *The Big Picture: The Antigonish Movement of Eastern Nova Scotia*, Santo Dodaro and Leonard Pluta interpret the Antigonish Movement primarily as an economic movement that proposed to use a form of economic action – cooperative organization – to better use economic resources to improve the lives of the peoples of eastern Nova Scotia. The authors distinguish economic movements from social movements, which they claim use political action to change society according to a shared ideal of what life should be like (3-6).

Dodaro and Pluta's distinction between economic and social movements does not work well because the conditions they outline as being essential to the success of economic movements are social and political. They suggest, for example, that successful economic movements require some sort of "grassroots" basis in shared ethnic, linguistic, cultural, or religious identities, particularly if they allow people to hold a common sense of discrimination, marginalization, or persecution. Such common identities motivate people to better mobilize their economic resources to remedy the inequalities they believe to have arisen from such experiences, and to rally behind institutions that may provide leadership (5-15). In the case of eastern Nova Scotia, rural peoples of Highland Scottish and Acadian descent, sharing a Roman Catholic religion, rallied behind the leadership of the "priest-professors" of St. Francis Xavier University beginning in the 1920s to address the poverty and inequality that arose from a long history of economic exploitation.

Dodaro and Pluta focus on the history of the economic action of the Antigonish Movement presumably because of the motivational potential in many of the peoples of eastern Nova Scotia, who believed that Roman Catholicism was the defining aspect of their identities. The result is that Dodaro and Pluta are much less satisfactory in their treatment of the broader social and political forces that shaped the politics of the Antigonish Movement. In particular, although Dodaro and Pluta identify church leadership as being crucial to the emergence of the Antigonish Movement, they do not subject that leadership to critical scrutiny. Dodaro and Pluta credit professor-priests, especially Rev. Moses Coady, with developing the "Antigonish Way" in response to what the authors see as the Roman Catholic Church's articulation of a socially progressive doctrine in the papal encyclicals *Rerum Novarum* (1891) and *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931). Dodaro and Pluta give no treatment of the encyclicals' corporatist or anti-communist elements. Moreover, the authors' understanding of eastern Nova Scotia is essentially rural. Despite acknowledgement of the problems of industrial Cape Breton, and of the Antigonish Movement's interest in addressing the same, Dodaro and Pluta do not adequately deal with the working class organizations and leftist political movements of the 1920s and 1930s, or the relationship between these and the emergence of the Antigonish Movement. By not addressing the social and political differentiation of eastern Nova Scotia, the authors often slip into a truncated concept – the "maritime region" – as a short-hand description of the peoples and communities that were to be the object of the Antigonish Movement's reforms (27, 34, 37).

The goals of the Antigonish Movement were nevertheless ones that could be supported by the left, and they prefigured the interests of the more recent CED

movement “to put in place an integrated alternate economic system based on cooperative economic institutions controlled and owned by the people themselves and with universal appeal and applicability” (18). The question is whether the understanding of the historical circumstances that the movement’s founders, especially Coady, held about the necessity of the Antigonish Movement would have actually supported the realization of its goals. Coady’s approach to the history of the “maritime region” was to start with what he wanted to accomplish – the mobilization of popular support for the cooperative movement – and develop a narrative that would lead towards it. The result was his notion of the “Great Default of the People.” This default argument, Dodaro and Pluta admit, “was not a formal theory based on empirical analysis of the historical evolution of the local economy but an instrument of economic rhetoric meant to inspire and motivate people to take matters into their own hands.” While not denying the complexities of colonial, mercantile, and industrial forms of exploitation, the default theory proposed that the peoples of eastern Nova Scotia were at fault for allowing these to happen because through “their ignorance, lack of foresight, and inertia, they had lost control over economic resources and institutions” (45). The purpose of this theory, which “assumed a mythical aura,” was not so much to blame the people, as it was to inspire them to believe that it was in their hands to build better futures free of the poverty and inequality that had marked unrestrained exploitation in the past.

