

# Parliamentary Bookshelf: Reviews

**Remaining Loyal: Social Democracy in Quebec and Saskatchewan, by David McGrane, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal & Kingston, 373p.**

David McGrane has written an ambitious book about social democracy in Saskatchewan and Quebec. His thesis is that the CCF-NDP and PQ governments were social democratic in a traditional sense under premiers such as Tommy Douglas and Allan Blakeney in Saskatchewan, as well as René Lévesque and Jacques Parizeau in Quebec. McGrane believes that later governments evolved into third way social democracy under other premiers, including Roy Romanow and Lorne Calvert in Saskatchewan and Bernard Landry and Pauline Marois in Quebec.

An associate professor of political studies at St. Thomas More College at the University of Saskatchewan, McGrane creates a complex template in order to build his thesis. He defines the ideologies that comprise traditional social democracy and the third way and compares them to his definition of neo-liberalism. McGrane says that social democracy in both of its guises is primarily concerned with the economic inequality inherent in unfettered capitalism, while neo-liberalism frets about the welfare state and excessive public intervention in the economy. Ontario's Mike Harris, for example, fit into a neo-liberal mould when he cut taxes, privatized public organizations, introduced workfare and cut welfare rates upon his election as premier.

McGrane says that traditional social democrats focused on universal social programs and used progressive income taxes and royalty revenue from resources to help pay for them. Universal public health care in Canada, for example, was pioneered by the CCF in Saskatchewan in 1962. The Douglas government also set up Crown corporations for automobile insurance, telephones, electricity and gas distribution. Premier Allan Blakeney moved the public sector aggressively into resource development, mainly through joint ventures involving Crown corporations and private business partners. Blakeney consciously used revenues from Crown corporations, as well as increased resource rents, to pay for programs such as a provincial pharmacare plan and a children's dental program in schools.



The PQ under Lévesque created several new public enterprises and had the Caisse de dépôt, which manages public pension plans in Quebec, buy shares in francophone businesses to help them expand and consolidate their operations. Quebec's universal day care program, easily the most generous in Canada, was launched in 1997 by Pauline Marois, then a PQ cabinet minister.

McGrane says that in the 1990s and beyond NDP and PQ governments were forced by developments such as globalization and free trade agreements to shift toward the right, narrowing the political spectrum. He says that these third way social democrats were more comfortable with market capitalism and the private sector than their predecessors. They also reduced

taxes, regulation and oversight, and targeted some social programs rather than adhering to universality. He argues, however, that NDP and PQ leaders remained champions of the core tenets of social democracy. McGrane says that when those politicians are compared to premiers such as Ralph Klein and Mike Harris, the differences outweigh the overlaps.

It seems a stretch, however, to include people such as Lucien Bouchard in the social democratic tent. Bouchard had served in Brian Mulroney's government prior to launching the Bloc Québécois and later moving home to become the premier. McGrane argues, rather weakly I think, that Bouchard "was forced to cooperate with a critical mass of social democratic ministers left over from the Parizeau era." In fact, one must also ask if the PQ throughout its history has been primarily a separatist or a social democratic party. McGrane says the PQ has been both but I believe that separatism usually trumped social democracy.

I salute McGrane's scholarly reach but he does use a complex structure which makes for a dense book. There is also a lot of repetition including identical phrases reoccurring in various chapters. These weaknesses could have been overcome by good editing but they were missed. Still, McGrane gives us much to think about and he shows that social democracy has contributed much to the body politic and the public good in Saskatchewan, Quebec and Canada.

#### Dennis Gruending

Ottawa-based author, blogger and former Member of Parliament from Saskatchewan

**Brave New Canada: Meeting the Challenge of a Changing World, by Derek H. Burney and Fen Osler Hampson, McGill-Queen's University Press, Canada, 2014, 218pp.**

Participating in international events, ratifying multilateral treaties, working on economic development, and responding to global issues and crises – all of these elements are included in a country's foreign policy. It is not an easy task to balance positive and negative outcomes of each initiative and it is even more difficult to clearly take into account some of the benefits of diplomacy. As the world becomes more intertwined, it is harder to fully comprehend the extent to which an action or a partnership can help a country's economic growth and stability in the long-term. As a medium-sized country, Canada used to rely on its presence in international organizations as a means to actively influence international affairs.

