

tion throughout the book. When added to pointless repetition of phrases and sentences, sentences that sometimes are meaningless and errors of simple fact (e.g. *God Save the Queen* in 1936, 223) the book takes on a self-indulgent quality that detracts from its virtues. A much stronger and consistent editorial hand would have made a great difference. The absence of a bibliography of the works cited is a disservice to those who would profit from Robin's extensive research. Finally, this book, like so many others, makes the case for returning to the old practice of placing footnotes at the bottom of the page. Robin's notes are a treasurehouse of information: how many readers will not bother to flip back and forth to experience their richness?

These criticisms aside, this is an important book that deserves to be read and discussed widely. Today's politicians need to better understand the folly of dabbling opportunistically in the muck of prejudices and hatred. All Canadians need to remember how easy it is to succumb to the lure of the simple answers to complex problems that hatred always offers. This is a book for our own times.

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Howard Leeson, *Grant Notley: The Social Conscience of Alberta*. (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press 1992).

No political movement can succeed without leadership. The question is what kind of leadership is needed as determined by circumstances and the choice of political terrain? For social democrats this has been answered by developing credible managers who can build an electoral class base within the parliamentary system.

Howard Leeson's biography of Grant Notley, leader of the Alberta New Democratic Party for much of the 1970s and 1980s, is a classic example of this dual process: the development of a credible program of state capitalist development in a mixed economy and the Canadian social democratic debate over

who should provide the party's electoral base. Should it be a progressive coalition of farmers, small business and labour? Or one more closely aligned with the trade union movement?

Leeson pursues these two themes in a concise fashion by reviewing Notley's rural upbringing near Olds, Alberta, his role in founding the University of Alberta CCF club in the late 1950s, his selection as Provincial Secretary of the new NDP in 1962, becoming Party Leader in 1968, election as the party's sole MLA in 1971 for the Peace River District (Spirit Fairview), and subsequent re-election until his death in an airplane crash in the fall of 1984.

As Leeson sympathetically shows, Grant Notley personified the struggle to shift the party's leadership away from the old doctrinaire populists (who split briefly from the new NDP in 1961 to form the Woodsworth-Irvine Fellowship) and from the new trade union bureaucrats under Neil Reimer's leadership in the 1960s. In the course of this struggle, as Leeson admits, electoral popularity, not questions of principle, informed much of Notley's behaviour.

Not until he was elected in the 1970s did Notley begin to define a policy platform. The outlines of Notley's social democracy in fact can be briefly reduced to the positive role the state can play in regulating a mixed economy as focused on such Alberta issues as shaping the oil boom in the long term interests of provincial development. Though, as Leeson proudly asserts, Notley could act the role of the Canadian statesman when he opposed the Lougheed government's oil strike against the National Energy Program.

In reality, while Notley illustrates the emergence of a Parliamentary state capitalist politics, the real focus of Leeson's biography is on the nature of electoral support for Albertan social democracy. Here Grant Notley, as Leeson admits, was a voice from the past, someone who may have revived the party's fortunes but who could not embody the future.

Notley, perhaps because of his rural middle-class past, shied away from urban, trade union social democracy. In part, it was because he disagreed with Reimer's confronta-

tional style. It was also because Notley believed rural seats were politically more stable than urban ones. Notley's beliefs led him, then, to emphasize a rural small town electoral strategy that was increasingly out of touch with voting reality.

Instead of rebuilding the old progressive coalition, provincial elections, particularly after the 1982 recession, revealed that it was working class, trade union voters who made up the bulk of party electoral support. This political tendency revealed itself dramatically in the mid 1980s when virtually all of Edmonton's seats were captured by the NDP.

While Leeson's study of Notley is meant as a personal monument to the memory of the man who renewed Albertan social democracy (Leeson was one of Notley's first legislative assistants), in broader terms what is perhaps more important is the struggle revealed within the party over its class orientation.

Should Canadian social democracy continue to focus on the CCF's hybrid class electoral strategy of rural populism, urban middle class reformers, and working class trade unionists? Or should it develop a new hybrid class orientation focused on the urban milieu of middle class reformers, trade union bureaucrats, and workers?

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S.F. Wise, *God's Peculiar Peoples: Essays on Political Culture in Nineteenth Century Canada*, ed. A.B. McKillop and Paul Romney (Ottawa: Carleton University Press 1993).

There is perhaps no area of Canadian history more insulated from a left reading than the nineteenth-century pre-Confederation years, especially if one addresses the centrally-important development of Upper Canada/Canada West. This is in fact odd because a good deal of early left historiography, including some of the writing of Stanley Ryerson and H. Clare Pentland, focused on this history, which includes moments of political and social insurrection, massive shifts in the structural and

institutional make-up of political economy, and formidable transformations in realms such as demography and culture. If there have been left-leaning and alternative forays into this history in recent years, including significant work by one of the editors of this volume, Paul Romney, it is nevertheless the case that the dominant interpretive tradition remain one of cranky, idiosyncratic conservatism and a blunt empiricism dismissive of "theory" and suspicious of ideas. The rebellion of 1837-38 is easily written off as a tragi-comic *putsch*, the principles of reformers and elites marginalized as little more than the superstructural wind of the obvious base of self-interest, and the acute and submerged tensions of a social order wracked by convulsions bred of class, gender, and ethnic difference written off as the comings and goings of a society on the proverbial "make."

The publication of many of S.F. Wise's writings on the political culture of nineteenth-century English Canada is worthy of note precisely because Wise is related to the trajectory of Upper Canadian studies (his essays touch down on the Maritimes as well and reach past 1867, but they are at their best when dealing with Old Ontario in the 1820-1850 years, and it is these essays that I will draw upon in this review) at the same time as he is apart from it. In his resolute focus on elites and conservative ideas, as well as his practical, if almost subconscious, conception of political culture as driven by these social strata and ideological forces, Wise fits easily, if superficially, within a dominant historiography that presents the entirety of Upper Canadian history in narrowly-defined political terms, reducing the social life of the pre-Confederation years to something of a "one-class society." In one essay, for instance, Wise states blithely, "Only when a society has come to consciousness of itself as a community, as a collectivity distinct from all others, with its unique interests and special place in the world, is it gripped by the idea of an overmastering destiny that transcends the short-term divisions of politics or class or locality." (19) Yet, looked at more substantively, Wise's writings, with their understated if unmistakable insistence that ideas be contextualized and that political culture be