



Parliamentary Book Shelf

Conservatism in Canada, edited by James Farney and David Rayside, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2013, 400 pp.

Following three consecutive Liberal Party majority victories in 1993, 1997, and 2000, there was a sense among many that the Liberal domination of Canadian politics might be indefinite. Sure, Jean Chrétien may not have been beloved exactly, but when his superstar Finance Minister Paul Martin inevitably took over the party's leadership, its majority would only expand.

So went the narrative in the aftermath of the 2000 election in which the Liberals, after two terms in government, picked up seats, securing yet another victory against a divided Right without breaking a sweat. The dread this inspired on the part of Canadian conservatives was perhaps best captured in a 2001 book written by two rightists entitled *Gritlock: Are the Liberals in Forever?* It was a serious question.

Yet by 2004, the Liberals found themselves rocked by the Sponsorship scandal, while the once seemingly intractable divisions which separated the Canadian Alliance and the Progressive Conservatives had been resolved in the form of a new Conservative Party of Canada. Led by Stephen Harper, it reduced the Liberals to a minority in the 2004, won its own minority in 2006, and increased its seat counts in 2008 and 2011 – winning a long-coveted majority

mandate in the latter election.

While these developments provoked a great deal of media commentary, a comprehensive scholarly study of the rise of both small “c” and big “C” Canadian conservatism had proven elusive until now. *Conservatism in Canada* is a perceptive and provocative collection of essays which insightfully identifies Canadian conservatism as a multifarious, complex, and sometimes conflicting, body of ideas, values, and policy commitments, rather than treating it as a monolith.

Edited by James Farney and David Rayside, the collection skillfully explores the diverse strains of conservative ideology within both federal and provincial politics. It aims to address the roles of each branch of government and, the relationship between them, while simultaneously seeking to determine to what extent Canadian conservatives can be regarded as distinct from their American and European counterparts.

Ambitious in scope, *Conservatism in Canada* offers an in-depth discussion of both domestic economic and cultural questions, as well as foreign policy. While some of the collection's essays advance their arguments more persuasively than others, nearly all of the contributions prove to be highly engaging, scrupulously balanced, and deeply revealing.

In their introduction,

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Farney and Rayside argue that conservatism is best understood as encompassing four major ideological currents: neoliberalism, moral and social traditionalism, populism, and nationalism. To what extent do these four currents find or fail to find expression in conservative political parties? The editors submit that, in the Canadian context, neoliberalism exerts a dominant role with moral and social traditionalism and populism taking a back seat, though still possessing a considerable measure of influence. Nationalism persists in efforts to construct citizenship along traditionalist lines, but the sort of feverish xenophobia

common in European and, increasingly, American conservatism is judged to be largely absent in Canada, given broad public acceptance of immigration.

Conservatism in Canada presents essays in three different sections: the first section explores the philosophical, religious, and attitudinal dimensions of Canadian conservatism, while the second and third focus on the federal Conservative Party and provincial conservatism, respectively.

The first section begins with a richly informative essay by Christopher Cochrane which analyzes public opinion and the conceptual divisions that shape and structure policy disagreements, not only between those on the Right and those on the Left, but also between different schools within conservatism. A final essay by Steve Patten is less persuasive, however. It advances the plausible claim that neoliberalism has triumphed within partisan conservatism in Canada but fails to support the claim effectively.

The Harper Conservatives have no doubt employed neoliberal rhetoric in calling for smaller government and freer markets and embraced certain neoliberal policies, such as tax cuts and free trade agreements. However, they also contributed to bailing out General Motors and Chrysler and increased corporate subsidies/corporate welfare programs, two moves widely repudiated by neoliberal purists. Moreover, some of the policies cited as evidence of the Conservatives' neoliberalism – their preference for targeted tax breaks and refusal to address climate change – bear no clear relationship to

neoliberal ideology, even by Patten's definition. Targeted tax breaks have been met with contempt in neoliberal quarters while prominent neoliberal economists have acknowledged the dangers of climate change and championed initiatives such as a Dion-like carbon shift on standard externality grounds.

For those most interested in the radical reconfiguration of party politics brought about by the creation of the Conservative Party in 2003, the second section of *Conservatism in Canada* has much to offer. An analysis of the organizational structure of the Conservative Party by Tom Flanagan, the University of Calgary political scientist who managed the 2004 Conservative campaign, is helpfully informed by an insider's perspective. Flanagan argues persuasively that the Conservative Party has become wedded to a permanent campaign model centered on national control, message discipline, and pre-writ attack ads. He sees the opposition moving in this direction as well, creating a "Darwinian world of electoral competition" driven by an "arms race logic" which threatens the ability of political parties to serve as vehicles for policy development and member representation.

Recent years have seen the development of major new conservative political parties in Quebec, Alberta, and, most notably, Saskatchewan with the right-of-centre Saskatchewan Party currently in government. *Conservatism in Canada's* final section ably addresses these developments while discussing the evolution of the more established Progressive Conservative parties, as well as provincial public opinion trends.

