

# Recent Publications

**"SO, WHAT ARE THE BOYS SAYING?": AN INSIDE LOOK AT BRIAN MULRONEY IN POWER, Michel Gratton, McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., Toronto, 1987, 242p.; FRIENDS IN HIGH PLACES, Claire Hoy, Key Porter Books, Toronto, 1987, 357p.; THE INSIDERS: GOVERNMENT, BUSINESS & THE LOBBYISTS, John Sawatsky, Douglas Gibson/McClelland & Stewart, Toronto, 1987, 358p.**

In racy prose laced with wit Michel Gratton chronicles his 32-month struggle to help Prime Minister Mulroney get a monkey off his back. The monkey: a craving for press approval and an obsession with polls. When Gratton gave up the post of Press Secretary in the PMO in March 1987 he returned to writing columns for *Le Droit*. If this book accurately reflects his talents, he'll give readers the right measure of cynicism and fairness many pundits lack.

Gratton deftly guides readers through bumbles and stumbles tracing "the fastest and most furious fall from grace any government in this country has ever known." Its peak was on election night September 4, 1984, when the P.M. asked "OK, we've won. What do we do now?" Its nadir came on December 5, 1986 when Claire Hoy of the *Toronto Sun* asked Mr. Mulroney at a press conference whether it bothered him that some were calling him "Lyin' Brian."

The author rejoices that Mr. Mulroney swiftly "clothes-lined" Hoy with the comment "I think you are going to find that, in the long run, people who read bitter personal attacks ... daily ... usually find the author more offensive than the target."

According to Gratton the P.M.'s constantly recurring question "So, what are the boys saying?" began as a routine inquiry, but ended as an epitaph. He

regrets he did not just once counter with "It doesn't matter Sweet Fanny Adams what the boys are saying. Get on with the job."

Gratton's book, if heeded, might help the Prime Minister earn the respect he needs in order to succeed at the nation's most difficult job. He plainly has Gratton's respect – whether he is liked or not is of no moment in the author's view.

Like John Diefenbaker in 1958 Mr. Mulroney has been hampered by his lopsided election victory. Instead of a lean and hungry fighter, claws sharpened by constant strife, the government became a muscle-bound giant, intent on preserving its overweening strength. It delayed application of unpopular, unpalatable economic remedies until after its first year. By then the honeymoon was fading and the government had lost its nerve. Since there was but a weak opposition the press quickly became the enemy, tormenting and taunting until acclaim turned to disdain, the polls took charge and politics supplanted policy as the driving force in the Langevin Block.

★★★★★

After reading Michel Gratton's opinion that "Hoy had been hard on Mulroney from the day he arrived in Ottawa", it's no surprise that *Friends in*

*High Places* is unfriendly. Its spleen may tire readers who do not enjoy incessant pursuit of a quarry.

Claire Hoy's account of the first three Mulroney years in office moves along like a news ticker through a welter of statistics, comments or quotations from critics or friends of the P.M. A sneer is never far below the surface. For example:

"Mulroney grew up to be a baritone, and after the Tories weren't buying his song and dance at the 1976 leadership convention, Hanna Mining Company of Cleveland, Ohio, asked him to come and sing the praises of their Canadian affiliate, the Iron Ore Company of Canada. In return, they offered to make him a millionaire and gave him a mansion in Westmount, membership in the best clubs, a fishing camp in Labrador, and four box seats directly behind the Montreal Canadiens' bench at the Forum. He did well by them, too. He ended labour strife and turned a profit, and when it came to a choice between sending dividends south of the border or propping up the mine at Schefferville, Mulroney did right by his American masters – he closed the town."

