

illustrated with a verve that should appeal to the occasional student of politics. Incidentally, it contains one of the most cogent summaries of the validity and reliability problems of survey research that will be found in the literature of social science. It will possibly become required reading in courses on Canadian politics; it will not, and for this we may be grateful, become a source of tactical inspiration for the politician.

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*People vs. Politics*, by Jean Laponce. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969. 219 pp. \$10.00.

This is a book at once fascinating and formidable. Fascinating to the psephologist, but formidable to just about anyone else.

Professor Laponce has made a study of voting behaviour in Vancouver-Burrard. The study began with the federal election of April, 1963. Political science students, under Professor Laponce's supervision, questioned 300 respondents about the way they voted, and why. The same respondents were questioned again after the provincial election in September, 1963. The opportunity presented itself to find out the reasons for the massive shift in support from the Liberals and Conservatives in the federal campaign in the spring, to Social Credit in the fall of the same year, is obvious. The study also includes the federal election held in November, 1965. Thus Professor Laponce was able to determine how all those same voters found their way back to the Liberal and Conservative ranks for that campaign.

The answers obtained from these voters were fed into a computer, and *People vs. Politics* is the result.

The book is largely a collection of graphs and statistics that are really quite formidable. In fact, so many technical terms are used throughout the book that they make it heavy going for anyone who studied political science in the days when no one ever thought of going out to actually find out why people vote the way they do.

Politicians will be fascinated, however, with a lot of the material. Some of the findings bear out theories about voting behaviour that have become generally accepted: there is a tendency for trade unionists to support the New Democratic Party, for older people to support the Conservatives, and for young people to support the Liberals.

One myth seems to have been exploded. The voters who support the Liberals and the Conservatives in federal campaigns and Social Credit in provincial campaigns are not Liberals and Conservatives who have forsaken their own parties to support Social Credit, as if voting Social Credit were aberrant behaviour on their part. It is just as true to say (and I think Professor Laponce's book bears this out) that they are Social Creditors who have decided to jump ship in order to instal a Liberal or Conservative administration in Ottawa. If this means that hundreds of thousands of B.C. voters have no fixed loyalty to any political party, that is what politics in this province is all about. The real watershed in B.C. politics lies between the NDP on the one hand, and the Liberals, Conservatives and Social Credit on the other hand. Of course, there is nothing new in the idea that there is a basic difference between the NDP and the other parties I have mentioned, but this book reveals how profound that difference has become in the mind of the voter.

The book makes it plain that the NDP voters regard themselves as quite distinct from the other parties on the political spectrum. The man or woman who has decided to vote for the NDP feels that he has joined a group that is wholly different from other parties. Not only is this how NDP voters regard themselves, it is the way in which they are regarded by those who support the other parties. Conservatives, Liberals and Social Creditors who answered the questionnaire made it plain that they really would have no difficulty in switching their votes, except to the NDP.

The deep-seated nature of the distinct position held by the NDP is illustrated by the fact that the middle class white collar voter who votes NDP has the feeling that really no more than 5% of middle class white collar voters are supporting the NDP, whereas the fact is that as high a proportion as 20% of that group may support the NDP in a given election.

So we have essentially two groups of voters in the province — those who vote for the NDP and those who vote for the other parties (I leave the Communists out of the picture because Dr. Laponce's findings reveal that they have no substantial support at all among the electorate). This of course accounts for the willingness of people in B.C. to cross party lines in order to keep the NDP out of office. At the same time it accounts for the difficulties the NDP experiences in attaining a break-through in terms of popular vote. In the 1969 general election, the NDP received 34% of the popular vote — the same percentage obtained in 1952.

I suppose the fact that so many voters would rather switch than fight for any kind of traditional party loyalty, in order to keep the NDP out

of office, reveals that they do not take political arguments very seriously, unless the argument is one where the NDP is ranged on one side and the other parties on the other side.

In my view, this absence of commitment to party is the most significant thing revealed by Dr. Laponce's book. But it will not come as a revelation to some — it represents the basis upon which W. A. C. Bennett has been fighting election campaigns in British Columbia since 1952.

As a combatant of the campaigns of 1963 and 1965, I enjoyed the book, but at the end of it, I was sorry that Dr. Laponce had drawn no conclusions. Even though the study is limited to Vancouver-Burrard, a congested urban riding, there is an abundance of material. The book is a collection of data, begging for somebody to develop a theory about political behaviour in B.C., or to attempt an intuitive glimpse of the future of politics in this province. I wish Dr. Laponce had made the attempt.

*Vancouver*

THOMAS R. BERGER

(Mr. Berger was NDP MP and MLA for Vancouver-Burrard)

*Those Were the Days*, by Peter Stursberg. Toronto: Peter Martin Associates Ltd., 1969. 169 pp. \$6.95.

Victims of the depression were more numerous than the casualties of the war which followed it, journalist Peter Stursberg observes in a reminiscence of the launching of his career in the arid economy and international tension of the 1930's. But the breezy tone of the slim tome suggests he and his youthful colleagues felt more victimized by than victims of the giant economic calamities and ideological clashes which lapped gently on the shore of his lotus land, Victoria, B.C. Stursberg was, after all, of the generation whose promise was left unfulfilled by a deranged economy, even if it didn't affect them very much.

Stursberg arrived in Victoria from Montreal in 1932 following his parents, the elderly victims of the depression. He lived with them for two years in genteel poverty on an acreage on the outskirts of the city, unable to pursue his university education and unable to get a job. These were not two years of grinding adversity, but of boredom, of frustrated career options, of a social life confined by lack of money to the Anglican Young People's Association, whose soirees by ministerial edict proceeded under