

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

full glare of the church hall lights. "Capitalism was a real bust, and everybody said so, but this didn't make much difference to us in our island refuge. No one really suffered. No one starved — at least no one I knew. There were soup kitchens and grocery handouts and relief camps. 'Don't let the sucker die' — that was the new humanitarianism." But life "... was lousy, just plain dull and dreary."

Life began to brighten, however, in the Spring of 1934 when Stursberg landed the job which began his continuing career as a journalist. He became an "outside reporter" with the *Victoria Times*, writing mainly for the home and garden page and eventually becoming a full-time staff member. The *Times* of those days was a small town, Liberal house organ whose editorial room was inhabited by a representative collection of newspaper characters, some now famous, like Bruce Hutchison, but most just toilers. It is to these characters, especially the *Times'* editor Benny Nicholas, and the journalism they practiced, that much of the book is dedicated.

Many of the younger reporters were putative left-wing radicals, a fashion of the decade even in Victoria, a city which appears to have harbored, per capita, more varieties of peculiar philosophical thought than daffodils. The city had the widest possible range of socialists, from the fascist ones to the Marxist ones, in addition to strong complements of Townsendites, technocrats, British Israelites and social gossellers, as one might expect in the retirement city of the British Empire. There were also some rabid Republicans and separatists, as well as the usual Liberals, Conservatives, and labor-CCF groups. The variety of such thought in Victoria can perhaps be explained by the relative isolation of Victorians. They could indulge themselves in almost any fancy because they didn't have to follow through. They couldn't. Social action was almost impossible in Victoria, as Stursberg and his cronies discovered later in the depression when they attempted to launch a Victoria chapter of the Veterans of Future Wars. With no one to demonstrate against but the "beery sweats" of the local Canadian Legions, the project collapsed amid derisive laughter at a suggestion "... that a blow be struck for pacifism by having toilet paper printed with Union Jacks..." (That, incidentally, is only one of many anecdotes which make this book a fit subject for a scatologist.) The only way to participate was to leave, as one of Stursberg's fellow reporters did to die in the Spanish Civil War, and as Stursberg eventually did to become a well-known war correspondent.

The main depression concerns of Stursberg and his colleagues, once they had money, appear to have been the Beaux Arts girls, Billy Tickle's

swing band at the Empress, bottles under the table, pub crawling in Esquimalt, or the old Rockne with the rumble seat. But the hedonistic newsroom Reds of the *Victoria Times*, and their associates, were probably not so far different from many Canadians who dabbled with ideological fads, put up with small discomforts, enjoyed cheap fun, but never came within a mile of getting their heads broken. The main thing was to make your own corner tolerably comfortable. Victorians, including Stursberg and his friends, regardless of the philosophy they espoused, come through as liberals with a guilt complex. It was still, for most of them, every man for himself. Perhaps it was true of Canada. Canadians opted for their history and chose a King rather than revolution.

As a social document, *Those Were the Days* has its limitations. There is not much new in the book, either new facts or new interpretations of old ones. In addition there is a certain poverty of description, or economy of style if you prefer. It would have been a more satisfactory book if Stursberg's impression had not been so fleeting. There is also a large amount of white space, most of it on facing pages of the incredibly short chapters, which makes this little 169-page book even shorter than it appears. It is truly a reminiscence, with little attention paid to research or "facts," some of the latter being included, by the way, in what look like editor's footnotes. Stursberg's *Those Were the Days* is somewhat like another recent depression reminiscence, *The Winter Years*, by James Gray, also a journalist. Both books are racy, readable, first person journalism, and both provide surprisingly vivid descriptions of the depression decade, although Stursberg's is a much slighter work. *Those were the Days* is a pleasant little hors d'oeuvre, but steep at \$6.95. Those certainly were the days.

Carleton University

JOHN TAYLOR

The Unjust Society, by Harold Cardinal. Edmonton: M. G. Hurtig Publishers. 272 pp. \$2.95.

The Unjust Society is not a great book but it is an important one. Harold Cardinal was born on the Sucker Creek Reserve in Alberta and attended residential school at Joussard and high school at Edmonton. After two years as a student of sociology at St. Patrick's College in Ottawa, Mr. Cardinal became the associate secretary for Indian Affairs