

**FREDERICK HAULTAIN,
Grant MacEwen, Western
Producer Prairie Books 1985,
198 pages.**

Anyone interested in that part of Canada lying west and north of the Lake of the Woods will benefit from this absorbing biography of an extraordinary prairie statesman and jurist.

Haultain came from French Huguenot stock which had spent two centuries in Britain before migrating to Canada. His father became a George Brown Grit member of the provincial legislature from Peterborough in what is now Ontario. Haultain went west as a young lawyer in 1884, launching his practice in what is now Fort MacLeod, Alberta. Three years later, he was elected to the non-partisan Assembly in Regina. He soon became an excellent parliamentary debater and leader of the movement for greater autonomy in the Northwest Territories. He also developed a reputation for incorruptibility.

From 1892 to 1905, as chairman of the Assembly executive committee, Haultain was in effect Premier of the Northwest Territories. He dealt with a host of administrative and policy matters facing the vast frontier region, including the schools and language issues which had gained national prominence in Manitoba, increasing immigration and the early days of the Yukon gold rush. These and numerous other matters were his daily bread for thirteen years. He also survived leadership challenges from two ambitious Assemblymen, including a brash R.B. Bennett from Calgary.

When circumstances seemed appropriate, Haultain led the drive for full provincial status against an intransigent federal government. In fairness to Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier, however, the issue of separate schools for any new western province after the debacle experienced by Catholics in Manitoba at provincial legislators' hands was difficult indeed; his minister of the interior, Clifford Sifton, would resign when Laurier finally properly opted for public and separate school systems for both Alberta and Saskatchewan.

Delay after delay resulted in Ottawa. When the Conservative national leader, Robert Borden, pledged to grant full provincial status to the territories, Haultain became the honorary president of the Territorial Conservative Association at a widely-publicized Moose Jaw meeting in 1903. This decision may have cost him both

a premiership and an eventual prime ministership. Every available political device was thrown at him after the Moose Jaw meeting. Ottawa offered him a federal judgeship, not as a bona fide offer, but rather as a device to discredit him politically by later spreading the rumour that Haultain had asked for an appointment. Laurier finally promised him full provincial status for Alberta and Saskatchewan, but only as the 1904 national election was called. Haultain, displaying the "solidarity of a Gibraltar", campaigned for Borden's Conservatives regardless.

The Liberals were re-elected. Haultain went to Ottawa to argue for one large province (approximately the same size as Ontario or Quebec). In this he sought to avoid the costly duplication of government machinery. "The territories", he argued, "have for a number of years been under one government and legislature, performing most of the duties and exercised many of the more important powers of provincial governments and legislatures. There has never been any suggestion that the territorial machinery was in any way inadequate for the purposes for which it was created." Most of the members of the territorial assembly were of the same mind.

Alberta and Saskatchewan were, nonetheless, created in their present form; Haultain's unhappiness with this and other features of the federal legislation was further compounded. In 1905 Lieutenant Governors of the new provinces, selected by Ottawa, chose well-known Liberals Alexander Rutherford and Walter Scott as the acting Premiers of Alberta and Saskatchewan respectively. Frederick Haultain, the most popular political figure in the west, was further snubbed when he was not invited to speak at the large and festive inauguration ceremonies held in Edmonton and Regina.

Haultain consistently maintained that political parties had no useful role in a provincial legislature. He led the provincial rights party into the first Saskatchewan election against the combined forces of both the provincial and federal Liberals. He won only nine seats to his opponents' sixteen. The author explains the loss by referring to a traditionally Liberal editor of the period who attributed the loss in part to the influence of Ottawa in respect of homestead lands and newcomers to the region, patronage by the provisional provincial government, and some thoroughly unscrupulous returning officers. The results were much the same in the election of 1908. After a decisive loss

in 1912, Haultain resigned as leader of the Opposition and began a long and distinguished period as Chief Justice of Saskatchewan and Chancellor of its University.

Author MacEwen clearly believes that Haultain had a good prospect of becoming Prime Minister of Canada in the 1920s but for the fact that Laurier failed to nominate him as provisional premier of Saskatchewan in 1905. If Haultain had been premier, he might well have gone to Ottawa as Borden's Minister of the Interior in 1911. "Then", MacEwen goes on, "if his judgment and skills were still adequately recognized, he would in due course have been a candidate for the party leadership in the '20s and probably Prime Minister". As a one-time federal Liberal candidate in Manitoba and subsequently a Liberal MLA in Alberta, Grant MacEwen's undisguised affection and admiration for his subject constitute the highest praise. They also illustrate why so many prairie Canadians respect MacEwen's integrity and scholarship and regard him as the reigning dean of letters in our region.