Nevertheless, since the election of Prime Minister Stephen Harper's Conservatives, the government has been less oriented towards a liberal and multilateral approach and more towards a case-by-case approach influenced by Canada's values and interests.

*Brave New Canada: Meeting the Challenge of a Changing World* is inspired by the assertive and economically-driven position of Harper's foreign policy. Like the current government, the authors of the book stress the need to link economic agreements with security concerns. The merging of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) with the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) in 2013 demonstrates this change in mentality. Targeting a non-expert audience interested in international politics, each chapter of the book provides an overview of the theme discussed before moving into in-depth analysis. The book is designed to produce reactions and not to indicate in detail what changes have to be implemented in our foreign policy. The book supports the transition from liberal institutionalism to economic diplomacy, in which Canada establishes relations with countries that can best serve its economic interests. Hence, as power is gradually shifting towards Asia, Canada must shape its political and economic policy in order to gain from the continent's economic development.

Both authors are very knowledgeable about Canada's international interests. Burney is a former Canadian ambassador to Washington and a former chief of staff to Brian Mulroney. Additionally, he handled the transition of governments for Stephen Harper in 2006. Hampson teaches international affairs at Carleton University and is the director of Global Security for the Centre for International Governance Innovation in Waterloo. Moreover, he is an expert on Canadian foreign policy. In 2012, they co-wrote the report *Winning in a Changing World*, which was later delivered to the prime minister. *Brave New Canada: Meeting the Challenge of a Changing World* seems to be the continuation of this report, as it further addresses the challenges faced by Canada to safeguard its international position as a competitive and wealthy country.

Drawing on a comprehensive examination of recent political events and an exploration of the country's memberships in international organizations, the authors brilliantly build up their argument. In addition to analyzing how the contemporary role of international organizations and the private sector will figure into Canada's future, the text also examines



current economic relations between Canada and the rest of the world, predominantly the United States. It offers a critical assessment of the need to establish stronger relationships with other, sometimes less conventional, countries. One chapter of the book is dedicated to summarizing the current relationships that Canada has with some of these countries and the ways that Canada could further develop its economic relationship with each country. Nevertheless, the authors could have pointed out more precisely initiatives or policies which would allow Canada to build comprehensive economic and diplomatic partnerships. For example, many foreign affairs experts argue that even after signing the Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (FIPA) with China in September 2014, Canada still needs to focus more on bilateral diplomatic relations which have become strained or deteriorated in the past decade.

When Burney and Hampson mention that “the government will have to decide whether it wants to ‘walk the talk’ on diversification and whether it seriously intends to broaden economic ties beyond traditional but sagging markets like the US and the EU” (p.49), the tone is confident, bold and compelling. The authors contend that Canada has to engage more eagerly with emerging markets, mainly Asia, but also Latin America and Europe. The arguments brought forward by the authors are based on a careful evaluation of multidimensional aspects of complex international dynamics. Furthermore, the authors suggest that the only way to remain influential through participation in international organizations is by carefully choosing which ones best align with the country’s interests. In brief, the analysis results in the recommendation of the “*Third Option with Legs*.” It is a combination of the first option, a closer relationship with the United States, and the second option, a diversification of our economy away from the United States to better suit Canadian interests. The “*Third Option with Legs*” means staying close to our southern neighbor while reaching out to new economies and increasing our participation in international initiatives which reflect Canada’s interests and values.

*Brave New Canada: Meeting the Challenge of a Changing World* presents well-written analysis and thoughtful examination of the key factors which influence the foreign policy of Canada. The book distinguishes itself by providing information on various aspects of the socioeconomic reality of Canada and its position internationally. Nonetheless, this book is written to support the point of view of the current government. Although the authors’ recommendations were reached after a careful review of Canada’s political standing on topics such as international trade, security, human rights and development, the book’s purpose is primarily to produce reactions among the readers and to defend the new strategic position of Canadian foreign policy to efficiently support our economic growth and development.

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