

Political Culture in Fin-de-Siècle Atlantic Canada

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Political Culture in Fin-de-Siècle Atlantic Canada

IT HAS BEEN TWO DECADES SINCE Ernest Forbes exhorted regional historians to critically examine the conservative stereotype of Maritime politics and society.¹ In the intervening years scholars have begun to take up the challenge, producing a more nuanced history of the post-Confederation Maritimes and Newfoundland, particularly for the period to 1960. Their work has qualified the stereotype of regional political culture. While acknowledging conservative elements in regional politics, it also emphasizes the importance of progressive — and, in some cases, radical — political thought and action. Studies by David Frank and Ian McKay, for instance, reveal significant pockets of radicalism in the region during the first three decades of the century.² Moreover, while it is true that the two mainstream parties have, until recently, dominated electoral politics in Atlantic Canada, Forbes and Margaret Conrad have shown that in the 1920s and 1950s regional politicians used the Conservative Party to advance a reform agenda at the federal level.³ The recent electoral success of the New Democratic Party in the region presents, perhaps, an even more serious challenge to a conservative stereotype of Atlantic Canadians, given that the poor performance of third parties has often been held up as evidence of regional traditionalism.

This review considers seven recent books dealing with politics and political culture in Atlantic Canada during the post-1970 period. These include biographies of John Buchanan of Nova Scotia, Richard Hatfield of New Brunswick and Clyde Wells of Newfoundland, and the memoirs of Angus MacLean of Prince Edward Island and John Crosbie of Newfoundland. These works were written, or ghost-written, by journalists, and although their focus is on “great men”, they provide insight into the practice of politics in Atlantic Canada over the past 30 years. At a broader level Ian Stewart, *Roasting Chestnuts: The Mythology of Maritime Political Culture* (Vancouver, UBC Press, 1994) and Ian McKay and Scott Milsom, eds., *Toward a New Maritimes* (Charlottetown, Ragweed Press, 1992) explore the formal and informal politics of the region. Taken together these books suggest that the regional political culture (or cultures) has been in a state of flux for the past three decades. Not only have voting patterns and the practice of politics changed during this time, but there is evidence of a new oppositional political culture within the region. The one

1 Ernest R. Forbes, “In Search of a Post-Confederation Maritime Historiography, 1900-1967”, *Acadiensis*, VIII, 1 (Autumn 1978), pp. 3-21.

2 For instance, see David Frank and Nolan Reilly, “The Emergence of the Socialist Movement in the Maritimes, 1899-1916”, in Robert J. Brym and R. James Sacouman, eds., *Underdevelopment and Social Movements in Atlantic Canada* (Toronto, 1979); Ian McKay, ed., *For a Working Class Culture in Canada: A Selection of Colin McKay’s Writings on Sociology and Political Economy, 1897-1939* (St. John’s, 1996).

3 E.R. Forbes, *The Maritime Rights Movement, 1919-1927: A Study in Canadian Regionalism* (Montreal, 1979); Margaret Conrad, “The 1950s: The Decade of Development”, in E.R. Forbes and D.A. Muise, eds., *The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation* (Toronto/Fredericton, 1993).

element of the political culture that appears to have remained constant with much of the population is support for some form of state economic intervention. This may help explain the recent improvement in the NDP's fortunes within the region.

The political lives of John Crosbie and Clyde Wells intersected at key moments in the history of Newfoundland and Canada. Joey Smallwood recruited both Crosbie and Wells to be provincial Liberal candidates in 1966. Crosbie served as a cabinet minister before resigning in 1969 (along with Clyde Wells) and challenging Smallwood's leadership. He later joined the Conservative Party and served as a minister in Frank Moores' government. In 1976 he moved to federal politics and served as minister of finance in Joe Clark's short-lived minority government of 1979. After a failed attempt to win the federal Conservative leadership in 1983, Crosbie went on to hold several important cabinet portfolios under Brian Mulroney, including justice, transport, international trade and fisheries. In the last two positions he helped negotiate two free trade agreements and was forced to close the northern cod fishery. He was also the Tories' regional minister for Atlantic Canada and the minister in charge of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA). Crosbie is widely regarded as one of Canada's more colourful political speakers and wordsmiths. Expectations were high when he published his memoirs, *No Holds Barred: My Life in Politics* (Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1997).

In some ways, Crosbie's memoirs fulfil their promise. Although rewritten by journalist Geoffrey Stevens, *No Holds Barred* contains plenty of Crosbie's often ill-tempered wit. Some of his skewering of opponents and recounting of one-liners from the House of Commons is entertaining, but it becomes wearisome. Crosbie's jabs at "the forces of political correctness" (read feminists) seem pathological. *No Holds Barred* covers a lot of territory, ranging from Crosbie's "pursuit of leadership" at the provincial and federal levels (he is terribly ambitious), to his career as a Mulroney cabinet minister (he was terribly competent), to the Airbus scandal (Mulroney was innocent) and to the "Kim Campbell Debacle" (he was not an admirer). Crosbie's analysis of the Smallwood era in Newfoundland politics is particularly interesting. He portrays Smallwood as dictatorial, corrupt and willing to throw provincial money at any investor with a half-baked development plan (proposals were never subjected to feasibility studies!) Smallwood used the cult of personality that built up around him to dominate politics. He hand-picked candidates and local party presidents and did not tolerate dissent. The premier's office controlled all patronage. Crosbie paints himself and Wells as reformers who stood up to Smallwood. Crosbie, though, was willing to "endorse" some "underhanded" (if not corrupt) practices himself in order to put an end to the Smallwood era. Crosbie claims to have cleaned up the way the government dealt with investors when he was provincial finance minister and to have helped modernize the political process. This did not mean an end to patronage, though. Crosbie remained a steadfast defender of the practice throughout his career, arguing that it was essential to the party system. Indeed, one of his roles as a "regional" cabinet minister in the Mulroney government was to distribute the spoils to deserving supporters.