History was, in Coady’s hands, a crude political and social instrument – it made a poor foundation on which to build what he thought would be key to the Antigonish Way: the mobilization of people through education for cooperative organization. The process of education and cooperation was to be constant and to be informed by a process of social and economic analysis of both the socio-economic conditions under which cooperatives developed and the strategies such organizations used to modify such conditions. Professor-priests would take the lead in the first organization of the people through mass education, and then continue to build the success of cooperative work by providing economic education and empowering people to take control of their educations and economic activities. The goal of all of this organizational effort for the clerical proponents of the Antigonish Movement, according to Dodaro and Pluta, was to realize the “Big Picture”: through the 1930s, the authors argue, Coady envisioned nothing less than organizing the people through a full suite of cooperative meetings, study clubs, rallies, leadership courses, conferences, and publications. Through these means people would manage all of the production, consumption, marketing, financing, services and cultural matters of their communities, the end goal of which was to build an economic and political democracy that would serve their needs (46).

Dodaro and Pluta argue convincingly that the “Big Picture” was a vision far more radical in its emphasis on the importance of collective needs and goals than Coady likely intended, and that it was therefore appealing and drew many people in eastern Nova Scotia into the movement during the 1930s. Popularity with the people, however, did not mean that it was popular with governments or businesses; the “Big Picture” had to be sold to the latter groups. That duty fell to economics professor Harry Johnson of St. Francis Xavier University, who, in 1944, outlined the Antigonish Movement’s “Six Principles”: “(1) the primacy of the individual, (2) social reform through education, (3) education beginning with the economic,

(4) education through group action, (5) effective social reform through fundamental changes in social and economic institutions, and (6) full and abundant life for everyone” (49). The Six Principles proved to be incompatible with the “Big Picture.” Although the Antigonish Movement’s vision was ostensibly about people cooperating for their collective interests, in practice the movement privileged the individual – an approach more in keeping with the liberal individualism that dominated official political and corporate life in the region. In Dodaro and Pluta’s view, the Six Principles placed much greater emphasis on improving individual participation in the marketplace than on the “Big Picture” of taking greater collective control of all aspects of community economies for the benefit of all people. The Six Principles suggested that the Antigonish Movement’s main purpose was to allow individuals to pursue the “full and abundant life,” thereby confining the movement’s goals, with Coady’s blessing, comfortably within the limits of neoclassical economic theory. Over time, the Antigonish Movement’s leaders discarded the collective idealism of the “Big Picture” for the pragmatic individualism of the Six Principles, a trend accelerated by their desire to acclimatize ideologically to the Cold War and embrace the notion that there could be a third way of local community-based and socially conscious capitalism between communism and unfettered capitalism (47-53, 143).

A quick erosion of the fundamental principles of community empowerment through education, critical analysis, and self-reflection facilitated the triumph of the Six Principles. While the Rev. James Tompkins remained committed to a more comprehensive and critical educational program for the Antigonish Movement, Coady tended to believe that education should focus on providing people with the technical skills they required to run cooperative enterprises, and this view won out to the detriment of a meaningful program of political education and debate. Through the 1950s, educational programs, which had found a home in the Extension Department at St. Francis Xavier University, shortened and became more vocational. As it embraced this more limited vision, the Extension Department lost the capacity to engage in an on-going program of critical re-examination of what the movement’s members needed in a changing post-war economic and social environment. Skills education became more of an end than a means to economic action, and the Antigonish Movement slipped into step with post-war Fordism in Canada. Embracing efficiency and consumerism over activism and community, Extension Services diverted more of its educational programs into mass media, first through radio and then television, rather than continuing to work directly with people in study groups and courses. The effect was to promote a more individual and isolating experience for members, which was incompatible with the original cooperatism of the Antigonish Way, but perfectly in keeping with the neoclassical liberalism of the Six Principles. The movement “failed to establish its own ‘think tank’” or analytical centre to serve as a guide for future action. Rather, it depended on the predilections of its priest-professors, especially Coady, who continued to dream of small agrarian idylls of Roman Catholic egalitarians surviving amidst global capitalism and resisting its communist alternatives. Such lack of analytical capacity weakened the Antigonish Movement even as it grew in size and scale and adapted to the post-war world by tapping government money, especially from federal programs, to support fishing cooperatives. Rather than focusing on local

affairs, the movement's gaze turned to international vistas through the development of the Coady International Institute in 1959, doing its part to ensure that Third Way capitalism, rather than communism, would prevail as anti-colonialism took hold in Africa and Asia (143-200, quotation on 201).

