obsolete. Fertile imaginations and patient industry, especially among the most
inventive, perceptive and literate of Canada's younger historians will soon ensure
that both Gagan's and Katz's work, like the first Royal Navy Dreadnaughts, are
themselves soon outdated. It is part of the excitement of current historical writing
in Canada.

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It is both a strength and frustration of a good historian that he can only
write as much about the past as the evidence before him permits. Unlike the
creative writer he cannot try to re-create events or circumstances for which he
has no reliable evidence. As a result, historical writing tends to be rather uneven
in its coverage of the past. Those who created and kept extensive documentary
evidence get much more adequate treatment at the hands of the historians than
those for whom little documentary evidence exists, and within documentary collec­
tions themselves, some aspects of the past are much more fully covered than others.
Indeed some very important things may not be mentioned at all in the surviving
documentary materials available to the historian. Such is certainly the case with
the surviving documentation relating to the life of Sir Clifford Sifton. Professor
Hall informs us that when the Sifton papers were deposited in the Public Archives
of Canada they had been stripped of all personal and most business correspondence.
Clearly this creates serious problems for the historian and biographer, and for his
readers, particularly for those readers interested in social history and therefore
the personal and business affairs of men like Clifford Sifton.

Professor Hall has written his biography in the only way open to an honest
and competent historian. He has discussed those aspects of Sifton's life for which
documentation exists, and he remains silent where the evidence is lacking or
inadequate. He acknowledges in his preface that his work is of necessity a political
biography. One might quibble about the fact that the exact nature of the work
should be more clearly indicated in the title as well as in the preface. But the
subtitle Professor Hall has chosen clearly refers only to a political reality of
Sifton's career.

As a political biography this work has many admirable features and makes
important contributions to our understanding of the political history of Western
Canada. Professor Hall has meticulously gathered relevant evidence from many
collections to provide an excellent and convincing account of Sifton's rather
devious methods in acquiring the Manitoba Free Press. Similarly Sifton's role in
the highly controversial Manitoba school question, his work in reorganizing the
department of the Interior, his organization of the government of the Yukon
Territory and of the Liberal Party in Western Canada, are discussed in authoritative
detail. No radically new and different interpretations are offered, with the possible
exception of the Manitoba Grain Act which Professor Hall has already discussed
elsewhere, but a great deal of new and sometimes surprising detail is added. On
all these issues the book makes important contributions towards a better understanding of what actually happened.

The subtitle, "The Young Napoleon", was bestowed on Sifton after the electoral campaign of 1899 in Manitoba and the federal campaign of 1900. This was a not altogether flattering recognition of the fact that Sifton had put together an effective political organization (his critics denounced it as a corrupt political machine) which had won important political victories. This, however, raises several basic questions. In adopting this sobriquet as the subtitle of his book Professor Hall seems to be suggesting that political organization, machine politics, and political combat are the most important aspects of Sifton's early career. That certainly is a continuing theme throughout the volume, but is that really the core of Sifton's well-known and monumental ambition? Did he not have a more coherent and long-term ideal than the winning of elections? Napoleon had some very ambitious long-term objectives for his country and for Europe. Did Sifton entertain higher ideals for his country than those of a political street fighter? If so they need to be defined more clearly and convincingly. On the basis of the information Dr Hall presents the essence or leitmotif of Sifton's career remains elusive. The Young Napoleon does not completely capture the spirit, the dynamism and the larger aspirations of the man.

The logistics of political warfare, despite much of the detailed information provided, also remain remarkably murky. In particular the whole subject of Western Canadian party finances is treated in only vague descriptions, doubtless because more specific and detailed information is no longer available. The sources of Sifton's own wealth, his financial relations with the party, and the relations with other contributors to the party war-chest are not and probably cannot be determined. This, nevertheless, leaves open a whole host of questions, particularly with regard to motivation and influence. Many a general has won battles because of his supply lines and logistics rather than his brilliant battlefront manœuvres. It is difficult to avoid the suspicion that this may have been the case in Sifton's political battles, although it is the battlefront manœuvres which get most of the attention.

It is probably unfair to dwell on matters Dr Hall did not do and, because of the lack of reliable evidence, could not do in this biography. He has certainly done an admirable job in using the extensive documentation available to him to write an authoritative and interesting biography. The work done is excellent, and yet it is apt to leave the reader with nagging doubts and questions. That, however, is where the responsible historian must leave the matter unless some hitherto undiscovered evidence is found and provides new information and new insights.

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