E.R. Forbes — *Challenging the Regional Stereotype: Essays on the 20th Century Maritimes.* Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1989. Pp. 220.

David Frank and Donald MacGillivray, eds — *George MacEachern: An Autobiography. The Story of a Cape Breton Radical.* Sydney: University of Cape Breton Press, 1987. Pp. xvii. 146.

Over the past two decades, the history of post-Confederation Atlantic Canada has emerged as a vital field of study. These two books reflect the flourishing state of the region's historiography and reveal the common perspective that informs scholarly inquiry.

E.R. Forbes has been one of the most influential and prolific of the region's scholars. By collecting eight previously published and three new essays into this volume, Acadiensis Press has performed yeoman service for students and general readers who require easy access to Forbes' ground-breaking research. (The long-awaited appearance of Forbes's hitherto unpublished essay on the Halifax feminist movement, widely cited since 1983, is especially welcome.) Together with his classical study, *The Maritime Rights Movement, 1919-1927* (1979), these elegantly-written essays define the contours of twentieth-century Maritime history and offer an informed assessment of recent public policy initiatives as they affect Atlantic Canada.

Forbes's work is fueled by determination to transcend the conservative stereotype which, he argues, usually passes for historical analysis of the Maritimes. In a seminal article published in 1978 and republished here ("In Search a post-Confederation Maritime Historiography"), Forbes urged researchers not to develop a new myth of a pregressive Maritime, but to offer a rigorous examination of the historical evidence. By that time, Forbes himself had applied rigour to such topics as prohibition, transportation policy and political protest in the region, and he went on to explore such themes as women's suffrage, relief measures during the Depression, and C.D. Howe's wartime industrial policy. Essentially, Forbes argues that any Maritime conservatism in matters of public policy is a result of griding poverty, reinforced by the tendency of private enterprise and the federal state to bow to the forces of centralization. His discussion of national policy as it impacted upon the Maritime Provinces during the Depression and the Second World War makes compelling, if not disturbing, reading, and must surely force Canadian scholars to reassess their interpretations of events in these years. On such issues as prohibition and women's suffrage, the conservative stereotype crumbles altoghether under the accumulated weight of Forbes's impressive research.

Two of the new essays in this volume enter the thorny terrain — at least for historians — of transporting policy, the constitutional debate and free trade in the 1980s. More than other pieces in the collection, they demonstrate the value of bringning a historical perspective to bear on contemporary issues. Forbes is obviously troubled by present-minded "supply side" economic policies which, he argues, are systematically eroding the post-war accommodation between Ottawa and the Maritimes based on regional development programs. In pointing out the regional tendency to succumb to a neo-conservative ideology which serves Atlantic Canada so badly, Forbes comes dangerously close to falling back on the conservative stereotype to explain the paralysis which has seized policy markers in the 1980s. (Of course, Forbes never claimed that conservatism was alien to the region, only that it should not

be used as a substitute for research.) While it is clear that historical analysis of the Atlantic Canada in the 1980s will benefit from a longer perspective, these essays should nevertheless become compulsory reading for the policy makers in the region and anyone interested in understanding the contemporary "Maritime mind" in these troubled times.

George MacEachern's autobiography adds more evidence to the Forbes's contention that the conservative stereotype fails as an analytical tool in understanding Atlantic Canada. Indeed, working-class historians have revealed a rich and varied regional heritage of labour struggle and organization, much of it focused in Nova Scotia's coal mining and steel industry towns. Born in 1904, George left school at the age of 14, and worked at various odd jobs until he became an apprentice in the machine shop of the Sydney Steel plant in 1922. He was victim of the class wars waged in industrial Cape Breton in the 1920s and a central figure in the organizing efforts of the steelworkers in the 1930s. As a member of the Communist Party, he ran in the federal elections of 1945 and 1953 under the Labour Progressive Party banner. His story ends with the Cold War, but MacEahern is still active in his community and, as his epilogue to this volume attests, he remains a keen observer of the contemporary labour movement.

