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business leaders may also do well to consider the book as a lesson as to the consequences of stubbornly holding onto outdated theories and practices when faced with evidence concerning the dysfunction of existing economic systems.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
drinker, who has been characterized as intemperate. Malleck sees the 1927 LCA, which birthed the Liquor Control Board of Ontario, as evidence of “temperance” in government—a neat turn of phrase and concept that fits in well with his Foucauldian framework.

Since it’s tempting to begin a study of public drinking in Ontario in 1934 (when licensed beverage rooms were first allowed), Malleck’s choice to delve into the transition period from 1927 to 1934 is especially revelatory. Purchasing alcohol was legal, but only with an individual permit. Through this bureaucratic tool, which could be revoked at the discretion of the Liquor Control Board, consumption could be tracked and, to some degree, controlled. Individuals that held both Standard Hotel licenses and liquor permits produced the most anxiety for the Board, since they were in prime position to break the law and profit from semi-public drinking. Many hotel owners and employees were caught selling alcohol to guests who held parties in private rooms or, occasionally, in the public spaces of the hotel.

We might assume that the repercussions for violating the conditions of both licenses would be swift and harsh and that hoteliers risked losing their livelihood with every quick sale of liquor. Not so, says Malleck, whose research involved reading every LCBO Establishment File in six jurisdictions—Toronto, Ottawa, Niagara, Essex County, Waterloo County and Thunder Bay—and revealed a pattern of paternalism and leniency. One woman hotel-keeper caught selling liquor on New Year’s Eve 1929 was told to be a “good girl.”

So, although the Liquor Control Board of Ontario (LCBO) is often portrayed as a tight regulatory agency, the control was primarily in the form of documentation and light reprimands, as opposed to strict enforcement. This is a significant departure from previous work that has interpreted the LCBO as an agency of tight social control. Malleck shows how liquor control was, instead, about disciplining subjects.

From 1927 to 1934, pressure to allow beverage rooms in Ontario largely came from people who believed that making public drinking legal would give the economy a much-needed boost. Critics of the restrictive Liquor Control Act of 1927 argued that Ontario’s ban on bars and permit requirements made the province unattractive to American tourists, who were looking for a vacation from Prohibition. Four other provinces—British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba and Quebec had more liberal public drinking laws and, as such, were more competitive tourist destinations. When America began seriously debating repeal of its federal prohibition on alcohol, Ontario opted to review its laws, too.

Of course, it’s unlikely that many post-Prohibition Americans would have been enticed by Ontario’s sorry beverage rooms, since the restrictions were myriad and designed to make it as likely as possible that Ontarians would control themselves. Where many American states opted to allow cocktails, live music and saloon-style stand-up bars, Ontario’s beverage rooms could only serve small glasses of beer to seated patrons. These conditions, in addition to advertising and signage, were closely monitored by LCBO inspectors, some of whom were doing clandestine
surveillance. Some rules were strictly enforced; others were loose, erratic and arbitrary.

Not that the inspectors were the only group engaging in surveillance, since communities were actively involved in policing Ontario’s beverage rooms. Disgruntled patrons, neighbours, and competitors helped form the larger fabric that was keeping tabs on bars, although, admittedly, the public’s most pronounced role was in the initial application process. Then, as now, prospective licensees had to advertise and, in some cases (generally if a proposed beverage room was deemed too close to schools) large segments of the community were mobilized to object. One example from Malleck’s book chronicles Toronto residents’ vocal and highly-organized repeated objections to licenses near Sunnyside Beach, since beverage rooms near beaches and amusement parks were considered particularly dangerous.

This also goes to show how deep the anxiety over the intersection between recreation and drinking was in the early days of legal public drinking. Both the Board and the community were concerned about the presence of music, gambling, singing, dancing, profanity, and quarreling, since the combination of this “constellation of minor vices” with alcohol would represent a return to the pre-prohibition saloon, something most agreed was an undesirable future. But there was one major aspect of the new beverage rooms that resulted in a huge departure from the old saloon, namely, specific rooms for ladies and escorts. Although there is significant difference in opinion as to how common it was for women to engage in public drinking in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the new beverage rooms, essentially, specifically invited them despite concerns that mixed drinking might lead to a wide range of problems, from prostitution to the breakdown of the family.

Despite pressure from some segments of the community, the Board continued to allow women into beverage rooms and, in time, made concessions for entertainments, like music and dancing. This all goes to Malleck’s main point that post-prohibition public drinking was an exercise in moderation on both sides, and represented a shifting negotiation between a paternalistic, yet lenient, state and a new public made up of citizen-drinkers.

This thorough and enviably researched book fills in an important gap in scholarship. Although Vancouver’s beer parlours have been examined very closely, we know very little about the implementation of public drinking venues in the rest of the country. Ontario, at least, is no longer an unknown quantity.

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