

Book Reviews

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

Additional systematic examinations of the opinions and attitudes of the Canadian electorate must be welcomed, for existing studies have done little more than chart the major demographic correlates of party preference and certain other issues. Professor Laponce's long awaited analysis of voters in the Federal Riding of Vancouver-Burrard (which disappeared in the 1967 redistribution) will be welcomed primarily for his novel attempts to find more deep-seated relationships in the electorate, even though he does replicate many of the methods of earlier studies.

This is an exciting book to read, as readers who are familiar with the snippet on non-voting already published¹ will appreciate. Yet it is a curiously difficult book to review. The author asserts that his aim is "simply to obtain a more precise picture of Canadian electors than we have at present,"² yet he fortunately does not hesitate to move beyond mere description and to make and test sundry hypotheses. He whets the intellectual appetite by posing a conceptual framework in which parties and politicians, on the one hand, and the public, on the other, interact together in a periodic stressful symbiosis at election time (hence the title of the book), but the book jumps fitfully from one chapter to the next with only casual and occasional references to the purported theme. In short, the reader gets the impression, fairly or unfairly, that the author ran some surveys, included some unusual variables, and analyzed the data with a perceptive and discerning eye. If this impression is correct, then it is a sad commentary on academic respectability, that such a strategy of inquiry cannot be baldly stated, without recourse to the conventional expository paradigm of introductory theory, research design, findings and conclusions. Intellectual breakthroughs rarely follow such a neat path.

¹ Jean A. Laponce, "Non-Voting and Non-Voters: A Typology," *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, Vol. 33, 1967, pp. 75-87.

² *People vs. Politics*, p. x.

The author uses three sets of variables. The first set, which constitute the basis for the originality of the analysis, tap subjective orientations to politics. It includes some measures used previously in surveys, such as party preference (reported vote at prior federal election), political knowledge (of the names of the federal and provincial leaders of the four major parties plus the Communists), party image (perceived linkage between 16 sociological groups such as 'rich people' and 'young people' and the five political parties), and also various political and campaign issues. But the set also includes some new measures of party and party leadership orientation, particularly a "liking-disliking" scale and five other dimensions of "new ideas-old ideas," "socialist-anti-socialist," "friendly-cold," "active-slow," and "powerful-weak" perceptions of the leaders. One wishes that a measure of strength of party preference had been included in the light of its success in the U.S. in predicting electoral migrations and issue salience, two topics close to the author's heart. Also, readers should be aware that his multiple measures of cross pressure (shifted party allegiance since the last election, or equal preference for at least two parties, or intention to vote for a party different from that preferred) would have been highly esoteric, to say the least, even if he had used them as mere proxies!

The other two sets of variables in the study have been used frequently in voting research. One is the psychological concept of authoritarianism, which the author measures with slightly modified items taken from Adorno *et al.*³ The other is a battery of objective sociological variables including sex, age, education, occupation, religion and ethnicity. One may question the author's choice here. If psychological predispositions are to be tapped, as they necessarily must be in any study of public opinion, then why was only authoritarianism chosen? If resources for the study were limited, then why authoritarianism rather than any other psychological variable? Again, if sociological variables are necessary, then why use objective rather than subjective measures, when the former can often be extrapolated from census data leaving room for additional items in the questionnaire? Besides, have not subjective measures, of class for example, proved more valuable in voting studies?

The study uses data drawn primarily from two random samples of the electorate made at the time of the Federal Elections of 1963 (N=465) and 1965 (N not given). A reinterview of a subsample of the 1963 sample was made in 1964 (N=140), while another survey was also made at the time of the 1963 Provincial Election (N not given). The

³ Theodore W. Adorno *et al.*, *The Authoritarian Personality*, Harper, 1950.

author also makes use of a number of nationwide CIPO polls on party preference and on some of the sociological correlates of party preference. He, thirdly, uses a content analysis of the relative weight of campaign issues presented in the two Vancouver newspapers at the time of the 1963 Federal Election.

The major finding in the study is that, in terms of the variables used, the party electorates are remarkably homogeneous. "Repeatedly, I found that expected correlations did not obtain, selected variables did not discriminate, or working-hypotheses turned out to be blind alleys."⁴ There appears to be a trace of a social cleavage between Liberals and Conservatives, in that trade unionists, Catholics and younger people tend more to the Liberal Party, while Anglicans and older people tend more to the Progressive Conservatives. There is also a trace of a cleavage between the NDP electorate and those of other parties in that supporters of the NDP rarely stray in their voting habits, and see themselves and are seen by others as being politically distinctive. Professor Laponce speculates that this homogeneity may be accounted for in the peculiarities of Vancouver-Burrard; "the dominant impression was that the population studied lived in a political melting pot."⁵ But this reviewer has also confronted similar conclusions in data drawn from the Provincial Riding of Victoria. We appear to be some way from determining precisely what makes the B.C. voter "tick."

