

J.L. GRANATSTEIN and J.M. HITSMAN. — *Broken Promises: A History of Conscription in Canada*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1977.

The first promise to be broken in *Broken Promises* is the one in the subtitle promising the reader a history of conscription in Canada. What he does get, more exactly, is a polemic on conscription in the two world wars of this century set against a very flimsy background. The *levée en masse* of the French era is shrugged off with one apt quotation from Bochart de Champigny; Guy Carleton's desperate efforts to mobilize the *habitants* under British banners in the 1770s are summarized in two paragraphs; and there is nothing at all about the virtually compulsory military training imposed on several generations of Canadian school-children prior to the 1930s. Perhaps these are some of the areas where 'Mac' Hitsman would have done more had he lived. Jack Granatstein's own interests lie more in the realm of party political history during the war years and his concerns — and prejudices — are strongly reflected in this book.

J.W. Pickersgill wrote of Granatstein's last major work that it was "the best account yet available of the way that the Government of Canada operated in World War II". He will probably be equally pleased with *Broken Promises*, for the same reasons. Not all Liberals mentioned in its pages are heroes — some are poor, misguided souls — but every Conservative is a villain.

The authors start (one writes 'the authors' bearing in mind that Hitsman died seven years before the book was published) by pointing out the damage that the conscription issue has done to the fabric of Canadian unity. Implicit in that opening statement and in all the subsequent analysis and discussion is the untested assumption that nothing could be worse, that nothing is more important, than a rent in that sacred cloth. On that basis conscription is, by unstated definition, bad. Those who favour it have sold themselves to the devil, while those who oppose it, if not actually saints, are certainly worthy of beatification.

This is a simplistic premise. Working from it, the authors define clearly the "unscrupulous tactics" of Borden and Meighen in 1917 but skate rather lightly over the question of Laurier's motivation in opposing them. The facts are there but the pejorative adjectives are not — a partisan approach that is frequently used but always masked by Granatstein's smooth and lucid prose.

A very different view of the 1917 crisis from that espoused in *Broken Promises* can be found in the late A.M. Willms' article, "Conscription 1917: A Brief For The Defence", which first appeared in the *CHR* for December, 1956, and has since been reprinted more than once. The title of Willms' piece makes its bias very clear and one could wish that the Granatstein/Hitsman work had been subtitled *A Brief For The Prosecution*. But even that would not relieve them of the accusation that they have largely ignored all those pro-conscriptionist arguments that are the most difficult to meet. Willms' suggestion "that Canada was fighting a war that would certainly have been lost in the spring of 1918 if other countries had followed Canada's tardy example" is not confronted, and the possibility that there might be a moral principle involved in conscription even more important to the individual than national unity never seems to occur to them.

The same criticisms can be made of their handling of the Second World War crises, with (in the 1944 case) an additional sin of omission. There is one rather innocuous reference to E.L.M. Burns' statistically-oriented study of *Manpower In The Canadian Army*, a book which carefully and objectively documents the "extravagant use of men for administrative purposes" that characterized the army bureaucracy and had much to do with the manpower shortage. A lack of cooperation between the three services — totally ignored in this account —

squandered many more men who could otherwise have been in the firing line. Senior officers were curiously slow to recognize the need for revision of infantry wastage rates and the urgency of the reinforcement problem in 1943 and 1944 respectively. *Broken Promises* does bring out this last weakness in a very low-keyed way but has nothing at all to say about the Canadian failure to implement the same sort of rigorous re-mustering and re-organization in the early fall of 1944 that marked the reaction of both our major allies — who each had universal conscription and a significantly greater proportion of men under arms — to similar crises in their armies.

There is, to take just one example, no mention of the damning memorandum reporting how an establishment strength for the army overseas had been:

arrived at simply by adding to the strength of the Army, as of 1 Jan 43, the number of troops that we could despatch overseas within a given period.... The question of our ability to maintain an Army formed within the present manpower ceiling did not enter as a factor into the determination of the manpower ceiling. [DSD to CGS, 23 Nov 43, in DHist 112.352.009 (D.200)]

That's a hell of a way to run an army! And surely such evidence should be an important part of any academic study of the conscription issue.

The Chief of the General Staff from December 1941 to December 1943 was Lieutenant-General Ken Stuart. From March 1941 until December he had been Vice Chief, and subsequently he was Chief of Staff at Canadian Military Headquarters in London. No one was closer than Stuart to the manning and operational policy-making cores of the Canadian Army from the very beginnings of its manpower problems and it can be convincingly argued that they were effectively of his making. Although Professor Granatstein admits (in a footnote) that "Stuart has often been painted as the villain of this piece", he follows that isolated criticism with a justification of the general by Chubby Power that concludes, "I think all along he had been playing the game honestly and fairly... I believed then in his integrity and have not changed my mind since". Apparently Granatstein himself has nothing to add. Anti-militarist he may be, but Radical Jack would sooner sock it to the Tories than point up the professional ineptitude (at best) or deliberate fudging (at worst) of the military hierarchy.

Since this review was originally submitted another book has been published which deals at length with the purely political background to the 1917 crisis. John English's elegant and objective study of *The Decline of Politics: The Conservatives and the Party System, 1901-1920* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), should be read in conjunction with *Broken Promises*.

Brereton GREENHOUS,
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J.E. REA. — *Parties and Power: an Analysis of Winnipeg City Council, 1919-1975*. Appendix IV, *Report and Recommendations*. Winnipeg: Committee of Review, City of Winnipeg, 1976.

On January 1, 1972, one of the most significant events in the development of urban government in Canada occurred in Winnipeg. On that day the government of Manitoba brought into being through provincial statute a unique form of government for Greater Winnipeg. The area's many municipalities, including the historic