Although the Coady Institute attracted international students and government money to St. Francis Xavier University, the Extension Department and, therefore, the Antigonish Movement, continued to decline throughout the 1960s. Part of the problem was that the university was moving more towards the academic and research mandates of the post-secondary mainstream, privileging baccalaureate and graduate programs and peer-reviewed, preferably externally funded, research over community development-oriented cooperative or adult education. The promotion and tenure process ensnared a newer generation of St. Francis Xavier University academic appointments, herding them away from community engagement and towards "pure" research. Its status within the university constantly eroding, the Extension Department prospected for public funds to keep its much-reduced programs going. While these funds buoyed the department in the short-term, the long-term effect was that it lost "its intellectual independence, undermining even further its identity and, perhaps, most important, its ties with the cooperative sector and other institutions of the Antigonish Movement" (205). Deprived of effective educational and analytical support, members of the cooperatives slipped more into the consumerism of the 1960s, often trying to milk their organizations for more personal income. The cooperatives that survived transformed into hybrids caught between trying to replace capitalist enterprises and being transformed into them. Although the Extension Department has persisted, it never regained its prominence or found a way back to the collectivism of the "Big Picture."

Dodaro and Pluta's analysis of the Antigonish Movement suggests partially that its leaders lost their way in the post-1945 world of Cold War and Fordism in Canada. The authors neglect to consider the anti-communism that was rife within the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church or the adequacy of Coady's view of eastern Nova Scotians as essentially Roman Catholic folk (among other factors), and how such factors might have limited the vision of the movement from the beginning. Moreover, the leaders of the Antigonish Movement were seduced by the post-war state's commitment to a more managerial and interventionist capitalism, and Coady enjoyed the limelight of being invited to provincial, national, and international bodies to give his opinions on how unemployment and poverty might be addressed, a trend that started during the Second World War but accelerated afterwards (127). The nature of the more managerial form of capitalism in Canada receives excellent treatment in Don Nerbas's recent *Dominion of Capital: The Politics of Big Business and the Crisis of the Canadian Bourgeoisie, 1914-1947*. Nerbas argues that the managerial state originated not only in the need to marshal resources for the war effort between 1939 and 1945 or to quiet working-class discontent and a turn to the left at the end of the war, but in an intellectual crisis within the dominant elements of the bourgeoisie. Since its beginning in 1867 Canada had been dominated by the plutocrats of St. James Street in Montreal, who organized a national and continental economy around their railway projects – primarily the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR). However, the crises of the first half of the 20th century – overextension of transcontinental railways, railway bankruptcy and nationalization, the Great

Depression, and then war in 1939 – undermined political confidence in their dominant ethos: a commitment to British liberalism, which the old elite defined essentially as *laissez-fairism*. The Canadian government under William Lyon Mackenzie King turned instead to a more American-style approach to state management of the economy from the 1930s in the pursuit of more efficient productivity.

Nerbas uses five case studies of elite figures, suggesting that histories of Canadian capitalists have rarely approached their subjects from the theoretical perspective of class. Interested in the mentalité of the national bourgeoisie, Nerbas finds that, regardless of their many individual characteristics, the capitalists whom he studied shared in common, aside from their gender as men, the ability to influence the “commanding heights of the economy” through the types of financial and industrial capital they controlled. Similarly, these were capitalists who focused on monopoly capitalism – socializing the risks of their investments through corporate structures and a very close relationship with political leaders (11). The specific individuals Nerbas examines are Sir Edward Beatty – the president of the CPR from 1918 to 1943, Charles A. Dunning of Saskatchewan, Howard P. Robinson of New Brunswick, Sam McLaughlin of Oshawa, and C.D. Howe.

Beatty was the archetypical older British liberal, adamant in his commitment to the individual and the free market when it suited the CPR – especially in opposing the formation of a nationalized railway system in the 1920s. More interesting are the people from the margins, such as the Western Progressive Dunning, who went to Ottawa in 1926 and who, in his various federal portfolios, most notably as minister of railways and canals, demonstrated that he was just as liberal as was Beatty – joining him as a member of the Montreal establishment. For the purposes of this review, Howard Robinson is a more intriguing example. The Saint John newspaper baron was a supporter of a Maritime Rights movement in the 1920s, but in a nostalgic way that bemoaned the loss of a supposed golden age of pioneering Loyalists and of wood, wind, and water that existed before the Maritime provinces had joined Confederation. As he rumbled about the need for a better deal from Ottawa for the Maritimes, Robinson’s interests in New Brunswick power utilities led him to oppose local industrialists’ demands for cheaper power rates in favour of the financial capital that had been invested in the utilities. Robinson rejected the progressivism of the Maritime Rights movement, favouring a militant liberalism and individualism. His investments and positions through the 1930s and 1940s with corporations, most notably the Royal Bank of Canada and the CPR, further tied Robinson to the interests of Montreal and Toronto capitalists rather than to his province or region. As the federal government intervened in the economy to deal with railway crises and war, and as people demanded that governments help them more in times of depression, Robinson stood squarely behind the sanctity of private enterprise and “unhindered property rights” (38-67, quotation on 66).