Memoirs inevitably include some egoism, and the best provide thoughtful reflection as well. But Crosbie's memoirs are little more than a spirited defence of almost every aspect of his public life. This is particularly true of Crosbie's years in the Mulroney cabinet. There are interesting anecdotes and some insights into decision-

making on issues such as the closure of the northern cod fisheries and the attempt to save the Meech Lake Accord from Clyde Wells, but there is little thoughtfulness. Crosbie, for instance, helped guide the free trade legislation through Parliament and knew as much about the issue as any other politician, but he never reflects on why he thought the policy would be good for Canada and Newfoundland. Instead, Crosbie continues to indulge in partisan name-calling, characterizing the policy's opponents as "cultural literati", "encyclopedia peddlars" and "CBC snivelers". It would have been more informative if Crosbie had considered the impact free trade has had on Canada and Newfoundland. This applies as well to Crosbie's treatment of ACOA, for which he was responsible. ACOA is the last remnant of regional development policy in Atlantic Canada, but Crosbie tells us almost nothing about what the agency did or was supposed to do, nor does he attempt to assess its impact. All we get are general statements regarding how good it was for the region.

Crosbie claims to be a Red Tory on social issues, but a fiscal conservative. His positions, though, were flexible. Time and again Crosbie recounts incidents where he tempered his fiscal conservatism because he knew that it would not play well in Newfoundland, which depended heavily on federal transfer payments and income support. He was sympathetic to the Forget Commission's attempt to reform/dismantle the unemployment insurance system in 1986, but he opposed it vigorously in cabinet as he knew his constituents' position. Likewise, in 1993 he fought with cabinet colleagues to get a better package for Newfoundland fishers who were being displaced by the closure of the northern cod fishery. This pitted him against Quebec members who wanted to punish Clyde Wells for opposing Meech Lake. While a supporter of Conservative initiatives such as free trade, Crosbie was no ideologue. He recognized what was politically feasible in his home province and implicitly acknowledged that the political culture of Newfoundland embraced the belief that the state had a central role to play in regional affairs.

Claire Hoy's *Clyde Wells: A Political Biography* (Toronto, Stoddart, 1992) presents Wells as being quite different from Crosbie, both as a man and as a politician. Wells and Crosbie both began their provincial political careers in the Smallwood cabinet but the similarities end there. Crosbie was a political animal; indeed, his memoirs suggest that he was constantly managing his political career, carefully calculating each next step to greater power. Wells, on the other hand, was a reluctant politician. The difference, Hoy suggests, arises from Crosbie's family background of old merchant money and Wells' experience of growing up poor and constantly being concerned about his financial well-being. After defecting from the Smallwood government and spending a short period as a Liberal Reformer (with Crosbie), Wells left political life to pursue a lucrative career as a corporate lawyer. He assumed leadership of the Liberal Party in 1987 and became premier in 1989. There were other differences between the two men as well. Crosbie was a pragmatic compromiser, but Wells, according to Hoy, was unbendable, an ideologue who, once his mind was made up, would not change it. This was the Wells who adamantly refused to endorse the Meech Lake Accord. Ultimately, this is the Wells that Hoy is trying to understand, and much of the book is devoted to Wells' role in scuttling Meech Lake. Hoy clearly admires Wells, the "guy who couldn't be bullied by Mulroney", and who opposed Meech Lake on the grounds that it undermined provincial equality and a strong central government. This admiration, however, is tempered by a recognition of how difficult

it is to deal with a person who is so morally certain of his position. One reporter described Wells as having “the God syndrome real bad” (p. 232).

Hoy also explores other issues. He examines the corruption of the Smallwood years and Wells’ attempts to modernize the political system in the 1990s. Although Wells presented himself as an opponent of patronage, Hoy provides examples of the persistence of old practices. Indeed Wells’ autocratic management style resembled that of Smallwood as well, and although there is little evidence that Wells tried to manipulate the political process as the province’s Father of Confederation had, he too centralized decision-making in the premier’s office.

The theme that dominates this book concerns the tension between Wells and the political culture that surrounded him. Hoy describes Wells as “a most unNewfoundlandish Newfoundlander” (p.139). While this can be seen in small things, such as his oratorical style — his was dull and humourless compared to fellow Newfoundland politicians such as Crosbie and Brian Peckford — it is most evident in Wells’ approach to economic policy. Writing in 1992 (before the election of Mike Harris, it should be noted) Hoy argues that Wells was the most conservative politician in the country. He cut government spending both because he thought it was necessary and on principle. This was done by renegeing on contracts with civil servants (à la Bob Rae), eliminating public sector jobs and reducing social assistance benefits at the very time that the northern cod fishery was being closed. Wells was so committed to fiscal conservatism that he opposed any state ownership and insisted on a clawback of the meagre benefits that the fishers received from Ottawa should they be lucky enough to find other work. This ideological conservatism set him apart from most Newfoundland politicians and, one suspects, most Newfoundlanders. Many of the Wells critics Hoy interviewed complained of Wells’ lack of compassion and suggested that he had forgotten where he came from. Wells was thus different from the pragmatic Crosbie. Wells’ opposition to Meech Lake was, at least in part, based on his belief in a strong central government. In this, he was a lone voice from the Atlantic region, where most provincial governments were seeking increased powers. His position, though, reflected a realistic assessment of the problems facing poor regions: “what use is power when there is no money to pay for the things you have jurisdiction over” (p. 151). On this issue, Wells may have understood his province’s — and perhaps Atlantic Canada’s — best interests better than most.

