

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?

Robin Wylie
University of British Columbia

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

explored, not only as intellectual traditions and linguistic texts (although this *is* important), but also as rooted in material circumstances, electoral behaviour, and the demographics of specific locales, are subversive of and challenging to much conventional Upper Canadian historiographic wisdom. Wise's essays, moreover, have always carried an almost libidinal stylistic charge into the rather monotonous aridity of an historiography unusually bland and routinized in the form and tone of its presentation. Convinced by the sermons, letters, and speeches of early Canadian Tories that words and their conveyance are acts of political and cultural importance, Wise has always offered his readers interpretations and evidence in a language of artful argument.

The twelve essays gathered together in this anthology establish the importance of the principles and politics of Upper Canadian conservatism. Wise explores individuals such as Christopher Hagerman and John Macaulay, delves into the sermons of John Strachan and others, traces the evolution of colonial attitudes toward the republic to the south, and presents invaluable assessments of the local and shifting contours of Tory factionalism as it was lived out on the hustings and in various electoral campaigns in the 1820s and 1830s. If one gets almost no sense of the role of artisans and labourers, women and aboriginal peoples, in Wise's depiction of the making of political culture, it is nevertheless the case that the doctrines and realignments of rhetoric associated with Upper Canadian conservatism are nowhere more deftly addressed than in essays with titles such as "God's Peculiar Peoples," "Tory Factionalism," and "Sermon Literature and Canadian Intellectual History." When Wise attempts to extend his reach beyond 1867, out of Old Ontario, and into more explicit theoretical realms, as in his "Reflections on the Hartz Thesis," he is sometimes insightful. But, more often than not, he overstays his welcome in a house of analysis where his empirical grasp of specific sources loosens and he retreats into the shadows of generalization and abstraction. The meanings of "loyalty" change, to be sure, but addressing them in the particularities of the 1830s is, for Wise, at least, more fruitful than meandering around

in analytic postures that end with gestures toward the ubiquity of "contradiction, paradox, and complexity." (211)

There is a great need for a new reading of Upper Canadian society. Such a reading will build on the recent social histories addressing aspects of state formation and social structure. It will necessarily address the elites and their ideas and institutions, but it will do so in ways more attentive to those marginalized socioeconomic groupings the Upper Canadian historiographic mainstream now largely ignores. Such a project will benefit greatly from a critical engagement with Wise's essays. Perhaps, when this new writing is available, Wise, like John Strachan, might look back at his writing of decades ago and think, "found it very inferior to what I expected." (17) But I doubt it.

Bryan D. Palmer
Queen's University

Kathryn Grover (ed.), *Hard At Play: Leisure in America 1840-1940* (Amherst and Rochester, New York: The University of Massachusetts Press and The Strong Museum 1992).

With a genial wish that "readers find as much pleasure in these essays as the authors have found in their quest to understand American play," editor of the book and former editor and director of publications at the Strong Museum, Kathryn Grover, introduces and sets the mood for a reader's romp through *Hard At Play*. A collection of ten essays by academics, independent researchers, and museum directors gleaned from eighty papers presented in 1987 at the Strong Museum, the book examines and stakes claim to the historical significance of selected aspects of American leisure and play in the hundred years prior to World War II.

Adorned with numerous photographs, reprints from *Harper's Weekly*, cartoons, maps and charts, the work at times resembles a children's picture book, which adds to the sense of fun and considerably enhances the reading of the text. But, in this case, appear-