David Frank and Donald MacGillivray have worked long and lovingly to bring MacEarchern's story to a wider reading public. In their introduction, they outline the process by which they converted 18 interviews and 33 hours of tape into a readeable, book length manuscript. They agree with Paul Thompson's dictum that editing oral history involves a "new kind of literary skill", one which they clearly enjoyed perfecting. Perhaps even more important than their editorial skills is the combined knowledge the editors bring to bear on the raw material of the autobiography. Because Frank and MacGillivray have such a comprehensive understanding of the context in which MacEachern is situated, they are able to ask the right questions and highlight the pertinent details that otherwise might have been overlooked. Thus, the reader is alerted to the fact that remnants of rural subsistence culture — Gaelic Bible reading, livestock in the back yard, long-suffering wives, a bottle of rum passed among "the boys" — thrived in MacEachern's Sydney neighbourhood. We also learn that MacEachern's account calls into question the accepted version of the founding of Local 1064, United Steelworkers of America, the first union in Canada to affiliate with the aggressive CIO. According to MacEachern, the earlier Steelworkers Union of Nova Scotia laid the groundwork for Local 1064. His discussion of the campaign for the Nova Scotia *Trade Union Act* of 1937, another first in Canadian labour history, reveals the role that Cape Breton labour, a Cape Breton-born premier, and the *Wagner Act* played in the process.

MacEachern claims that he was "influenced more by example than by theory", and his editors concede that his loyalty to Cape Breton transcended any party affiliations. Nevertheless, throughout his narrative, MacEachern provides pithy and politically "correct" assessments of everything from the Roman Catholic Church and the Antigonish Movement to the Cold War and labour strategy. His discussion of women working in the Pictou ship yards during the Second World War and ethnic minorities also bears a modern ring. How much of his political philosophy came after the fact (or indeed was developed during his 33 sessions with his interviewers) is difficult to determine, but his rallying cry — "an injury to one is an injury to all" — might still give organized labour and Atlantic Canadians something to ponder.

Both books reviewed here clearly "challenge the regional stereotype" by emphasizing the complexity and the radical possibilities of political life on the periphery. While scholars may disagree with the perspective portrayed in these volumes, they cannot help but be impressed by the commitment which all three scholars bring to their work and by the quality of their research.

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Ralp Gibson — *A Social History of French Catholicism, 1789-1914*. New York and London: Routledge, 1989. Pp. xiv, 322.

Gibson, an Australian with "atheistic tendencies" (ix), has written a superb book on French Catholicism in the nineteenth century. It is not that he has unearthed new ideas or methods, but that he surveys, analyzes and synthesizes the work and conclusions of other historians of religion. Further, he incorporates the findings from his own research on the diocese of Périgueux. He has created a thought-provoking book — part of a series called *Christianity and Society in the Modern World* under the general editorship of Hugh McLeod and Bob Scribner. Gibson is interested in patterns of religious behavior and is sympathetic to ordinary "people who struggled to give meaning to their own lives" (x). Gibson's style is clear, direct and pleasant (and entertaining!). The modest size of the book means that Gibson is selective rather than comprehensive.

Gibson's themes are the diversity and complex evolution of French Catholicism (270). He shows that the religious behavior of men and women varied according to region, age, gender and social class. He discounts the picture of a simple linear decline of French Catholicism by pointing to the beginning of change from Tridentine Catholicism to a new model of Catholicism.

The book is divided into nine chapters and is organized topically (and somewhat chronologically whithin the topic areas). Each chapter is carefully crafted with the definitions of terms (e.g. popular religion) where appropriate so as to be sure the reader will follow the chapter's development. Summaries of the author's main points end each chapter. The author carefully explains the theses of major historians and, then, provides his own insight. Thus, in discussing the uprising of the West during the French Revolution, Gibson agrees with Tackett that religion was the crucial factor of the revolt and disagrees with Tilly, Bois and Shutherland who emphasize socio-economic factors (49-51). The reader profits from the survey and the critical appraisal of major works on French Catholicism. All the while, Gibson shows the complexity of Catholicism; generalizations are nuanced.

In Chapter I (Catholicism under the *Ancien Régime*), Gibson explores the nature of religious practice in eighteenth-century France and deals with the concept of dechristianization. He questions the validity of evidence used to measure religious fervor (e.g. wills, clerical recruitment, rising illegitimacy), but he concludes: "Each element taken separately is subject to major problems of interpretation, but taken