Did the election of Wells — who has since left politics and been replaced by Brian Tobin — suggest that Newfoundlanders had fallen in love with neo-conservatism? This seems unlikely. Hoy credits his victory to disenchantment with his Conservative predecessors, and it was a marginal victory at that, as the Conservatives actually won most of the popular vote. It is difficult to believe that Newfoundlanders would advocate a smaller state as they grapple with the consequences of the closure of the cod fishery. Hoy thinks that Wells’ neo-conservatism might provide opportunities for the NDP in Newfoundland, although the party has never done well there in the past. He argues that all Newfoundland governments, Conservative and Liberal, have been left-of-centre, and that as a consequence “there has never been any room for the NDP” (p. 312). (Moreover, the party did not win any popularity contests with its opposition to the seal hunt in the 1970s.) According to Hoy, Wells’ decision to renege on contracts, his hostility toward unions generally and his right-wing orientation may have driven union members into the NDP camp, but the results of subsequent

provincial elections have not borne out Hoy's prediction. However, in the recent federal election the NDP increased its share of the vote from three per cent to more than 18 per cent. Hoy's book is best read together with Crosbie's memoirs, as they show how Newfoundland politics was "modernized" during the late 1960s and early 1970s and demonstrate the difficulties in applying a neo-conservative world-view to the region in the 1990s.⁴

J. Angus MacLean's memoirs, *Making It Home* (Charlottetown, Ragweed Press, 1998), provide a good sense of his different style of political leadership. Arguably Prince Edward Island's most successful politician in the 20th century, MacLean represented the province in the House of Commons for 25 years before taking over the leadership of the provincial Progressive Conservative Party in 1976. He served as premier between 1979 and 1981. This charming book paints a picture of a politician quite unlike the others examined in this essay. MacLean emerges, above all else, as a humble man for whom political and business success have not been all-consuming. Indeed, his reflections on his long political career occupy a relatively small part of the book. MacLean's humility and perspective were shaped by his wartime experience as a bomber pilot in Europe. He was shot down behind enemy lines but managed to avoid capture and return safely to England. MacLean devotes more than a third of his book to this saga, noting that the experience shaped his attitude to politics and life. MacLean is grateful to be alive when so many of his comrades were not so lucky, and he attributes his escape to the selfless and heroic actions of members of the Dutch and French underground. He repeatedly acknowledges his debts to others and one gets the sense that his wartime experiences made him aware that his successes were not all of his own making. MacLean is therefore able to avoid the "great man" syndrome that afflicts so many politicians.

MacLean's discussion of his political life is relatively brief and traces only the broad outlines of his career. He was elected in 1951 and served for six years as fisheries minister in John Diefenbaker's government. He admired Diefenbaker for his commitment to regional concerns but acknowledges that he knew little about Atlantic Canada. Unfortunately, MacLean says little about his experience as a fisheries minister and the regional minister from Atlantic Canada. We do learn that he was a champion of state-sponsored regional development; indeed, in his first speech to the House of Commons in 1951 — in the midst of the Cold War — he rather cleverly advocated the location of some key industries in less developed regions of Canada on the grounds that this would make them more difficult targets for the Soviet Union. His commitment to regional concerns was also evident when, as premier, he tried to have the amelioration of regional disparities written into the new Canadian Constitution.

MacLean conceives the Maritime character as essentially rural. He was raised on a small Prince Edward Island farm and is suspicious of urbanization, choosing instead

4 There is surprisingly little information on the Peckford years in either account. Hoy's analysis is limited in other ways as well. In his preface, he acknowledges the work of a Newfoundland research assistant who dug up anecdotes and stories for the Ontario-based author. This, Hoy notes appreciatively, allowed him to avoid moving to Newfoundland to do his research. The distance shows: Hoy depends on political, business and labour leaders for insights and rarely provides the point of view of the fisher or the front-line civil servant. Had he done so, the book might have provided a clearer picture of Newfoundland politics.

to extol the virtues of rural people and their communities. During his political career he defended the “rural way of life” in Atlantic Canada, and the country as a whole, and regularly talked about the need for a rural renaissance to stem outmigration and decline. How such a renaissance would take place was not clear. As premier he briefly imposed a moratorium on the construction of shopping malls and paved rural roads. He felt powerless, though, to reverse the consolidation of schools and services that had been increasing since the late 1960s. MacLean’s rural commitment is romantic and, in some senses, admirable, but one would like to know more about his understanding of the causes of rural decline. He laments the mechanization of the agricultural sector and the rise of agri-business but does not explain how this transformation is taking place. Who are the key players orchestrating this and what is the state’s role in the “modernization” of farming? Given MacLean’s commitment to regional development and rural life it is surprising that his book does not discuss federal regional development policies that targeted rural areas, such as the Agriculture and Rural Development Agency (introduced by the Diefenbaker government) and the Fund for Regional Economic Development (under which a comprehensive development plan was designed for the province of Prince Edward Island in the 1960s).

There are few explicit statements about Island political culture in this book. We learn that “treating” continued on Prince Edward Island into the 1970s, although MacLean himself opposed the practice, and that party traditionalism shaped voting patterns. MacLean was sensitive to this, and he was always cautious to condemn policies and politicians rather than the Liberal Party. To criticize the party was to challenge the way many Islanders defined themselves. Although MacLean’s membership in the Progressive Conservative Party was, he admits, the result of traditional family loyalties, he did not follow the party blindly. He is scathing in his assessment of the Mulroney government and the Free Trade Agreement, which, in his opinion, further marginalizes the Maritimes. It is unfortunate that MacLean does not say more about the type of Toryism that has existed on the Island for the last 40 years. The province has produced a number of prominent Red Tories, including Heath MacQuarrie and David MacDonald, as well as himself, but he says little about the Red Tory phenomenon in Prince Edward Island or in Atlantic Canada.