But a way out of the apparent abyss may possibly be found through some of the other findings in the study. Professor Laponce orders the parties on most of the variables tapping subjective orientations to politics, as well as on a scale designed to minimize party jumping (so that electoral migrations flow to the closest party on the scale rather than "jump over" to more distant parties). Had the scales been related in a perceptually set multi-dimensional issue space, then possibly the traditional cognitive measures could have been synthesized with rationality postulates about party preference and change currently coming into vogue in electoral research under the inspiration of the late V. O. Key.⁶

In general, this is one of the better pieces of research on electoral behavior yet to be made in Canada. The findings are carefully and accurately presented, and the author only makes some unwarranted conclusions in the absence of supporting evidence. It is, moreover, written and

⁴ *People vs. Politics*, p. 177.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

⁶ In his posthumously published, *The Responsible Electorate*, Harvard University Press, 1966.

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.

University of Victoria

MARK SPROULE-JONES

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

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

in the Canadian Union of Students. Later he held the presidency of the Canadian Indian Youth Council, the Indian Association of Alberta and became a member of the board of the National Indian Brotherhood. From the perspective of these experiences and associations, Mr. Cardinal is eminently qualified to write about the position of the Indian in the white world. His book is a scathing attack on the white administrators who rule the world of the Indian, vitally affecting his total life and that of several generations of Indians. It is also an attack on the uninformed Canadian public which allows its government to perpetrate many injustices. While the text errs in some instances and fails to fully report in others, it remains the valid reflection of at least one individual who has suffered the frustration and the humiliation of a colonial administration. The Indians, for whom Cardinal speaks, are not seeking the sympathy or help of non-Indians; they are seeking freedom from oppression — the freedom to do and to be what *they* decide without legal or social restriction.

Appearing when it does, the book is bound to be politically contentious. This is supposedly the era of Trudeau's "just society," yet Trudeau's actual policy and implementation of it show few signs of enacting any justice with regard to Indians. Behind the political facade of "consultation" lies the reality of a White Paper on Indians written long before any consultations were held. While fraudulent statements are made to the Indians that they may have the final decision vis-a-vis their affairs, the government spends money and appoints staff to put some of the policies outlined in the White Paper into effect. While Indians talk about land settlements, government officials talk with provincial officials about the transfer of jurisdiction over Indians. Is it any wonder that Mr. Cardinal seeks to expose these actions and that the Indians question the goodwill and faith of Canadians?

Cardinal unravels a tale of cultural warfare carried out in an effectively devious manner by avoiding treaty issues and land claims, through bypassing Indian leadership, and by propagandizing and stereotyping. The ill-conceived schemes of government, of church and of school are not all historical; many are current and some are in the process of evolving. Astonishingly, and despite the visible trappings of assimilation, Canadian Indians have shown considerable cultural tenacity. Cardinal hopes that basic tenacity and the restoration of Indian identity and integrity will enable Indians in every province to see that the answers lie in the fostering of contemporary Indian values and strengths. Only then, he feels, will the Indians have the effectiveness to negotiate, and to demand

and obtain their own objectives for the control of their own lives, environment and development.

Socially, the book comes at a time when Indians are "in". This reason for the ready publication and circulation of his book may not appeal to Mr. Cardinal. However, it may advance the goal which Mr. Cardinal sets himself: that of informing Canadians about how Indian people feel and what they seek to do in the immediate future. Mr. Cardinal hopes that an informed Canadian public will not permit the injustices and oppression to continue.

In general, Cardinal's criticism and points are well made and substantiated. There is a danger, however, that the whining tone which emerges from time to time, and the complete lack of humor, will undermine his objectives and lose him the concern of his readers. The publishers might also have indulged us with a better quality of printing and binding. The binding is so poor that the book barely survives one reader. On the whole, the book is easily read and comprehended and has a powerful and discomfiting impact. It is not a sociological treatise and provides a welcome relief from the usual exposition of "the Indian problem." Cardinal makes his people and their concerns very much alive and he conveys the anguish of the frustrated person who finds himself without alternatives, without power, and without much hope of amassing the needed finances and support to achieve desired ends. It is a book which should give every Canadian reader pause.

University of Calgary

JOAN RYAN

Portraits of the Premiers, by Sydney W. Jackman. Sidney: Gray's Publishing, 1969. 272 pp. \$7.50.

