



Recent Publications and Documents

ELECTION CANADA by Derek Black, Broadmoor Press, Sackville, New Brunswick, 1982, 163 p.

Everyone, or so it seems, wants to write a book. Unfortunately not every budding author can find a publisher, at least not among the major commercial publishing houses. As a result, some good manuscripts are left unpublished while in other cases authors entrust their work to small publishers who may be less critical or have fewer resources to check material submitted. The latter appears to be the case for this book.

Despite its title the book is not about elections as much as Prime Ministers. The first fifty pages are devoted to information, in point form, about every Canadian Prime Minister since Confederation. The usual facts such as date of birth, education, occupation, marriage, military service and previous political experience is augmented by a few unusual headings such as the publications of each Prime Minister. This initiative, like the book as a whole, was a good idea but was not researched carefully enough to make much sense. For example, why list Lester Pearson's memoirs but not those of John Diefenbaker?

The second chapter consists of maps showing the distribution of seats after all federal elections since 1967. Provincial governments at the time of the elections are also listed. Another section of the book, lists the Premiers of all provinces since they joined Confederation. Provincial election results since 1967 are given in chapter 4.

The most interesting parts of this book are chapter 5 which gives some "quotable quotes" attributed to each Prime Minister and chapter 6 entitled "Comparative Statistical Data". The latter is really a gold mine for trivia buffs. It lists such things as the oldest Prime Minister when taking office, which Prime Ministers had sons who became Members of Parliament and numerous other odd bits of Canadiana.

One cannot become very enthusiastic about this book because of the incredible

number of mistakes both minor and major. The names of Sir John A. Macdonald (not MacDonald), Alexander Mackenzie (not MacKenzie) and William Lyon Mackenzie (not MacKenzie) King are misspelled throughout. Laurier's given name is Wilfrid (not Wilfred). There are factual mistakes too. Members are appointed (not elected) to the Privy Council and the Imperial Privy Council. The definitions in the Glossary, (most of which are not even used in the Book) are unclear to say the least and a few, like private bill, are simply wrong.

The book contains no date of publication but the title leads one to believe it was published in 1982 and much of the information is updated to that year. So why is Tommy Douglas still listed as sitting in the House of Commons (p. 87) when he retired in 1979? Why is Pierre Trudeau listed as having only two children (p. 116)? In fact nearly every page has some typographical, spelling or factual error!

The author wished to make Canadians more knowledgeable of their political heritage and more appreciative of those who have held political office in Canada. That is a noble, although difficult objective. Surely more harm than good would be done by a wide diffusion of such careless or mistaken information.

The Editor

JULES LÉGER, GOVERNOR GENERAL OF CANADA, 1974-1979: A SELECTION OF HIS WRITINGS ON CANADA by Jacques Monet s.j. (ed.), Montréal, Les Éditions La Presse, 1982, 237 p

Of all the parts of our constitution, the Crown is the least written about and the least well-understood. The Crown exists in two worlds: the metaphysical world of constitutional law where it as sovereign summons and dissolves Parliaments, chooses Prime Ministers, issues orders and regulations, assents to legislation, whose ser-

vants cabinet ministers are — in theory the most powerful post in the country — and the real world of the Governor General, sequestered in Rideau Hall, doing the government's bidding, and performing a narrow, dignified, ceremonial role as head of state.

Jules Léger, Governor General from 1974 to 1979, was the fourth Canadian appointed to the post. This book includes excerpts from his speeches and an extended essay he wrote after leaving the post reflecting on the position, and his experiences as incumbent. As he is the only recent Governor General to have written extensively about the position, the book is a unique and valuable addition to knowledge about Canadian government.

The introductory essay by Jacques Monet gives a succinct description of the position, and of Jules Léger's background and distinguished career in the public service and diplomatic corps. Like many outstanding Canadians his background was modest — his father was a shopkeeper in rural Quebec — but he rose to the highest position in the country. Here, perhaps, is an answer to one of the paradoxes of Canadian politics: our parliamentary system is derived from a British original based on an established monarchy and nobility in a stratified and deferential society, but Canadian politics and society place little significance on rank or title. Jules Léger was immensely able. He had inner resources of dignity and humanity, and he knew and loved the variety, strengths and quiddities of Canada. He was a natural, not a hereditary, aristocrat, whose abilities were recognized even in a country whose egalitarianism often extends to the point of willfully denying greatness in living citizens. This book is testimony to the qualities he brought to the office of head of state in Canada.

Many of the excerpts from Jules Léger's speeches in this book are written in the exalted, hortatory, style of secular proselytizing appropriate to the office of Gov-

ernor General; they express a vision of national unity, progress, diversity, and quality. They reflect what he believed and stood for, and offer a sense of the excellence possible that is often lacking in our politics. They are splendid examples of this kind of stately writing in both French and English and could be quoted with profit on public occasions. One speech, on "The Decisive Influence of the Press", is written in a less lofty style. I found it an interesting and perceptive discussion of an important and not well understood aspect of modern politics.

The third section, Jules Léger's reflections on the position and his tenure, is useful: we learn that he deliberated before dissolving Parliament in 1974; we learn a little about his meetings as Governor General on a regular basis with the Prime Minister and less frequently with other politicians including the Leader of the Opposition; and we learn some of the details of his duties and the limits of his autonomy. He proposes a longer term, eight years, for a Governor General, and makes a good case for the value of state visits abroad by the Governor General, as opposed to visits by politicians. He also suggests that the Gov-



Jules Léger (Karsh, Ottawa)

ernor General might become chairman of a revamped Senate, and might preside over meetings of the Privy Council when Orders-in-Council are actually signed. Neither of these changes is likely to happen. The Gov-

ernor General is part of the dignified, not the efficient, side of our constitution structure, and whatever his private role is, his public role will be ceremonial.

Jules Léger's reflections are extremely discreet. I wish they had more flesh and blood. One can hope that someday a Governor General will be as indiscreet a diarist as Mackenzie King was as Prime Minister. In the meantime, this is as close to an insider's portrait of the position as we are likely to get.

The stroke that Governor General Léger suffered early in his term obviously limited what he could make of the position. The speeches in this book came largely from his first few months in office, the reflections from after its conclusion. They are the best writing we have from, and about, the position. The French and English texts are of comparable quality except for his reflections on the office, where I found the French version preferable.

C.E.S. Franks

Associate Professor
Department of Political Studies
Queen's University
Kingston