Peter Kavanagh’s *John Buchanan: The Art of Political Survival* (Halifax, Formac, 1988) examines the political life of the man who led Nova Scotia’s Progressive Conservative government throughout the 1980s. In some ways this is the most unsatisfying of the three political biographies under review. It says little about Buchanan’s life before he entered formal politics in 1967. We learn that the future Tory premier grew up in Cape Breton, worked in a steel mill during the summers after his father died and then attended Mount Allison University and Dalhousie Law School. However, Kavanagh does not adequately contextualize these early years nor does he demonstrate how they shaped Buchanan, either as a man or a politician. Buchanan came of age in the 1950s, “the decade of development” in the Maritimes as Margaret Conrad phrases it, a time when the welfare state was developing in Canada and regional elites clamoured for federal aid to rehabilitate the Atlantic Canadian economy. The federal government came to play an increasingly important role in the economy during the next 30 years. This would seem to be an important context for understanding the issues Buchanan faced as premier from 1978 until 1991.

Written in the aftermath of the surprising re-election of Nova Scotia's scandal-ridden Progressive Conservative government in 1988, Kavanagh's book focuses on Buchanan's political resiliency. How did Buchanan escape blame for the scandals of the 1980s that enveloped members of his cabinet such as Rollie Thornhill and Edmund Morris? Kavanagh suggests that a number of factors may explain "Teflon John's" success, including significant internal divisions within the two opposition parties. But ultimately he emphasizes Buchanan's personality. Kavanagh portrays Buchanan as a "clan chief", a father figure who exudes competence and who, most importantly, is not ideological: "there is the obvious appeal of the father figure at work in the province's political culture. This accounts in part for Buchanan's success. He is able to reassure significant sectors of society that change under his rule will be moderated change. Just as Buchanan is unlikely to radically restructure the province's social relations, so too are the citizens unlikely to demand such change" (p. 167). Where does one begin? Let's start with some history. Buchanan may have tried to convey the sense that his actions were "moderate", but his administration restructured social relations in fairly significant ways. While few provincial governments embrace organized labour, the Buchanan Tories were particularly hostile to unions. The "Michelin Bill", introduced in 1979, is one of the more regressive pieces of labour legislation in the country.⁵ Nowhere is this infamous legislation mentioned in Kavanagh's book.

Kavanagh's personality-based explanation for Buchanan's success ultimately falls back on the conservative stereotype of Maritime political culture: Nova Scotians will always vote for stability. Another element of this stereotype concerns patronage in provincial politics. Kavanagh embraces this characterization and devotes a whole chapter to "Rum and Roads". Undoubtedly there is some truth to the stereotype, but one wonders if treating and patronage are any less prevalent in other rural parts of Canada. Although Kavanagh notes that the political process in the province has become more "modern" — although we are not really told how — he conveys the impression that Nova Scotian voters are unsophisticated rubes willing to sell their vote for a mickey of rum. The conservative stereotypes that Kavanagh accepts so uncritically allow him to avoid thoughtful consideration of Nova Scotian society and, ultimately, to avoid discussions of class and power.

Kavanagh's book does, nonetheless, have some interesting insights into Nova Scotia political culture. He notes the shift in the NDP's base of support in the early 1980s. A leadership dispute between Halifax-based Alexa McDonough and Cape Breton's Paul MacEwan marked the NDP's transformation from a party grounded in working-class Cape Breton to one which increasingly drew support from urban and middle-class areas of the mainland. Tensions between the mainland and Cape Breton were evident in the Liberal Party as well during the early 1980s after Sandy Cameron, a mainlander, defeated former Sydney schoolteacher Vince MacLean in a rancorous leadership race. These divisions eventually healed, but they suggest the importance of region to political differences within the province. More importantly, Kavanagh

5 For a good overview of the attempts to organize Michelin workers in Nova Scotia, which is as critical of union leadership as it is of the government, see Ken Clare, "Michelin: the Fortress That Didn't Fall", in Ian McKay and Scott Milsom, eds., *Toward A New Maritimes* (Charlottetown, 1992).

argues that most Nova Scotians favour state economic intervention. According to Kavanagh this position dates from Robert Stanfield's Tory administration of the 1950s and has persisted through the 1980s. The all-party commitment to continued state involvement in the Sydney steel plant throughout the 1980s is, he believes, evidence of this. Kavanagh's description of the consensus that exists in Nova Scotia sounds similar to Hoy's description of the position of the traditional parties in Newfoundland politics before the arrival of Clyde Wells. The political consensus concerning the merits of state intervention has disappeared in Nova Scotia since the publication of Kavanagh's book, but the idea, it would seem, continues to draw strong support from many Nova Scotians.

Michel Cormier and Achille Michaud's *Richard Hatfield: Power and Disobedience* (Fredericton, Goose Lane Editions, 1992) is a more successful biography. Originally published in French as *Richard Hatfield: un dernier train pour Hartland*, this well-written account of New Brunswick's colourful premier succeeds where the Buchanan book did not. Cormier and Michaud analyze the social context of Hatfield's formative years and political life. They assess Hatfield's "Red Toryism" and suggest that it drew from Nova Scotia's Robert Stanfield — Hatfield was studying law at Dalhousie University when Stanfield was elected in 1954. They believe it was inspired as well by his parents, who taught him to help those "to whom fate had been less kind". Hatfield's father, a Hartland businessman and Member of Parliament, was well-known for exercising a paternalism not uncommon among small-town businessmen in pre-1950 New Brunswick. What Hatfield took from the Red Toryism of Stanfield was a pragmatic approach to politics and a "liberal tolerance". Beyond this, the authors argue, he had "no ideological anchor". This pragmatism — which resembled that of Crosbie — was the hallmark of Hatfield's career, confounding traditional Tories and opponents alike.

