

about such a major political step as the public ownership of Hydro. The nature, quality and direction of the government intervention in this case as in all others was decided by political struggle. To the contending historic figures, striving to gain their ends, there was nothing sure or inevitable about the outcome.

Again the book demonstrates the enormous importance of politicians to the economic process itself. The impact of a premier like George Ross on Ontario economic development was much greater than even a spectacular entrepreneur like François Clergue, who put together such a dazzling complex of enterprises under the all-embracing Consolidated Lake Superior Company. Whitney's decision to accept public power was much more crucial to the Ontario economy than the resistance offered by Henry Pellatt, one of the most prominent Canadian financiers of his day. Again, at the core of any study of the paper industry between the wars would be Ferguson's policy towards that industry. Ontario premiers were not pallid, bloodless puppets, without character or philosophy who merely responded mechanically to strings pulled by the master financiers. While economic and political circumstances imposed limits on them, they still had lots of room for choice. It is now clear that what each chose to do really affected economic development. Yet the concrete nature of each decision was often influenced crucially by the character and outlook of the premier concerned. The vivid portrayal of such a reciprocal relationship between individual politicians and powerful entrepreneurs makes this book an exciting piece of historical writing.

Joseph LEVITT,
University of Ottawa.

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MARCEL HAMELIN. — *Les Premières années du parlementarisme québécois, 1867-1878.* Québec, Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1974.

The study of provincial politics in Canada has been seriously hampered by the lack of official records of debates until relatively recent years in most provincial assemblies. One consequence has been that only those big mouth-filling, mind-boggling questions such as provincial autonomy, nationalism and, of course, scandal have had much attention paid to them for the simple reason that historians have followed, and relied upon, newspaper reports. (In passing it may be worth remarking that historians, who in real life frequently criticize journalists, have a touching faith in the validity of newspapers as evidence.) Anyone with the willpower and the attention span required can read the Debates of the House of Commons and discover how many journalists depart hurriedly after question period when the real work begins: chartering companies, altering fishing legislation, jiggling tariff schedules, quarrelling about bridges and feeder lines. Moreover, as Leacock long ago demonstrated in his seminal study of local politics, *Sunshine Sketches*, these are the sorts of issues that form the stuff of everyday politics.

Consequently the closer the examination of politics the more clearly certain contradictions between day-to-day realities and the big issues, which historians often use to explain political change, become. Historical writing on Quebec makes this observation especially striking. For one thing only a small amount of detailed work has been done on that province's politics and that chiefly by Robert Rumilly whose *Histoire* is both invaluable for sources and sometimes misleading in its concentration on the headline stories. Secondly, the role played by intellectuals in Quebec politics has meant that ideological issues have impressed themselves on many writers who themselves may be engaged in political wars of an ideological type. The persuasive, but also polemical, writings of P.-E. Trudeau and Michel

Brunet are a case in point; "agriculturisme, anti-étatisme et messianisme" have too often been accepted as the only code necessary for deciphering the smile on the face of the Quebec sphinx. Recently a healthy reaction has set in, as economic and social history have come back into their rightful place. But reactions may proceed too far. (In Canada, two books represents a very large reaction!) Professor Terry Copp, in his otherwise useful study of the condition of the working class in Montreal, aggressively rejected any suggestion that ideology, or cultural values, plays any significant role in Quebec's economic situation.

A similar view, though more modestly stated and more fully documented, underlies Marcel Hamelin's extremely valuable analysis of Quebec parliamentary life during the first post-Confederation decade. The book is a mine of new and fascinating information. It fully succeeds in its stated aim of reconstructing the parliamentary history of the period, and in answering the question: "quels problèmes ont retenu l'attention de la chambre, dans quelle perspective les a-t-elle abordés, quelles solutions a-t-elle proposées?" To answer this apparently simple question Professor Hamelin has searched the records, published and private, of the period to piece together the debates of the assembly, and to analyse the socio-economic complexion of the debators. That task he has done meticulously, and the resulting volume is very well put together.

