adoptent fréquemment une perspective critique, dans un style étonnamment élégant. Cependant, contrairement à beaucoup d'historiens de sa génération, il n’hésite pas à s’aventurer en dehors des limites des sciences historiques sur le terrain de la sociologie ou parfois de la science politique pour enrichir ses analyses, par exemple en citant au passage la vaste enquête de Pierre Bourdieu sur les peintres préférés des Français (p. 249). Ailleurs, abordant au passage les études savantes sur les célébrités (« Celebrity Cultures »), il déplore que la seule relève aux intellectuels d’autrefois (Sartre, Camus, Aron, Foucault, etc.) qui s’opposaient aux grands de ce monde ne se limite qu’à quelques célébrités comme le chanteur Bono (p. 198). C’est ce genre d’observation qui fait le charme de ce livre nourrissant que même les bacheliers et les non-historiens pourront apprécier. Même lorsqu’il rédigéait un compte rendu, un article pour la London Review of Books ou une préface (comme on en trouve plusieurs dans ce recueil) pour l’ouvrage d’un collègue, Eric Hobsbawm avait toujours quelque chose de passionnant à nous faire connaître, selon une perspective qui lui était propre.

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How did Canadian business leaders handle major political changes in the period from the declaration of the First World War to the conclusion of the Second World War? How did their responses reflect fundamental differences dividing old and new political landscapes? In Dominion of Capital, Don Nerbas relates a tale of two political economies—one, rooted in longstanding National Policy protection of manufacturing entrepreneurs; and the other, welcoming the state’s engineering of continental economic integration. Nerbas argues that defenders of the old political economy, largely railway magnates based in Montreal, were unable to halt the forces of change that threatened to overturn the state’s relationship with private capital. He finds that this national bourgeoisie was in a state of “crisis” during this period, the result of being “too rigid and too classically liberal to respond effectively to the emerging political challenges created by the onset of the Depression” (p. 24).

Published as part of University of Toronto Press’ Social History series, Nerbas eschews a strictly grand theory style study of the capitalist class, choosing instead to present close portraits of leading businessmen. Each chapter is structured as a mini-biography of selected figures, including conservative news mogul Howard P. Robinson, progressive financier and politician Charles A. Dunning, Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) president Edward Beatty, General Motors president Sam McLaughlin, and wartime political oligarch C.D. Howe. While these characters are...
not necessarily typical of average businessmen, they are apparently representative of 102 members of the nationally-significant business elite during this period and their collective responses to a changing political economy (p. 12). The book is organized thematically according to each biography, but also takes into account chronological developments that occurred in the transition from old to new political economy. A social historical and comparative biographical analysis of these major figures allows Nerbas to identify individual responses to political changes that are shaped by discrete personal circumstances while situating them within the broader story told by statistical information from different geographical regions and sectors of the economy. As a result, he is able to effectively consider the evolution and impact of the “crisis” as it pertained to different ideologies and sectors of the Canadian bourgeoisie.

The temporal focus of the book spans a period of intense change that rocked the business elite. The period following World War One saw the locus of economic power gradually shift from Montreal to Toronto, and with this came a turn toward the United States and away from Britain. The result was a major overhaul in the thinking of the period which was dominated by the politics of the railway. Railway politics are a major theme in the book given that the interests of National Policy-era capitalists in the old political economy were rooted in the operation of the railway system which was intimately connected with global economy of the British Empire. The changing politics of the railway also enable Nerbas to demonstrate significant overlap and conversation between the new and old orders, which effectively began with the creation of the state-owned Canadian National Railway (CNR) in the early post-World War One period to consolidate and nationalize failed private rail lines. The CNR constituted a major source of competition for the privately-owned CPR and was followed by similar nationalization projects during the 1920s and 1930s. Nerbas contends that by the end of the Second World War, the political relationship between capitalists and the government had been fundamentally restructured. Nerbas contends that it was the Depression which stripped the business elite of any legitimacy to back their claims as effective community stewards (p. 244). Indeed, the severity of the economic failure also signalled the general failure of the old economic elite to effectively transition to a new political economy based around state management to ensure efficiency and productivity.

Nerbas presents the case for a revised understanding of government-business relations by highlighting the importance of social and cultural considerations in the evolution of political and economic conditions in the wartime and interwar period. A monograph based on his dissertation, Nerbas succeeds in presenting a highly convincing analysis of the Canadian bourgeoisie during a period in which an entire mindset, or mentalité, among the capitalist class was under threat of usurpation. Most effective of all is the fact that Nerbas allows readers to understand how individual capitalists in each political economic paradigm rationalized the situation and why this made sense in the context of their particular interests and background. This approach would not have been successful without these intimate and highly detailed portraits that place development actions within the context of
individual biographical trajectories. However, readers who are new to Canadian political and economic history may initially feel a little lost in the woods or get the impression they stumbled into an ongoing conversation. For example, the term “National Policy” is introduced on the second page of the text as a given without much explanation or context. The fact that the National Policy was introduced in order to create a Canadian economy that was more independent from the United States could also have been underlined more forcefully, particularly when discussing its contrast with an emerging political economy that embraced the U.S. Finally, in any close reading of history such as this, there invariably exists the risk that a sense of the bigger picture is lost. Nerbas does well to situate his biographical subjects within this macro perspective in introductory and concluding statements, but readers may sometimes struggle to make these connections within the body of each chapter. As a result, readers may need to consult other background literature in Canadian political and economic history before diving into the narrative.

*Dominion of Capital* is a thoughtful, well-written and ultimately convincing study of the social history of major changes affecting the political economy of Canadian big business from the 1920s to 1940s. The book will appeal to a wide range of scholars and students of history, political science, and business, offering them a fresh perspective of historical developments that shaped an evolving relationship between capitalists and government during the twentieth century. Contemporary business leaders may also do well to consider the book as a lesson as to the consequences of stubbornly holding onto outdated theories and practices when faced with evidence concerning the dysfunction of existing economic systems.

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Like all perfectly-titled books, Dan Malleck’s *Try to Control Yourself: The Regulation of Public Drinking in Post-Prohibition Ontario, 1927-44*, summarizes his argument succinctly. In a nut, the end of Prohibition represented a new, more moderate phase in Ontario moral regulation, one in which the newly constructed “citizen-drinker” became a participant in a complex and highly bureaucratic negotiation between political power and the body.

From 1916 to 1927, there was a total prohibition on alcohol in Ontario and, as such, until repeal, there was no legal public drinking and no “citizen-drinker.” In Malleck’s view, this period was a legislative excess, since there was no room for negotiation. Repeal, therefore, represented the scaling back of excess and a move towards a more moderate approach. In turn, the 1927 Liquor Control Act requested that the “citizen-drinker” be moderate, too, unlike the pre-prohibition