Cormier and Michaud trace the key periods of Hatfield's life, from his early years growing up in a political family to his election as premier in 1970, and then through the drug scandals of the early 1980s, his devastating defeat at the hands of Frank McKenna's Liberals in 1987 and, finally, to his early death in 1991. The picture the authors paint is of a very untraditional Conservative. Hatfield was as interested in the arts as he was in economic development, he loved to jet-set around the world, and he had style. He was also a strong promoter of biculturalism in a province that was one-third Acadian. This was particularly anomalous as the Tories had long ignored — if not expressed open hostility to — Acadian issues. Hatfield loved the grand gesture, such as declaring Canada bilingual or repatriating the Constitution, but lost interest when it came to policy details. As Cormier and Michaud note, he often failed to attend his own government's cabinet meetings.

Two themes dominate this study of Hatfield, and they both shed light on the province's political culture during the past 20 years. The first concerns the scandals Hatfield faced throughout his tenure as premier. Some were fairly traditional political scandals. In the 1970s Hatfield and his government were accused of demanding political contributions from firms receiving government contracts and of obstructing a police investigation into those activities. An inquiry exonerated the government of the obstruction charge but the influence-peddling allegations were never fully examined. The Conservative Party's bagman, Francis Atkinson, was, however, eventually convicted of charges relating to a kickback scheme. The details of this

scandal are interesting, but the authors' assessment of what the scandal says about the evolution of New Brunswick's political culture is more so. According to Cormier and Michaud, the kickback scandal reflected Conservative misunderstanding of how the "rules of politics [and of government] had changed" since they last held power in the 1950s. Louis Robichaud's Liberal administration of the 1960s oversaw the expansion, professionalization and unionization of the province's civil service. These developments meant that the Tories could no longer replace civil servants with their own people, which made it more difficult to attract active supporters and get donations for party coffers. Furthermore, as government functions became more complex, the premier and cabinet ministers increasingly surrounded themselves with professional technocrats and became less accessible to individual party members. With access to power limited and fewer patronage appointments available, Tory fundraisers adopted the kickback scheme to finance the party's ever-increasing expenses, many of which were incurred by Hatfield himself. The party apparently bought him a house and paid for his extensive personal travel. Interestingly, public revelation of this scheme changed the rules of politics all the more. In 1974 the Hatfield administration passed the Political Process Financing Act, which regulated financial contributions to political parties. Despite his involvement in the Atkinson affair, Hatfield was thus able to paint himself as a reformer.

Cormier and Michaud also consider the scandals relating to Hatfield's personal life, particularly the allegations of drug use in the 1980s. They provide a fascinating discussion of the discovery of marijuana in Hatfield's luggage during the Queen's Royal Tour of 1984, and Hatfield's subsequent indictment, trial and acquittal. They also consider allegations that he used cocaine with university students. As well they explore the sensitive topic of his sexual orientation. Hatfield was a bachelor and there were many rumours about his sexuality.⁶ The Liberal leader, Joseph Daigle, called him a "faded pansy" during the 1978 provincial election campaign but, according to Cormier and Michaud, the remark hurt the Liberals, not Hatfield. "Daigle's personal attack on Hatfield showed that . . . [he] did not respect the moral code of New Brunswick's Anglophone society. Whether Hatfield was a faded pansy was not the issue. Such things were simply not said" (p. 103). That Hatfield was unhurt by the allegation and went on to win the election reflected the sense of propriety in a province where "people do not talk about homosexuality; they ignore it" (p. 232). The premier's private life became harder to ignore after the drug scandals put him on the front pages of national newspapers. During the 1987 election campaign the Liberals "and others" carried on a more subtle "whisper campaign" regarding the premier's sexuality. The Liberals portrayed their leader, Frank McKenna, as a "family man", surrounding him with his wife and children at all campaign gatherings. Cormier and Michaud's analysis of the reaction of New Brunswickers to Hatfield's personal "scandals" suggests that in New Brunswick's political culture a politician's personal life was not an issue so long as it remained personal. Politicians who allowed their personal business to become public, however, could expect to pay a price.

6 The importance of politicians conforming to the traditional family construction in the 1950s is also noted in MacLean's memoirs. Commenting on his improved electoral showings after getting married, he suggested that "people seemed more supportive of a family man and his wife".

The other major theme in Cormier and Michaud's biography concerns Hatfield's successful overtures to the province's Acadian community. Until the 1970s, the Conservative Party represented the "cream of anglophone society" and was largely closed to the province's other linguistic group. The Acadian community responded by almost always supporting Liberal candidates. The Liberal grip on francophone constituencies tightened in the 1960s with the election of Louis Robichaud as premier and the introduction of his government's Equal Opportunity reforms. Their intention, supposedly, was to improve the educational and social services in the poorer counties of the province, a disproportionate number of which were Acadian. According to Cormier and Michaud, Hatfield was an unusual Conservative. Long fascinated by Acadian history and culture, he saw himself as someone who understood and sympathized with New Brunswick's francophone population and with the Québécois as well. He even took out a membership in the Parti Québécois and travelled secretly with René Lévesque during the 1970 provincial election campaign in Quebec. Although sympathetic to the plight of Québécois and Acadians, Hatfield opposed separation, preferring Trudeau's bilingual/bicultural approach to federalism.

