

of consensus in its rewriting of urban history. However much it may be a reflection of current styles and political climate, this reaction to the emphasis on conflict which is particularly visible in earlier studies of Montreal and Winnipeg has the lasting merit of suggesting that Canadian cities may come in both conflict-dominated and consensus-dominated models.

Margaret W. Andrews  
Washington State University

\* \* \*

A.K. McDougall — *John F. Robarts: His Life and Government*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986. Pp. xiii. 320.

Professor McDougall's biography of John Robarts, Premier of Ontario from 1961 to 1971, is a volume in the Ontario Historical Studies Series, which is publishing biographies of all the premiers of the province. The trustees of the series indicate at the beginning that "we are deeply indebted to Professor Michael Bliss for his assistance in giving this volume its final form" (x), and the author himself in his preface explains that "the entire text was recast by Michael Bliss", giving it "a more historical and biographical orientation than was envisaged at the outset" (xii). These somewhat mysterious signals about authorship are not the only oddities about the book.

Robarts was a successful leader in a singularly successful Conservative dynasty (1943-1985). During the years of his premiership, Ontario was the economically expansive heartland of Canada and the stable anchor of federalism amid the storms of the Quiet Revolution and separatism issuing from Quebec. One might expect a biography of Robarts to be much like his province and his party: solid, grey, affluent, businesslike, and more than a little dull. This book is at times all of these things, yet there are darker, disquieting notes under the blandly conservative surface.

McDougall touches on all the expected bases. We see the younger Robarts skillfully wending his way into the Ontario legislature through the local Tory business network in his native London, and into the leadership of the party through a wider network of cronies and party notables. All the major areas of public policy of his premiership are examined, although with varying degrees of objectivity. The battles with Ottawa over fiscal federalism are viewed entirely from the official provincial perspective; the author does not explore the deeper layers of economic interest which underlay Ontario's public stance. On the other hand, Conservative interventions in the operations of finance capital ("Tending the Golden Goose", as the author has it in his chapter title) offer a textbook illustration of why capitalism requires a relatively autonomous state to manage the inherent contradictions of the unchecked market.

The Robarts era was one of transition, as McDougall makes clear. The old Ontario which survived into the early 1960s was not only conservative in the social, economic, political and cultural senses, it was also smaller and more local, more provincial, than the bureaucratized, corporate and cosmopolitan Ontario which was to emerge by the 1970s. Robarts arose out of the small-town old-boy network but he found himself governing a province increasingly intractable to the old style of politics and administration. During the 1960s the Ontario government grew into a major bureaucratic actor on the Canadian stage, and its internal reorganizations, its interventions and its attempts at planning faced Robarts with unsettling new perspectives and problems. Rationalization of local government, school boards and property taxation roused strong community opposition, yet they were unavoidable aspects of regional development policy. Much attention had to be paid to controlling the administrative state. When bureaucrats had to be appointed to control bureaucrats, Robarts was getting beyond his depth. "Robarts himself was increasingly concerned that organizational reform in pursuit of efficiency hampered his ability to maintain personal contact with the affairs of government" (p. 231).

It was harder to be a politician than it was in the days of Leslie Frost. In the old Ontario, "the market would dictate choices and the resentments of the losers tended to dissipate for lack of a target. Now that planners tried to dictate choices, politicians would be the target of the resentments" (p. 249).

There is a fascinating underground stream in this biography which surfaces from time to time. Robarts seems to have mirrored within himself the contradictions over which he was presiding. Although his intellectual universe was that of old Ontario, he was drawn to the new on another level. His home town, his wife of many years, and the respectability of his roots, were gradually abandoned for the moral ambiguity of the Toronto metropolis and its temptations of wine and women. "Not only had his own roots been deep in the old Ontario that was passing, but now the deterioration of his personal life meant that he was too often himself adrift, a victim of swirling political and personal winds" (p. 206). In 1971, he reached the limits of his public career. As he announced his retirement, he told a reporter: "I am a product of my times exactly, and my time is finished" (p. 260). He remarried a younger woman and cut himself from his old friends. One morning in 1982, he stepped into the bathroom and took his own life.

It was a perplexing ending to a 'success' story, and one which inevitably calls into question the inner stability of Tory Ontario. This book only intermittently responds to such questions, but it does raise them. And there is, early on in Robarts' life, an extraordinary hint of the darkness at the end. In his grade twelve yearbook of 1934, young Robarts had a composition called 'Retribution':

There are two characters: a lone scientist trying to discover the secret of alchemy, and a chattering, 'almost human' monkey. When the monkey's noise distracts the scientist, he beats the little animal unmercifully. Then, just as the scientist succeeds in producing gold from lead, the monkey leaps into the apparatus in a frenzy, smashing everything. At the end of 'Retribution' we have an insane scientist, a dead monkey, and a wilderness of broken glass (p. 8).

Reg Whitaker  
York University

\* \* \*

Dianne Newell — *Technology on the Frontier. Mining in Old Ontario*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986. Pp. 220.

Perhaps the one theme that has most preoccupied the small but growing number of scholars engaged in the history of Canadian technology is the notion that, historically, Canadian technology cannot be dismissed merely as "borrowed" technology, imported wholesale from Britain and the United States. Dianne Newell's *Technology on the Frontier* is a pioneering attempt to describe how, in actuality, industrial practice was introduced into a Canadian setting: the mining regions of southeastern Ontario, the western peninsula, and the Upper Great Lakes before 1890. Professor Newell's book is a rare example of Canadian economic history informed by a sustained concentration on the fundamental *practical* factors, material and technical, in production. By no means a narrowly conceived study, the book has the additional virtue of providing a sound general introduction to nineteenth-century Ontario mining. Technology, ordinarily ignored in Canadian historiography, was a key variable in determining the vicissitudes of "frontier" enterprise. *Technology on the Frontier* demonstrates the value of understanding material environments and the complex patterns of technological innovation and diffusion in analyzing regional and industrial development. Moreover, while accounts of technological innovation commonly concentrate on single aspects of the process "such as invention, diffusion, adaptation, or [technological] lag" (p. 1). *Technology on the Frontier* broadens the scope to include the entire progression of events from initial stages of technical development to eventual routine application. The result is a more satisfyingly complete account of technological change.