Robinson’s case illustrates how regional interests meant little to Canadian capitalists. The case of Sam McLaughlin, on the other hand, reveals how little the aspirations of working people meant to them. McLaughlin was the scion of an industrial family that had made its fortune through carriage manufacture in Oshawa in the late 19th century. In the early years of the 20th century, Sam McLaughlin began to manufacture automobiles, selling out his interests to General Motors (GM)

in 1917 and becoming the manager of its Oshawa operations. McLaughlin was a transitional figure, intellectually planted in liberal views similarly to those of Beatty, Dunning, and Robinson, but, by his business actions, helping to usher in a new era of Canadian integration into a continental economy dominated by American corporations. The McLaughlin family had prided itself on its paternalistic relationships with its employees and the working class in Oshawa generally. As workers, however, organized against GM by joining the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO)-backed United Autoworkers of America and striking in 1937, McLaughlin sided squarely with GM against the workers and backed Ontario premier Mitch Hepburn's aggressive commitment to breaking the strike rather than the more conciliatory approach of the federal government of Mackenzie King.

The federal government did not care about the workers of Oshawa, but it also did not believe that the future of capitalism in Canada was best served by the older liberal views of elite figures such as McLaughlin or Beatty. The future belonged, instead, to C.D. Howe, the American who had graduated from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and who then became an engineering professor at Dalhousie University and later entered into grain elevator engineering and construction in northern Ontario. Recruited by Mackenzie King, Howe won a seat in the federal election of 1935 and became minister of railways and canals, then minister of marine. In all of his portfolios Howe brought a new approach to economic management, arguing that the state must intervene to ensure that the national economy operated as efficiently and productively as possible. As minister of munitions and supply during the Second World War, Howe applied his views on state management of the economy to marshal Canada's resources for the war effort and extended his work into post-war reconstruction. Howe believed that economic growth could not be trusted to the operation of the free market. He was committed to the notion that the scientific and technical planning skills of his engineering profession could provide better management of the economy. While Howe's emphasis on the need to improve economic productivity was an essential component of the post-war Fordist emphasis on industrial legality, he was no friend of organized labour – openly evincing hostility to unions – and, like most of the architects of the post-war settlement, he felt that women had no proper role to play in public life (157-241). In many ways deeply conservative, Howe was an important force in building the new managerial economy that so quickly seduced Moses Coady and helped to weaken the Antigonish Movement.

Nerbas's study reveals that while there was a crisis of faith about the nature of capitalism within the upper reaches of the bourgeoisie in the first half of the 20th century, the dominant social and economic relations in which they operated were never seriously threatened. The managerial ideology that emerged with C.D. Howe, as Dodaro and Pluta demonstrate in the case of the Antigonish Movement, was pervasive enough to co-opt, subordinate, and, ultimately, dismiss movements that had aspired to challenge the nature of capitalism in Canada. The example of the Antigonish Movement for more recent proponents of community economic development should be a reminder that critical analysis and self-reflection are important to any successful challenge to the neoliberal impulses of present-day capitalism. All of the studies reviewed here suggest that historical perspectives are essential to such critical analysis and self-reflection. The need for such perspectives

should be a calling for historians who are interested in shaping a new and better agenda for Atlantic Canada. The hegemonic forces that entice us with research funding are especially strong in an era in which governments primarily offer programs for public funding for research if it serves the interest of private-sector businesses.²¹ An important challenge for historians should be to rise above such impulses, to be counter-hegemonic, and to find a way to inform groups that want to resist collectively prevailing inequalities and instead build resilient communities committed to the well-being of all. Such partnerships will depend on the continued non-directed work of historians such as Nerbas, that is, work free of direction from any particular interest group, and which provides critical insight into the workings of the broader social and economic relationships in which community members and groups find themselves.

SEAN T. CADIGAN

21 See, for example, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC), "Report on Plans and Priorities, 2013-14," http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/NSERC-CRSNG/Reports-Rapports/RPP-PPR/2013-2014/index_eng.asp.