On the provincial stage, Hatfield courted influential Acadian leaders and candidates, appointing them to important cabinet positions and making a number of symbolic overtures. He continued Robichaud's Equal Opportunity initiatives, supported the principle of bilingualism in the province (although he did little to ensure that legislation had any teeth) and eventually passed Bill 88 in 1981 which was supposed to protect collective rights. Hatfield's efforts to woo Acadian voters brought some success in the 1970s, but the Conservative Party's real breakthrough came in the election of 1982. Under the leadership of Hatfield's Acadian lieutenant, Jean-Maurice Simard, who was advised by a Parti Québécois strategist, the party gained the support of many Acadians, some of whom had formerly supported the nationalist Parti Acadien. The party's support of bilingualism and vague promises concerning the decentralization of services formed the core of the campaign. In short the Conservative Party became a reasonable political choice for Acadian New Brunswickers during the 1970s and 1980s. Tory success was brief, as five years later Frank McKenna's Liberals swept the province. Nevertheless, the changes in traditional voting patterns were significant and may have set the stage for NDP gains in Acadian ridings during the most recent federal election.

The authors' decision to focus on scandal and the integration of Acadians into the Conservative Party means that other matters receive less attention in this book. They provide little analysis of economic issues. Certainly culture, language and education were part of Acadian grievances during the Hatfield years, but economic disparity between northern and southern New Brunswick was at least as important. There is, however, no discussion of Hatfield's approach to economic development in the north. K.C. Irving, the province's most prominent industrialist and a dominant figure in its political, economic and social life, receives virtually no mention. We are left in the dark concerning Hatfield's relationship with the industrialist and Irving's influence on state policy.

Ian Stewart's *Roasting Chestnuts: The Mythology of Maritime Political Culture* explicitly examines Maritime political culture. This is an interesting and, at times, clever book. It is unfortunate that it reads like a political science dissertation with uneven prose, often laden with jargon and not particularly accessible to the general

reader. Stewart challenges “outdated political stereotypes”, or “chestnuts”, that have long been accepted inside and outside the Maritimes and which create the impression that the region is a “pre-modern hinterland in which corrupt practices and traditional loyalties predominate” (p. 4). Stewart suggests that these stereotypes may once have had a basis, but he also argues that they need to be tested against contemporary political attitudes of Maritimers in order to develop a “new set of images” that more accurately “capture Maritime political reality” (p. 4). Assessing attitudes and political culture is a tricky business and Stewart is careful to point out the limitations of his methodology and conclusions. He uses a wide variety of sources, sometimes in imaginative ways, drawing from electoral data, newspapers, interregional traffic patterns, national and regional surveys of political attitudes — including some of his own — and a survey of liquor purchases in Prince Edward Island in months during which elections were held.

The “chestnuts” Stewart seeks to roast are varied. In one chapter he considers a much-cited article on regional political cultures, published in 1974 by political scientists Richard Simeon and David Elkins. It concluded that Maritimers were a disaffected lot (at least in political terms) compared to the rest of the country. Stewart examines post-election questionnaires from the 1979 and 1984 elections and concludes that Maritime levels of disaffection and distrust of government have fallen into line with other regions of the country. Another chapter disputes the conventional wisdom that the three Maritime provinces share a common political culture. Using the results of a mail survey he suggests that opinions on a variety of issues including Maritime union, dependency on the federal government and provincialism differ depending on whether one lives in Nova Scotia or New Brunswick. These differences emerge even among residents of the counties on the interprovincial border, suggesting, he concludes, that provincial borders shape political culture. In another chapter Stewart draws from his survey data to refute the notion that the region’s Loyalist heritage created a political culture characterized by apathy, patronage, anti-Americanism and statism. He uses data from contemporary New Brunswick to test the case for a “Loyalist sub-culture” and finds little evidence that Loyalist descendants are any more likely than non-Loyalist descendants to exhibit these traits. Other chapters challenge stereotypes concerning Prince Edward Island’s political culture, considering the prevalence of treating during elections and the claim that Islanders always try to elect provincial governments with the same politics as the governing party in Ottawa. He notes that since 1980 Islanders have been much more independent in their voting, often siding with the “out” party in Ottawa so as to ensure that their concerns do not get buried in the backbenches of the government side in the House of Commons.

Two of the most interesting discussions in Stewart’s book deal with political parties in the region. Chapter Six challenges the stereotype, long propounded by Murray Beck, that there are no ideological differences between the Liberal and Conservative parties in Nova Scotia. Stewart uses mail-in surveys and surveys of leadership convention delegates for both parties, taken over the past 20 years, to examine the claim. He finds some differences in the candidates, activists and supporters of the two parties. Conservatives tended to take more right-wing positions on a number of issues, such as the role of unions and government in society. Another chapter assesses the many explanations for the electoral failure of the NDP in the

Maritimes. Stewart argues that the CCF-NDP's failure in the region has been "theoretically over determined, but empirically under determined" (p. 62). He dismisses the idea that the regional party system disadvantages the NDP any more than in any other region of the country and likewise rejects suggestions that the party has been hurt by internal divisions, though there have been many, particularly in Nova Scotia. Stewart also questions those scholars who point to the region's "idiosyncratic social structure" (compared to other Canadians, Maritimers are more likely to be poor, Protestant, of British stock and rural) to explain the party's failure. Using census data and his mail-in surveys he concludes that only the rural nature of the region provides any help in understanding the NDP's lack of appeal, noting that "members of the working class are more likely to support left-wing political alternatives if they live in working class communities or in constituencies where the left has customarily been a political force" (p. 49).

Finally, Stewart addresses the age-old notion that Maritime political culture is too conservative and traditionalist to support a social democratic alternative, even though the NDP advocates positions which should be popular in a poor region. According to Stewart, this stereotype was once true but is no more. Using recent popular opinion surveys, he argues that since the mid-1980s Maritimers are only marginally more conservative and traditional in their voting patterns than other Canadians. In the absence of an explanatory theory, then, Stewart suggests that the CCF-NDP is really a "prisoner of the past" (p. 63). The historical existence of traditionalism in the region has meant that the CCF-NDP is unable to make political inroads and therefore is not seen as a realistic alternative. "The forces that initially undercut the party may have ebbed, but the electoral damage may already have been done. The party's name may have become synonymous with failure; its candidates may have come to be perceived as losers" (p. 63).