David Kilgour, MP
Edmonton-Strathcona

**MY DEAR LEGS ... Letters
to a Young Social Democrat,
Alex MacDonald, New Star
Books, Vancouver, British
Columbia, 187 pages.**

Alex MacDonald Q.C. has spent more than 25 years at the centre of the CCF and later NDP politics in British Columbia. He has acted as Attorney General, Minister of Industry, as well as assuming the responsibility for the Department of Energy. He is now the longest serving member of the British Columbia Legislative Assembly.

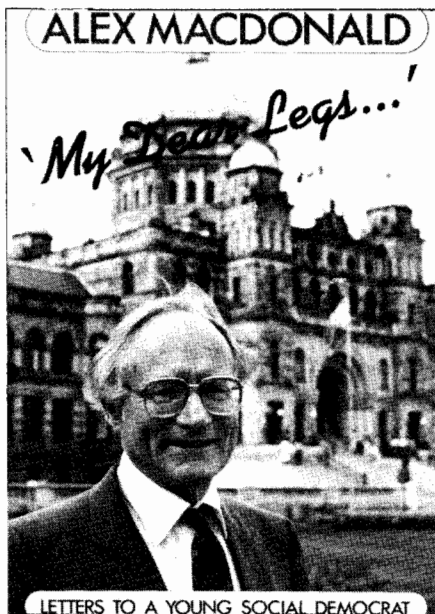
My Dear Legs ... is a series of letters written by Mr. MacDonald beginning in 1983 to his young squash partner and friend Hugh Legg, examining the current status of the Social Democratic movement in Canada. MacDonald's witty prose and irreverent style takes the reader on a critical examination of the New Democratic Party and digs to the roots of many of the problems the social democratic movement faces, not only in British Columbia, but in Canada as a whole. Since at one time Mr. MacDonald was secretary to CCF Leader M.J. Coldwell in the late 1940's, and served a brief stint as a Member of the House of Commons the year prior to the national Diefenbaker sweep of 1958.

In his letters MacDonald deals directly with the many issues and problems facing the NDP in the 1980's. On the question of Medicare and fee-for-service doctors paid for by the state, MacDonald proposes a novel approach of local clinics staffed by doctors who are paid to keep people well instead of simply providing services. Throughout the letters, he refers to the need for an Incomes Policy that will affect the party's relationship with both business and labour, however, an explicit plan or method of implementation is never proposed. On issues such as Energy and Human Rights, MacDonald draws on his experience as a Minister to suggest modest changes in the current party position.

On the issue of "electioneering" Mr. MacDonald seems to have his greatest trouble with the party, reflecting uncertainty among others within the party about the basic objectives of the NDP. He is concerned that the NDP is "beginning to quack, waddle and gabble like any other party for whom winning elections is the goal". He reluctantly accepts, by the end of his letters, that "there are two strains in the CCF-NDP movement, one idealistic, the other pragmatic, and we need some of each."

MacDonald also comments frequently on the need for policy

alternatives proposed by his party. After numerous examples he concludes "the lesson for us, Legs, is to have enough policies in our wardrobe so as not to go naked when



some are stolen". Yet aside from the few suggestions above, MacDonald does not have many tangible proposals to fill this gap.

As well as a serious political examination of the NDP, *My Dear Legs*

... is a thoroughly readable, witty and sometimes irreverent series of political stories and foibles. In describing the end of a session in the British Columbia Assembly, MacDonald remarks; "historically Canadian Legislatures wind up their sessions when the bores begin to bore the bores ... I prefer girls."

MacDonald also cannot resist an opportunity to shoot at a classic NDP target when describing his recovery in hospital in a later letter: "When I came to from the anesthetic, there were nurses and flowers all around me I thought I must have died and gone to the Senate."

Alex MacDonald's letters are genuinely readable and amusing. MacDonald himself emerges as likeable and witty. Most people, I would guess, would leap at the chance to hear more or share a good cigar and a nice bottle of wine with the author at the Union Club in Victoria. The book itself in the years to come, regardless of the fortunes of the NDP, may prove to be the best insight into the present state of the social democratic movement in Canada - straightforward and honest, but with some serious fundamental questions unresolved.

Michael Ferrabee
Ottawa