It opens up with an illuminating and historically grounded analysis of how differing social, religious, and economic dynamics have determined which type of conservatism takes greatest hold in a particular province. This general survey is followed by a number of pieces which discuss conservatism in individual provinces.

While each contribution in this section is laudable, a standout piece by David K. Stewart and Anthony M. Sayers pushes back strongly against conventional wisdom in challenging the widely accepted notion of Alberta as a monolithically conservative province. Making excellent use of a wealth of polling data, it convincingly establishes that Albertans are neither adamant neoliberals nor stalwart social traditionalists. Rather, their political convictions on both economic and social issues are not far off from the national centre, though they are far more sceptical of and opposed to centralized government action than citizens of any other province save for perhaps Quebec.

Conservatism in Canada concludes with the editors' contention that Canadian conservatism can ultimately be regarded as distinct from European conservatism on the basis of its greater/relative acceptance of ethno-cultural diversity, and from American conservatism on the basis of its relative secularism. In commenting on the interaction between the various ideological currents outlined in the introduction, they argue again for neoliberalism's dominance, while suggesting that conservatism's "reverence for the past," expressed primarily in its support

for “traditional norms on gender and sexuality,” is in tension with its celebration of the ever-expanding individual autonomy that has undermined these very norms. This is an interesting, but underdeveloped, claim which demands further reflection.

Wide-ranging, stimulating, and brimming with insight, this work is an excellent addition to existing scholarship on the character of Canadian conservatism.

Mathew Giroux

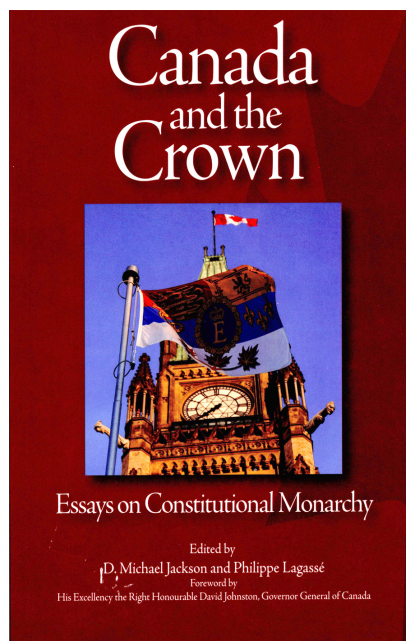
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Canada and the Crown: Essays on Constitutional Monarchy, edited by D. Michael Jackson and Philippe Lagassé, Institute of Intergovernmental Relations, Montreal, 2013, 312 pp.

and

The Crown and Canadian Federalism, by D. Michael Jackson, Dundurn, Toronto, 2013, 336 pp.

The Diamond Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth, celebrated in 2012, provided monarchists and constitutionalists alike with an opportunity to re-examine the significance and role of the Crown as a part of Canada’s identity and government in the 21st century. The task was not without its challenges. For many, there is something curious about having the person who is Queen of the United Kingdom as Canada’s Sovereign as well as the head of state of more than a dozen other realms of the Commonwealth. The fact that Elizabeth II is personally respected, admired and even revered, for her sense of duty and near faultless service over many years is not really



relevant to those who question the value of the Crown as an undemocratic institution and a pointed reminder of our colonial past. For others, however, the Queen’s long reign represents the best of a modern monarchy; its stability, continuity and almost mystical prestige provide a counterpoint to the leadership of government that, at its worst, is often seen as too partisan and divisive.

Explaining and defending the Crown in Canada has become the mission of a number of scholars, writers and parliamentarians. Chief among them are D. Michael Jackson, David Smith, Serge Joyal and Christopher McCreery. They and others have contributed essays to *Canada and the Crown: Essays on Constitutional Monarchy*. This is the second volume on this topic to be published in recent years by the Institute of Intergovernmental Relations of Queen’s University – the first, *The Evolving Canadian Crown*, appeared in 2010. In this new collection, a mix of history, constitutional theory, law and

practice is used to support the ongoing importance and relevance of the Crown in Canada. Contributions cover a wide range of topics including the tenure of the fourth Governor General, the Crown and Quebec, recent changes to the Law of Succession, the use of prerogative powers, and the Crown’s relations with First Nations. Overall, it is a useful collection describing how and why the Crown is still relevant in today’s Canada. For those who believe in the value of the monarchy, this book provides ample justification for their convictions.

The complex nature of the Crown in its multiple relationships involving the United Kingdom, the Commonwealth, Canada, and the provinces is currently being revealed through a legal challenge in the Quebec Superior Court. The case questions the process followed by Ottawa to accede to changes to the rules of succession implemented by statute at Westminster. Following their approval by all the Commonwealth realms, these changes will allow a first-born child, regardless of sex the right to inherit the Crown. They will also eliminate some restrictions with respect to marriage of members of the Royal Family to Catholics. The court challenge is based on the degree of consent required under the *Constitution Act, 1982* to effect these changes. The federal government insists that it has the authority, acting on its own, to give Canada’s approval to these new rules of succession. The opponents, two professors from Laval University, contend that approval requires the consent of all the provinces under the section 41 unanimity clause. The case is now scheduled to be heard next June.