Much has happened in recent years that challenges Stewart's revised images of Maritime political culture. The two traditional parties have, for instance, become virtually indistinguishable in terms of fiscal and social policy (particularly in Nova Scotia) as they embrace neo-liberalism. As well, the recent success of the NDP throughout the region suggests that the party has not been entirely hamstrung by its past failures. It is unfair to criticize Stewart for not predicting the future, and it should be noted that although the book was published in 1994 much of his research was conducted in the 1980s. Stewart's research ended at a crucial, and unfortunate, moment for it was precisely at this time that neo-liberal concerns about deficits and debts were growing within the federal state. By the early 1990s provincial governments throughout Canada were espousing these "common-sense" ideas. The result has been the steady dismantling of Canada's welfare state, such that it was, in the name of economy. It would be hard to argue that any region was harder hit by this process than Atlantic Canada, where federal transfers have long played an important role in the regional economy generally and individual survival more specifically.

What has been the impact of this change on Stewart's image of regional politics? The recent regional success of the federal NDP suggests that some Maritimers are reverting to a regional protest culture that emerged at other moments of economic crisis, such as with the Maritime Rights Movement of the 1920s and, to a lesser extent, the Atlantic Revolution of the 1950s. In both of these instances they expressed their protest through a traditional party. The increasing numbers of Maritimers who

are turning to the NDP in the late 1990s, rather than the Tories or the Liberals, may reveal another element of regional political culture not discussed by Stewart but hinted at by Kavanagh. NDP successes in the Maritimes, coming as they do at a time when both the Tories and the Liberals (not to mention Reform) have embraced neo-liberalism, may reflect Maritime commitment to using the state to mediate the effects of capitalism. The abandonment of these values by the mainline parties in the late 1990s suggests that it is they, and not the NDP (which despite its slide towards the centre of the political spectrum has maintained at least some commitment to the welfare state), who may be out of touch with the region's political culture.

Ian McKay and Scott Milsom, eds., *Toward a New Maritimes* provides further insight into the nature of this political culture. *New Maritimes* was a popular regional magazine with an unabashed left-of-centre perspective that published investigative journalism, book reviews, original literature and history. Throughout its existence from 1981 to 1996 it articulated opinions and ideas that rarely made it into the mainstream press. The magazine's contents were unified by a commitment to an accessible "political education" that avoided abstract or doctrinaire theorizing. McKay and Milsom were editors of *New Maritimes*, and this is the second collection of its "greatest hits". The first, published in 1987, focused on aspects of the region's resource industries and on the regional political economy more generally.⁷ *Toward a New Maritimes*, however, has a "much more cultural or political bent" (p. 10). It is organized around general themes and explores political issues at the local and personal level. The essays in this collection reveal a political culture of resistance within the region, both in the past and the present.

Historians will be particularly interested in the first section of this collection, entitled "Reclaiming Histories of Resistance". There was always a strong historical emphasis in the articles and literature that appeared in *New Maritimes*. As the editors note, they sought to provide people with a "'usable past' — images and ideas we can call upon in the present" (p. 15). The readings in this section provide evidence of Nova Scotia's radical and semi-radical past, including the life of Cape Breton's J. B. McLachlan, the electoral successes of the CCF in the 1940s and the "third way" of the Antigonish movement. One of the most engaging pieces in the book is George Elliott Clarke's interview with Rocky Jones, a prominent African Nova Scotian activist. In the interview Jones outlines the history of the Black Power movement in Nova Scotia, placing it in the North American context and providing important insights into the political and social divisions within the African Nova Scotian community in the late 1980s (when this interview was conducted). He also discusses the negative impact of the "misguided humanitarianism" of liberal social workers, seen most dramatically in the forced relocation of African Nova Scotians from Africville in the 1960s. In another article Clarke explains how the African Nova Scotian community became politically mobilized in the 1980s after the provincial justice system acquitted a white man of killing an African Nova Scotian resident of Digby. The resistance of racial communities is also the subject of Marilyn Millward's examination of the Shubenacadie residential school and everyday opposition to it in the region's

⁷ Gary Burrill and Ian McKay, eds., *People, Resources, and Power: Critical Perspectives on Underdevelopment and Primary Industries in the Atlantic Region* (Fredericton, 1987).

Mi'kmaq community. Millward show how Mi'kmaq parents and children tried to keep their families together in the 1930s and 1940s and avoid the “institutionalized cruelty” of the school.

Other sections of the book examine more recent examples of resistance. One set of readings considers the impact reductions in the welfare state have had on people in the region. It explores the increased hardship for poor Maritimers and the privatization of welfare — such as the growth of food banks — that has resulted from the government downsizing that began in the 1980s. Meanwhile the state continues its corporate welfare programmes, especially in the resource sectors where it has encouraged “modernization”. Essays on the fishing and agricultural sectors illustrate how these initiatives have hurt small producers in the region and caused long-term problems. Most importantly, all the essays in this section highlight groups within the Maritimes which have opposed rollbacks in social welfare and the growth of corporate welfare. The third and fourth sections of the book explore the politics of gender, sexuality and the environment — issues that became increasingly important to regional activists in the late 1980s and early 1990s. “The Personal is Political” contains essays on feminism and transition houses, a Nova Scotia teacher’s struggles against homophobia and the fear of AIDS, and the rise of a gay rights movement in the region. As its title — “Thinking Globally, Acting Locally” — suggests, the fourth section of this book deals with the efforts of local activists to do their part to solve larger problems. Particularly interesting are essays on political mobilization around environmental issues and regional peace activists’ successful opposition to the location of a Litton military plant in Prince Edward Island.