One wonders how discerning columnists are. On January 29, 1987, accompanying the P.M. on an African

political safari, reporter Hoy noticed that Mr. Mulroney paid scant attention to the majesty of Victoria Falls. He approached no closer than 300 yards, apparently anxious to "rush off to catch his charter airplane back to Harare for yet another hotel meeting." Yet, as Gratton explains, the Prime Minister was, at the time, "sick as a dog, running a temperature and barely able to stay on his feet." The former Press Secretary commented "none of the media were to find out, otherwise it would become the day's story."

*Friends in High Places* is a fast-moving record of events and political developments seasoned, if not soured, by the acerbic views of a practiced observer. The general reader may find it easy to put down but not so the political student.

★★★★★

The Sawatsky book is the weightiest of the three reviewed here but not heavy. Tightly written, relying on facts

to speak for themselves and salted with surprising insights into the motives and methods of people with power, it deserves to do well.

Sawatsky fashions painstaking research, some of it, I suspect, provided by university students, into a compelling story of two skilled ex-ministerial aides who made themselves and their advice indispensable to corporate leaders seeking the ear of government. Bill Lee and Bill Neville, their wits and persuasive powers honed in the high-pressure atmosphere of ministers' offices, established Executive Consultants Ltd. Dispensing advice on how to deal with government, who to see and how to approach them, it became a lucrative enterprise with a clutch of business clients paying monthly retainers. ECL did not open doors; it steered business executives towards the right ones and primed them with facts.

Neville later became the moving spirit of Public Affairs International which grew and prospered along with small firms set up by others trained in the hard school of politics. Some, notably Government Consultants International founded by former Newfoundland premier Frank Moores, are unblushing lobbyists. They not only open doors but unabashedly plead the client's cause. And why not?

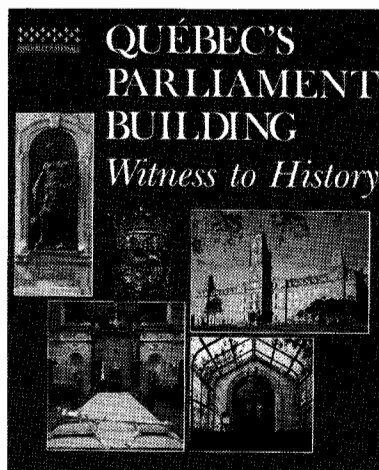
Sawatsky's is far more than a dry account of the rise of government consultants on the Ottawa power scene. He follows them into the backrooms of leadership conventions and the campaign cockpits of prime ministers. Messrs Trudeau, Turner and Mulroney may not relish his evidence of fumbles, flip-flops and pettiness. The book fairly reflects the warps of the political game and the warts of the players.

★★★★★

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**QUEBEC'S PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS: WITNESS TO HISTORY, Luc Noppen and Gaston Deschênes, Les Publications du Québec, Montreal, 1986, 204 pp.**

Who can visit parliament buildings and not be impressed by the solemnity of the place, as though the rooms, the walls, the corridors, even the chairs, breathed history? Some famous political figure comes into your mind — you imagine him strolling through the very halls where you yourself are walking; in the chamber the guide points out his seat and you hear his voice raised in debate. And the irreverence with which we sometimes regard politicians is, for the moment, forgotten. The physical space where the political history of a nation has been made has a definite symbolic dimension; this makes such sites, both for their own citizens and for tourists, centres of pilgrimage, political



Pantheons. The architecture and ornamentation of parliament buildings illustrate the spirit of their people. This reviewer has had the privilege of visiting a good many legislatures, in Canada (the federal Parliament and the legislative assemblies in Quebec City, Toronto, Fredericton and Winnipeg), in Europe (the French National Assembly and Senate, the headquarters of the Belgian Conseil de la Communauté française) and in Africa (Senegal, Mali, Ivory Coast, Cameroon); and more than any other national monument, parliament buildings are the concrete and visible symbol of a community.

Because of this they are designed, built, decorated, adapted, and preserved from the ravages of time by the best architects, artists and master craftsmen their society has to offer. They are part of the national heritage, perhaps even its crowning glory.