

## *Showdown! Making Modern Unions* by Rob Kristofferson and Simon Orpana

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in a coda that linked historical to current racism? In any case, discussing in detail the actual resonances between historical and contemporary iterations of one movement or problem would have been more effective and instructive than the quick and general gestures, however powerful they are as solidarity gestures.

If there's a criticism that can be levelled at the book, it's that its institutional focus, its attention to unions specifically as opposed to the wider working class culture of Hamilton in the period, feels a bit limited, a bit old-fashioned as labour history. There is some discussion of food, fun, and music, but it's all pretty much connected to the success of the strike. Labour history is about more than unions, and while the story of how unions were made is important, changes in working class culture are probably more important to understanding the current political and social moment. And the institutional focus raises the further question of whether comic readers are being condescended to: like undergraduates presented with all-killer-no-filler course options, are they assumed

to only hunger for action? Will they only gain insight by stealth?

It's notable, in this respect, that the current issue the book draws attention to in connection with labour politics is the Harper government's attacks on unions, bills C-377 and C-525. The Harper agenda was destructive without a doubt, but it does little to explain the decline in effectiveness and energy on the part of unions over the last many decades. Strikes like the one described in *Showdown* are highly unlikely now because of changes in the culture of class, to say nothing of the state and the economy, not because of laws that affect unions, most of which are unchanged. Ignoring culture, in fact, drives a teleological current in the book (signalled in the subtitle *Making Modern Unions*) that underlines what we have that the people in the story lacked, rather than what we lack and they had: strong and effective bonds of class solidarity.

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### ***Mike: The Memoirs of the Rt. Hon. Lester B. Pearson, vols. I-III***

by Lester B. Pearson

Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015.

Volume I, 326 pages. \$32.95 paper, ISBN 9781442615649. \$32.95 ebook (EPUB format) ISBN 9781442668645.

Volume II, 372 pages. \$32.95 paper, ISBN 9781442615656. \$32.95 ebook (EPUB format) ISBN 9781442668669.

Volume III, 366 pages. \$32.95 paper, ISBN 9781442615663. \$32.95 ebook (EPUB format) ISBN 9781442668683.

Donald Creighton never forgave “the giggling bow-tied bastard,” later confessing to a journalist, “I feel positive hatred towards that man.” According to Creighton’s historical calculus, Lester Pearson had abandoned Great Britain during the Suez Crisis and later severed Canada’s symbolic connection to what used to be called its mother country when he insisted on the Maple Leaf over the Red Ensign. Even

worse, Canada’s fourteenth prime minister accepted the premise of bilingualism when he appointed the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. It cut both ways because Pearson didn’t think much of Creighton. When Frank Underhill sent him an offprint, he thanked him “for reducing some of Donald Creighton’s views to historical perspective and accuracy,” adding that he intended “to borrow from it shame-