The last section of the book, “Regionalism and Resistance: Mapping A New Politics of Culture”, contains a disparate group of essays — perhaps too disparate — which tackle issues related to the region’s perceived conservatism and efforts to challenge traditionalism. Essays explore the conservative and traditional portrayal of Maritimers in beer commercials, the cultural resistance of Acadian Nova Scotians and the rise of alternative theatre. The most interesting contributions to this section come from Gary Burrill and deal with the left’s lack of success in the Maritimes. Some of Burrill’s essays focus on problems within the left itself. In one essay he suggests that left activists need to “lighten up” and develop a sense of humour. In another he argues that traditional parties are successful in the region because they are more “rooted” in small Maritime communities; the candidates have more connections and are therefore better known and liked: “It is not very surprising, given this, that left-wing politics based on ideas and strategies drawn from away have never gotten very far here. The crazy ‘Marxist-Leninist’ groups of the New Left ultimately had to fold their tents in the Maritimes because, among other things, their ideas sounded as though they had come from Montreal, which they had, and their members stuttered and stammered too much when people asked them who their father was” (p. 338). The future of the left in the Maritimes, he argues, is to be found in building home-grown alternatives.

Perhaps most instructive is another of Burrill’s contributions in which he argues that Maritimers’ traditional voting patterns are related to the success of business elites in the region in co-opting grass-roots protests. Burrill believes the phenomenon began as far back as 1925 when the region abandoned the Farmer and Labour parties and backed Tory candidates who wrapped themselves in the flag of Maritime Rights. Burrill criticizes historian E.R. Forbes for viewing this as a rational and progressive choice:

The working class of the Maritimes has been taking a solid going-over for many, many years: it is almost as though the worse it has become, the more we have voted for people and parties that stand for a maldistribution of resources. This is not *rational* — it requires an explanation . . . [W]e should probably take a look at how people's thinking has been manipulated. A people's collective self-understanding is a pretty important part of their thinking. And the manipulation of regionalism has had a fair bit to do with the way the Chamber of Commerce and Board-of-Trade types have been so successful since the '20s in convincing us that they speak for the hopes and interests of the Maritime community as a whole (p. 354).

In fairness, Forbes' argument is a bit more complex, but Burrill's point is important. The business community has been at the forefront of regional protest throughout the 20th century and, in many ways, has set the agenda. This was possible as long as the traditional parties — through which the business interests worked — were flexible enough to embrace policies that gave something to the region's workers and unemployed as well as the business class.⁸ The business community's hegemony in regional politics may be in decline today, at least for the time being, as their parties of choice — the Liberals and Conservatives — have adopted neo-liberal positions that leave little room for programmes that could be identified as beneficial to the region. Moreover, the ability of these business interests to present themselves as regional advocates must surely be compromised by their support of cutbacks in social spending. These factors may go some way to explaining the recent success of the NDP in the region.

Toward a New Maritimes reveals much about Maritime political culture. The essays make it clear that the region's political history is more than a competition between the two traditional parties, described by Ian Stewart as tweedledum and tweedledee. The existence of third parties provides evidence of this, but it becomes yet clearer when we view political culture as something more than formal politics. The collection's analysis of political action at the community and personal levels demonstrates that there have been many challenges to the political status quo from Blacks, Mi'kmaq, women, anti-poverty activists and others. With few exceptions the "local" stories and issues presented in this collection were not included in the political biographies under review. Indeed, these leave the impression that the only political actors in the region were Liberal and Conservative politicians and their supporters. *Toward a New Maritimes* suggests that the region's political culture is much more complex and that there is both a past and a present with examples of resistance and opposition to the dominant parties and their ideology. In addition, *New Maritimes* can be read as a primary source. A perusal of the biographies of the contributors reveals that most were and are community activists — unionists, feminists, civil rights advocates, followers of liberation theology and social Christianity, environmentalists and gay rights advocates. Their voices are evidence of the existence of an oppositional

8 On these issues, see James P. Bickerton, *Nova Scotia, Ottawa and the Politics of Regional Development* (Toronto, 1990), chapters 5 and 6 especially.

political culture in the Maritimes at least during the 1980s and 1990s.

Collectively these books suggest that there have been significant changes in Atlantic Canada's political culture during the past several decades. The practice of politics has changed. Treating is much rarer, and although patronage continues to exist, it is moderated by the presence of professional bureaucracies and a watchful media. "Traditional" voting patterns have been altered in important ways. In the 1970s and 1980s Acadians began supporting Tories in New Brunswick, Islanders began voting provincially for parties that differed from the federal government, and the NDP's base of support in Nova Scotia shifted from industrial Cape Breton to professional areas of the urban mainland. Although these changes seem small they may have set the groundwork for the untraditional results of the recent federal election. Some of the books also suggest that it may well be incorrect to speak of a monolithic regional political culture. Newfoundlanders have long proclaimed their uniqueness, but Stewart's book suggests that the argument could also be made within the Maritime Provinces. *Toward a New Maritimes* reveals the existence of oppositional political cultures within provinces themselves. If there is such a thing as a regional political culture, it may be grounded in a general consensus concerning the preservation of the welfare state that is now being dismantled. The abandonment of state programmes by the traditional parties may have created the vacuum which has permitted a watered-down social democratic party to make gains by appealing to a hodge-podge of Red Tories, liberal Liberals, social democrats and socialists who see nowhere else to go. This will no doubt be an uneasy alliance. Only time will tell if future historians will point to the mid-1990s as a sea change in regional political culture.

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