Though many of the incidents that are dealt with in the book will be familiar to readers of Rumilly, and to those who have read Brian Young's work on railways and politics in nineteenth-century Quebec (Hamelin is apparently not among these), there is also much that is fresh. For example, the discussion of the foundations of the Quebec bureaucracy adds a perspective to the period that is often missed. Historians, like politicians, sometimes forget that the positive state requires well-trained technicians, and those were hardly thick on the ground in nineteenth-century Quebec. Moreover his discussion of emigration, colonisation, and schemes to promote home industries demonstrates that Quebec provincial politicians, like those in Ontario, were more concerned with bread and butter than with "la mission civilisatrice et religieuse." Hamelin's account of the division of the public debt of the United Canadas is careful and appears to substantiate the claim that Quebec was burdened with a larger portion of that debt than strict equity demanded. This revision of Maxwell's study of forty years ago is important because it helps to explain Quebec's subsequent financial problems. The chapters on politics, on scandal, on public finance and the details about the mechanics of parliamentary government all contain substantial material. In short the book adds a solidly-researched new dimension to this decade of Quebec politics.

The book has its limitations, both in its scope, and in basic assumption. There is something a little artificial about the way parliamentary history is sliced out of the total pie. It would have been helpful, though the book would have been even longer, if the legislative assembly had been placed in a more detailed context by paying attention to general economic developments, political affairs at Ottawa and to ideological concerns. Professor Hamelin forcefully asserts the view that ideology rarely ever raised its ugly head in the legislature and totally disappeared from political campaigns at the local level. One might quibble with his definition of ideology for it would surely not be difficult to extract ideological preferences from speeches on even the most prosaic subjects. For example, was there not a clear free market assumption underlying almost all of the discussion about "une vocation économique?" But more than that, the absence of debate about general ideas may mean something quite different from what is sometimes contended by writers like professors Copp and Hamelin. They appear to believe that ideology has little significance for the "real" issues of the day, issues which

past politicians and some later historians perceive far more clearly than intellectuals, clerics and newspaper editors. But is it not at least possible that the ideological assumptions of *les clercs* were so deeply imbedded and widely accepted that politicians found no need to debate subjects on which there was common agreement? There is, of course, no question that some writers have too readily assumed that ideology conforms directly to reality. It is now obvious that the "agriculturisme et anti-étatisme" of the intellectuals was not the opiate of the politicians, at least not directly. But the problem of the relationship between "ideology" and "reality" is not solved by the mere assertion of the primacy of "material" interests. Not even Marx believed that.

Professor Hamelin's book then, is a doubly important one. It contains a good deal of new, carefully analysed, information, and, it is a substantial contribution to the discussion of the relationship of "ideology" to "everyday life" in Quebec. As long as that discussion remains open a good deal of valuable research and interpretation will result. But if Hamelin's book is taken to mean that the debate has been resolved, a conclusion which he surely would not wish to see drawn, then it will have damaged a good cause.

Ramsay Cook,
York University.

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MICHAEL BLISS. — *A Living Profit: Studies in the Social History of Canadian Business, 1883-1911*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974.

Readers of this journal may wonder why a study in business history appeared as an inaugural volume in the Canadian Social History Series. The answer is two-fold. First, the Series' editors, Michael Cross and S.F. Wise, define social history broadly and simply as being "about people." Second, unlike most previous historical studies of business in Canada, *A Living Profit* is neither a company biography nor a study of a particular industry. Through an examination of business and trade magazines, government reports, the minutes of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association and papers of some individual businessmen and politicians, Michael Bliss has broken important new ground. In six essays on businessmen's ideas, he presents a fresh and challenging approach to such traditional subjects as the tariff, labour questions and the relationship of business and government.

Drawing on regional as well as national sources, French as well as English publications, Bliss offers a tantalizing picture of businessmen between 1883 and 1911. He argues that, with certain exceptions, not only was there continuity in business thought during this period but "the fact that a man was a businessman was more important in the formation of his attitudes" (p. 10) than his location, the kind or size of his business or his religious, linguistic or educational background. Bliss provides considerable evidence to support this stimulating idea but, regrettably, does not undertake a detailed analysis of it. He effectively demonstrates, however, the common desire of businessmen for "a living profit" or a fair wage for themselves though they would not have agreed on what this might be. To achieve their "living profit," businessmen fled from open competition, their insecurity often leading them into inconsistent positions. Though "deeply individualistic," (p. 138) believing in self-help and self-discipline, many staunchly defended such protective devices as the tariff and price-fixing combines against "unfair" foreign and domestic competitors respectively. The inconsistency of business thought is clearly shown by W.K. McNaught, a Toronto jeweller, who, while bitterly objecting to railway and private power monopolies, lobbied the