

Recent Publications

THE BROADVIEW BOOK OF CANADIAN PARLIAMENTARY ANECDOTES, Marc Bosc, Broadview Press, Peterborough, 1988, 343 p.

Marc Bosc is a Procedural Clerk with the House of Commons' Journals Directorate. His book is one of a series of three collections of anecdotes published by Broadview Press: the other two are about the Middle Ages and about Canada in general. Anthologies of anecdotes constitute a very specialized literary genre, and to succeed they have to meet certain criteria. As Mr. Bosc explains, an anecdote is the account of an incident or event that is interesting, funny, or striking in itself. It is more likely to reveal something immediate about an individual than to present an in-depth personality analysis; it might also be said that the anecdote's form makes the incident reported seem trivial or without real importance. Be that as it may, the teller of anecdotes can usually count on being a popular success.

Politicians on the whole lend themselves particularly well to being anecdotalized. Their visibility, their idiosyncrasies, the curiosity of the media, all make them ideal targets. Canada's politicians are no exception. As Mr. Bosc's book makes abundantly clear, our parliamentarians are neither drab nor conventional: on the contrary! Their quips, their escapades, their obsessions, both in the House and outside it, make hilarious reading.

Mr. Bosc has chosen to give us his personal favourites, in chronological order, from Confederation to the present day (the latter including only former parliamentarians who are no longer active in politics). Memoirs and biographies were the main sources. And as could have been expected, Prime Ministers are the subject of more anecdotes than anyone else.

This is an entertaining book, and one that humanizes a great many Canadian political figures.

Serge Pelletier
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THE HAPPY WARRIOR: POLITICAL MEMOIRS, Donald C. MacDonald, Fitzhenry & Whiteside, Markham, 1988, 440 p.

When I learned that Don MacDonald was writing his memoirs I looked forward to their publication with great anticipation. As someone who has followed his career with interest and admiration I expected an anecdotal, clear, no-nonsense and captivating book. I was not disappointed.

From the opening recollections of his early years to the present day, the reader is a full partner in these memoirs. The author takes us from his humble and life-shaping beginnings, his years as a teacher, journalist, broadcaster, political

organizer, politician and eventually leader of the Ontario CCF/NDP.

One of the more interesting aspects of these memoirs (and there are many) is how MacDonald arrived at his decision to join the then CCF, forerunner of the NDP. It was by no means a doctrinaire decision. Thanks to these memoirs it can be safely said that no less than a conversation with retired Conservative Prime Minister R.B. Bennett contributed to MacDonald's decision to join the CCF, later the NDP which he led from 1953 to 1970.

For many years he was literally a "one-man-band" as leader, doing his own research and typing his own press releases on that "faithful 1938 Underwood". In those years facing the Tory dynasty and a sometimes complacent Liberal opposition, he worked tirelessly to build the CCF/NDP into an active and credible political force in Ontario. During those "wilderness years" election campaigns there was no campaign bus or plane just his car and interested reporters who tagged along on the campaign trail.

The mountains and valleys which any political leader faces are relayed clearly by MacDonald to the reader as if they happened yesterday. The reader has a front row – or front bench – seat to issues and personalities in Ontario politics. This includes the battle for accessible and universal health care; the contentious separate school funding issue; a