"You must never," my old Granny used to say, "judge a book by its cover." And I have tried earnestly to live up to this rule, however difficult it has been to do so. In the present case, the difficulty is enormous. For one thing the cover of Professor Jackman's book is padded and pretentious — the title is embossed in gold and includes the provincial coat of arms. For another it arrived semi-clad in a topless dust jacket that offers a statement of warm praise by Willard Ireland, and a ludicrous photo of Professor Jackman, standing by his bicycle at the foot of the Legislative Building steps — though judging from the accoutrements it

could be Brighton or Bournemouth. Inside the cover one learns that the manuscript was completed on "The Feast of St. Ambrose, 1969." (I confess I had a vision of the good professor scribbling off the last few sentences at the end of a long table, littered with the remains of an enormous banquet.) Not an auspicious beginning this.

The book is subtitled "An Informal History of British Columbia." Informal it most certainly is. A history of British Columbia it manifestly is not. It is rather a collection of short undocumented biographical essays on each of the province's 25 premiers, beginning with McCreight and ending with Bennett. Most are between seven to ten pages in length and all are straightforward, factual and generous. As one reads the book one is led to wonder at the good fortune of British Columbia in finding so many splendid men to steer the provincial ship of state. Of James Dunsmuir Professor Jackman remarks, "He was absolutely honest and reliable, trustworthy in business and thoroughly capable in the administration of his economic empire." Aspects of his character the miners clearly had overlooked. But then earlier in this particular essay Professor Jackman comments that Robert Dunsmuir was frugal and did not "indulge in extravagance" although it is later stated that he built his son James "a handsome costly house" at Departure Bay.

I suspect, however, that such criticism is niggling. The book is informal, cover notwithstanding. And it does offer a useful introduction to the political life of the province and we must be grateful for that. As to its reliability, in the absence of footnotes or other documentation, we can count on Professor Jackman's reputation as an historian. His touch is gentle, his judgements more soft than harsh, and his interests clearly more in the area of manners and 'society' than in the hard vigour of politics.

It is vexing, nevertheless, that the grime, the bitterness, and the raw edges of power so seldom emerge in studies of the history of this province. The gentility which infuses these biographical sketches is wholly out of place in B.C. history because it is unreal. There has been too much of Victoria in provincial historiography and far too little Nanaimo, or Vancouver for that matter. Padded covers are easier to hold but they hide too much of the truth.

Politicians of a Pioneering Province, by Russell R. Walker. Vancouver: Mitchell Press, 1969. 246 pp.

Russell Walker, reporter, lobbyist, political organizer and, it would appear, bon vivant in the frontier fashion, has published his scrapbook. Clearly he is enjoying his anecdotage and with the assistance of Mitchell Press offers to share it. The result is a formless ramble with no particular theme, apart from the significant role played by the author in a number of crucial events in B.C. politics in his capacity as fixer, lobbyist or what you will. In any case the reader is left in no doubt about the fact that Russell R. Walker was on the "inside."

His career as legislative reporter began with the *Vancouver Daily World* in 1919. A year later he had joined the *Province* and between that paper and the *Sun*, served in the press gallery for ten consecutive years. The newspaperman's salary in the twenties was not lavish — although a room in the *Empress* with bath was available for \$2.00 per day — but it was augmented handsomely by the politicians. As Walker points out on page 92, "my gratuities from ministers of the government amounted to an average of \$500.00 a session," and this was exclusive of funds received for lobbying. In 1924 he took on the additional job of providing Liberal party propaganda to the interior weekly newspapers, "mailing carefully prepared news reports to 45 weekly newspapers." This information must serve to cast some doubt on the validity of newspaper reports of legislative activity at that time and historians can, at least, be grateful for the warning.

But much of the book is about the politicians Walker reported and consorted with. The sketches are interesting and amusing and will, no doubt, help flesh out the characters of Bowser, Oliver, Patullo and their colleagues for students of that period in our history. The picture that emerges from this collection is that for the most part, these men were insular, insensitive and quite fascinated by their own power and importance. Equally interesting, but not particularly startling, are the gossipy passages that recount the drinking exploits of these political giants.

The whole book, however, is pervaded by a curious sense of unreality, perhaps a product of the author's rather coy and archaic style, but more probably the result of his view that the centre of the universe lay somewhere between the legislative buildings and the *Empress* hotel — a view which, if Mr. Walker is to be believed, was shared by many politicians about whom he writes. Indeed as one reads the book it is necessary to stop and remind oneself that the events are taking place in Victoria, not

Westminster, and these men are wrestling not with the problems of the world but with the footling questions of provincial politics. Such myopia is possibly the occupational hazard of the provincial legislative reporter.

At any rate, the book is worthwhile if read with due caution because it does provide the flavour of an era when politics was a man to man affair worked out in the legislative corridors or the rooms of the Empress, amid the reek of stale cigar smoke and good whisky; when a policy was won or lost on the basis of "gratuities" made or forgotten, with no attention paid to opinion polls or public issues. Come to think of it, that era may not yet be over.