



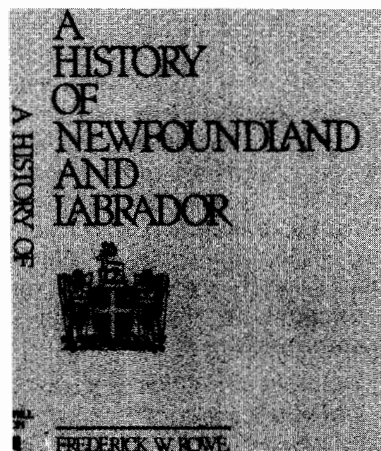
RECENT PUBLICATIONS AND DOCUMENTS

A HISTORY OF NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR, by Frederick W. Rowe, McGraw-Hill Ryerson, Toronto, 1980, 563p.

This book sets out to provide a "comprehensive general history for adults" and it admirably succeeds in doing so. Senator Rowe is not an academic historian, obviously, but he is able and experienced in historical writing, witness his earlier books on the history of education in Newfoundland and on the Beothuks. This book was undertaken, the author tells us, because since Prowse wrote his famous study in 1895 there has been an accumulation of both primary and secondary documentation which is not readily available to the general public and because there has been in the last forty years an increased interest in Newfoundland's affairs both historical and contemporary. Dr. Rowe's chief asset in this enterprise is that he is thorough in his research and he writes well; the book is readable, informative and clear.

We begin with a tour around the island and Labrador, an introduction to the physical geography, the climate and the flora and fauna of the province. We proceed from there to eight or nine chapters on the early history of settlement, relations with the West Country of England, of piracy and wars and a balanced chapter on how white man's ignorance and disease more than destructiveness wiped out a whole people, the Beothuks. The next eight or nine chapters deal with the nineteenth century and pick up on the coming of representative and responsible government, the question of the French

Shore and the politics and economics of the Newfoundland railway. The "French Shore" meant direct French involvement with Newfoundland from the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 until 1904 when finally Britain and France reached agreement and Newfoundland was at last entitled to full rights over her total land areas. As for the railway, Canada and Newfoundland as separate dominions shared a common experience as the politics of the railway shaped the



politics of each country. Economically, the railway strained both nations, but it broke the back of the smaller one. The last eight or nine chapters bring us into the twentieth century, two world wars, a very even-handed assessment of the Commission of Government episode, and a good meaty chapter on Confederation. We finish with two disappointing chapters on the post-1949 years.

Gradually one sees the pattern of the chapters emerging. Dr. Rowe concentrates on getting the facts before us, but he also attempts to hold the balance between conflicting points of

view, and the conclusions of various writers both "ancient" and modern. To an academic it is annoying not to have all these references footnoted back to the original sources, but perhaps author and publisher are correct that this habit distracts the general reader at whom, as noted, the book is aimed. What I do think we can more legitimately complain of is the lack of headings within chapters. Rowe tries to remember that history is not just politics and each chapter has a concluding section on social and economic developments, but more than once it happens that in one paragraph we can be deep in denominational conflict over education (p. 289) and in the next paragraph, without any signal from the publisher, we are into economic development questions. It would have been so simple for a good editor to pick up the need for a heading to warn the reader that we had slipped for instance at p. 345 from a discussion of the forest industry to questions of international fishing treaties. My point is that for the general reader a few small things might have improved the book. There are for instance no pictures to break what is a comparatively long narrative. Apart from two excellent maps and what I count as five headings we march relentlessly on. Across my desk this week has come a recent more academic history, *Canada Since 1945* (by Bothwell, Drummond and English) and it is full of pictures, charts and even cartoons. Something like this would have added to this book and surely not have raised the price *that* much.

