



## Recent Publications

*Richard Hatfield: Power and Disobedience* by Michael Cormier and Achille Michaud, translated by Daphne Ponder, Goose Lane Editions, 1992, 253 pages.

I first saw Richard Hatfield in the summer of 1957. He was then assistant to the new Minister of Trade and Commerce, Gordon Churchill, whose parliamentary office was next to mine. I saw very little of the good-looking young New Brunswicker, except when he put out the silver service for the messengers to return to the parliamentary restaurant after his afternoon tea. (Perhaps an early indicator of the dilettante). He did not exude the surprised delight that beamed from many Ottawa-based Tories after the great breakthrough of the June 1957 election.

In his last months, the long-time premier, national statesman, and enigmatic iconoclast was again my next door neighbour on the Senatorial floor of the East Block. As is typical of political veterans, we sometimes talked of battles lost and won. We also swapped recipes for baked beans. Once he came back from Fredericton with all the ingredients for his recipe, which I tried and found almost as good as mine. This small gesture of kindly sensitivity was a part of his charm.

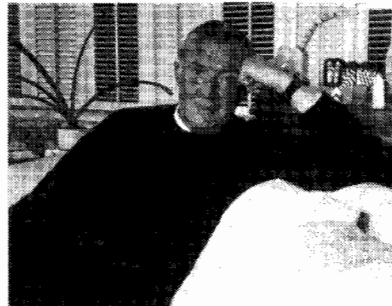
Through the years, I often saw him at political, public and university gatherings. In the elections of 1970 and 1982, I accepted his invita-

tions to campaign in a New Brunswick election, although I thought it perhaps presumptuous for a Prince Edward Islander. In fact, I enjoyed it immensely, especially the North Shore meetings.

Despite the long years of acquaintance, I could not claim to have known him well. Richard Hatfield was an interesting person (although sometimes his speeches were not).

### RICHARD HATFIELD

POWER AND DISOBEDIENCE



Michel Cormier & Achille Michaud

Often indeed, he could be fascinating, but always he was opaque. No matter how closely one viewed him, one felt that he was still being seen through a glass darkly.

In this highly readable book, the authors, correspondents Michel Cormier and Achille Michaud, do well in their analysis of a complex and sometimes contradictory char-

acter. We see Hatfield the loner remaining aloof from most of his colleagues. He was moved by symbols, but bored by details. Often languid and underactivated, he nevertheless led the Dalhousie University class in criminal law outshining the brilliant and ambitious John Crosbie. To some of his political associates, Hatfield was a "dandy" and a "prima donna," but it is clear that while he was an unorthodox premier, he was by no means a weakling leader. In fact, he was very much in charge of the New Brunswick government every day of the year, whether he himself was in the province, or in more exotic climes.

On the whole, this is an interesting and well-written book. But there are lapses. The chapter on the Atkinson affair is both too long and too vague. There are some factual errors. For instance, if the seven-year-old Hatfield was presented to R.B. Bennett at a Conservative Convention, it was in Ottawa, not Winnipeg (p. 25). But the authors do well when they discuss Hatfield's relations with Acadians. For years in New Brunswick, being Acadian was synonymous with being Grit. The correlation of ethnic and partisan lines is generally unfortunate in a multi-ethnic democracy. Whatever Hatfield was or was not, did or did not, his capacity to reach out to the Acadian population of his province entitles him to the highest accolades of historians. He brought about a new and better province. His same ecumenical values were exercised in the interest of his country as well as

his province, and both are better for it.

Inevitably, this biography ends on a tragic note. The 1987 New Brunswick election was an unmitigated disaster. Not since Walter M. Lea took every seat in the thirty member P.E.I. legislature in 1935 had there been a total electoral sweep in Canada.

It is always more difficult to explain elections than to predict them. The authors suggest that there was a blending of Hatfield's personal and political life. As I read about the identification of the man and the position, I could not but think of Louis XIV's dictum, "L'état c'est moi." It may be that innuendos, smears, and uncertainties about his lifestyle brought on the terrible political annihilation of 1987. But was there not more to it than that?

Richard Hatfield was anything but a hypocrite or a phoney. Nor were New Brunswickers the greatest prudes on earth. As the book reports, his fellow citizens seemed proud that he could get to Montmartre without asking the way. Other political leaders seem to get a way with personal idiosyncrasies. Was the big failure solely that of the man, or was it also that of the party?

Of course, Hatfield ran one election too many. Here he was unlike Brian Mulroney who, despite those about him counselling otherwise, chose the wiser course for his party's and his own sake.

As the authors put it, "The remaining years of his government read like the log of a sinking ship." (p. 213) "The Conservatives went into the election like lemmings headed for the sea." (p. 222) No matter who the leader, a political party is more than a leader. Did no one notice that it is generally dangerous to delay an election too long? Was there no concern about the delay in

ratifying Meech, of which Hatfield was an ardent supporter?

This book will prompt further and deep reflections on the man and the Hatfield era. It merits careful study and reflection.

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*Making Government Work, Public Policy Forum, Ottawa, June 23, 1993, 17 pages.*

On June 23, 1993 two days before a new Prime Minister was sworn into office the Public Policy Forum which describes itself as a "non-partisan organization dedicated to excellence in the way Canada is governed." issued a short paper entitled *Making Government Work*. The Forum was established in 1987 to promote better relations between the private and public sectors and to identify measures to improve the functioning of government. The Forum is sponsored by over 90 private sector organizations representing a broad range of private sector activities as well as by the governments of Canada, British Columbia and Ontario.

The Steering Committee for this project consisted of thirty individuals ranging from the President and CEO of The Royal Bank of Canada to a former lobbyist now Chief of Staff to Prime Minister Campbell. Small wonder the project elicited support from some 21 organizations contributing \$100,000 in cash or services for round table discussions in various cities (none of which seems to have resulted in any published records) to consider the rea-

sons Canadians have lost faith in their institutions and their politicians.

The best part of the report is the opening sentence, born perhaps out of sober experience by so many Forum members who sided with the YES committee in the recent Canadian constitutional wars. "We do not believe that good process automatically guarantees sound public policy, but we are sure that sound policy is seldom the result of bad process."

The twenty-four recommendations that follow are grouped into several areas - better public participation, increased public-private sector co-operation, opening up the budget process, parliamentary reform, cultural change in the public service and public awareness. Unfortunately there is little meat on the bones. The report acknowledges that most of its suggestions have been proposed by various governments, parliamentary committees and Royal Commissions in recent years thus inferring there is little need for elaboration. The real message that comes through this terse report is that members of the Forum are all busy people and do not have time to read long studies. Anyone who is anyone in this country knows the problems so why waste valuable time explaining things to the uninitiated.

In terms of parliamentary reform the Forum calls for less party discipline, greater division of chairmanships between government and opposition, establishing a roster system for Ministerial attendance at Question Period and advance notice of questions. The Forum also calls for legislation to be referred to committee before the House has given approval in principle and for creation of a Standing Committee of the House on the Public Service as well as establishment of a mechanism for