The quality of what we are being told depends to some degree on the

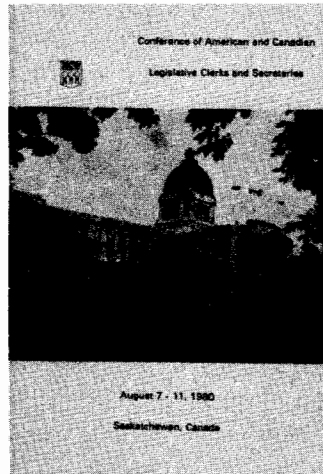
quantity and quality of the sources. On such issues as the railway or the Commission of Government where there is a sizeable body of academic writing, Rowe weaves a balanced and fairminded account. Where the groundwork has still to be done, for instance, concerning the social effects of the second world war, the narrative is thin. This is not to say that Rowe does not *write* history. I particularly liked his treatment of the myths surrounding the credit system and the outport merchant (p. 354). He also charts a skillful course through the shoals of the various religious and class conflicts embedded in the confederation fight, but by and large he is dependent on his sources. In the last two chapters where one might have hoped for an original treatment coming from Dr. Rowe's personal involvement in events, we are left high and dry. What is a good book is marred by a superficial treatment invented by J.R. Smallwood, i.e., "in 1949 there were fewer than 10,000 automobiles in Newfoundland, in 1980 there are over 140,000" (p. 505). I had hoped for better, but maybe that will be in Dr. Rowe's next book. In the meantime, for the general reader interested in Newfoundland, this history is an excellent choice.

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CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN AND CANADIAN LEGISLATIVE CLERKS AND SECRETARIES, the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly, Regina, Saskatchewan, 1980, 150p.

It is becoming a common occurrence these days for Canadian legislators to be invited to American parliamentary conferences and vice versa. The same trend is developing among legislative clerks and secretaries in the two countries. The idea for this joint seminar was the result of a number of courtesy visits between officials in both countries. The organization of the conference and the editing of its proceedings were due in large part to the efforts

of the Clerk of the Saskatchewan Legislature, Gordon Barnhart. The conference was held in Regina from August 7-11, 1980.



Four working sessions, each devoted to one aspect of parliamentary government, were attended by forty-four parliamentary officials including twenty-one Canadians, twenty-two Americans and one British. Topics were introduced by one or more experts after which the floor was opened to general discussion. The following subjects were on the agenda: The role and duties of the Clerk in American and Canadian Legislatures; Committee Systems in Canada, the United States and Britain; the role and importance of the individual legislators and finally the role of the executive in the Canadian and American forms of government.

Veterans of this type of parliamentary conference will hardly be surprised by the choice of topics. The same subjects, except perhaps for the one on the Clerk, are usually found on agendas of Commonwealth Parliamentary Association conferences or meetings of the National Conference of State Legislatures to mention only two parliamentary associations. However reform of the committee system, the revitalization of the role of members and relations between the executive and the legislative branches represent ongoing problems and no conference is likely to find all the answers.

What make this publication interesting, is the quality of presentations

and discussion. Readers will quickly realize that the participants are all specialists who are discussing common problems in a frank and unrestrained manner. No state secrets or scandals emerge from the proceedings but it is interesting to hear the usually discreet voices of parliamentary servants, when they consider critically some problems involved in their day to day work.

The delegates are also continually making comparisons between Canadian and American practice which seem to show that despite customary and constitutional differences nothing resembles so much the problems of one parliament as those of another! It is unfortunate, however, that a comparison of the two systems was not pursued more systematically. In spite of certain similarities, either real or apparent, the differences relating to procedures and even to the spirit of the two systems, were not considered sufficiently. The discussions could also have benefitted from a short comparative glossary defining terms used in the American and Canadian legislatures. The inclusion of such a list would have been a useful addition to the verbatim reports.

Finally as this type of publication will be read primarily by persons working in legislatures there is no doubt it contains information that will be useful to them. The remarks of the discussion leaders were, on the whole, interesting and well written. A few of them deserve to be singled out for special mention. For example, Pierre Duchesne presented an excellent synthesis of a little known subject, the evolution of the office of Clerk. Messrs. Koester, Bradshaw and Ridgely made a useful comparison of the parliamentary committee systems in their respective legislatures. Indeed this discussion, more than any other, seemed to meet the objective of the conference in summarizing similarities and differences in British, American and Canadian approaches to parliamentary democracy.

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