

## Taylor Hollander, Power, Politics, and Principle: Mackenzie King and Labour, 1935–1948

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20th century, domestic service was easily the most common form of paid labour performed by Finnish Canadian women. Lindstrom digs deep into the world of Finnish maids, exploring, for example, the wide range of views maids had about their jobs, and the steps taken by maids to improve their situation. The chapter, too, looks at the North American Finnish socialist press discussions of the hardships faced by domestic servants. Some Finnish Canadian maids supported socialism and the efforts by leftist groups both to build unions among domestic servants and to nurture a radical working-class consciousness among domestic servants.

Readers of *Labour/Le Travail* might be disappointed, as I was, that so little of the text concerns overt expressions of working-class consciousness. Although Finns of many political stripes lived – and continue to live – in Canada, the fact that *Hard Work Conquers All* both begins and concludes with discussions of the Finnish Labour Temple in Thunder Bay, Ontario, a structure built and run by the Finnish labour movement, suggests that there would be more of a discussion of working-class activism and overt forms of class conflict. Indeed, beyond Lindstrom's chapter, there is little discussion of the relationships between work and labour politics, a surprising omission given Finnish North Americans' deserved reputations for their workplace, political, and community activism.

*Hard Work Conquers All* will make a strong addition to reading lists in Finnish Studies and Canadian immigration history.

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**Taylor Hollander, *Power, Politics, and Principle: Mackenzie King and Labour, 1935–1948* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 2018)**

WE'VE ALWAYS NEEDED this book. While much has been written on William Lyon Mackenzie King, and while scholars like Paul Craven have examined the earlier days of King's philosophy regarding unions and labour relations, Taylor Hollander's monograph is a timely examination of King's relationship with labour during his final run as prime minister, and when organized labour was coming to a prominence theretofore unseen.

Hollander seeks to, without wholesale abandoning the tenets of social history, recognize that no one person in this critical period did more to shape the evolution of Canadian labour relations than King. He also seeks to reinterpret King, arguing that he was neither a "weirdo PM" (15) nor a man without conviction, but rather a figure operating under a strict system of principles and vision. Rather than being the man of nebulous triangulation many see him as, King for Hollander is perceived as a man of consistent values, which were a concern for the poor, a drive to keep Canada unified, and a belief in moderate liberalism as the best ideological path forward. This did not imply political rigidity, but rather a mooring that kept King centred as he moved around in tumultuous political times, which empowered him to "demonstrate commitment and courage in the face of adversity." (17)

But this is less a history of King's relationship with labour in a general sense – although these elements are found in the book. Rather, as Hollander notes in both his introduction and conclusion, his original goal was never to write a history about King directly: his real aim was to produce a history of PC 1003: the wartime order that forever shaped the very

structure of Canadian labour relations. Here, Hollander draws on both personal and scholarly experience – including his years as an Canadian autoworker and his study of industrial relations in the United States – to contrast the labour relations terrain in Canada and the United States, arguing as King did that PC 1003, and the cautious philosophy which underpinned it, is the key reason why Canadian unions and workers have fared better than their American cousins covered under the more strident Wagner Act and its rights-based discourse which legitimized a right-to-work counter assault on trade unionism across the Republic. As Hollander notes: “Power, Politics, and Principles helps to explain why in relative terms the Canadian labour movement has fared better over time; it does not make an argument for the superiority of Canada’s collective bargaining regime.” (12)

In some ways, I find these arguments persuasive, especially in regard to King having a consistent small-l liberal ideology which defined his life’s work, both before and during his time as prime minister. This mirrors some of my own understanding of King’s eventual successor Pierre Elliott Trudeau, who I have argued had, throughout his adult life, a consistent liberalism which made him an ally of the labour-left in the 1950s, but a steadfast foe of those same forces while at 24 Sussex. While part of King’s ideological consistency was rooted in a desire to dilute the organizational capacity of the working class, Hollander shows how King sometimes resisted reactionary voices within his own cabinet when they sought to put the screws to labour.

I am less convinced, however, by the claim that the differences between PC 1003 and the Wagner Act remain the key difference maker in “the cross-national divergence in union density rates fifty years later.” (20) Again, Hollander’s view

was that Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s approach, which was seen as more unabashedly pro-labour, sowed the seeds of reaction, whereas King’s slow and ostensibly neutral approach made such a backlash less tenable: “Left relatively unscathed, PC 1003 and subsequent provincial laws proved more advantageous to workers and unions in the long run than the continually worked over, if not besieged labour law of the United States.” (18) I feel that this places far too much value on the role of these two pieces of legislation, failing to adequately consider other factors which existed both during King’s times and in the generations that followed. To Hollander’s credit, he does note in his introduction the role of anti-black racism in the United States being a special barrier to southern unionism which did not exist in Canada to the same extent, but this is a bigger factor than he makes it to be, and may well be more important than P.C. 1003-Wagner Act distinctions.

Perhaps even more important are some of the other issues which engendered divergences between the two countries. First is the existence of Québec which while during King’s time was not especially pro-worker, but which over time became a relative bastion of trade unionism. The leftward trajectory of Canadian – and Québécois – nationalism, and unions’ role therein, was something which rose largely after King’s retirement and passing. But the biggest factor may be the existence and actions of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation and New Democratic Party. Certainly, Hollander doesn’t ignore the CCF during this crucial period of history, and he notes on more than one occasion the direct and indirect pressure CCF policies and ideas put on King, and how they emboldened labour leaders to demand more of the Liberal regime. But I feel this is a much bigger story line than is shown

here, and neither the CCF nor the NDP are mentioned when it comes to analyzing the divergent union density rates in Canada and the United States. Surely, America's lack of a meaningful labour/socialist party is an at least noteworthy reason for its unions and working people struggling so much.

Finally, and because Hollander argues that Canada has fared better because our labour relations discourse is set less on rights than it is upon process, it would have been helpful to get his brief insight into the broad development of labour relations in the Charter era. As it stands now, the Supreme Court has read into the Charter the right to strike and bargain collectively, and this has inspired a good deal of labour's rhetoric, though scholars like Larry Savage and Charles Smith have noted the potential pitfalls of such a Charter-centric strategy.

Though I am not persuaded by Hollander's thesis that King's reluctance to support labour's positions was ultimately a good thing for labour, this book offers an interesting insight into the debates between King, his party, and the labour movement. Some of this can be found across other studies, but this effort brings it all under one roof in an effective manner. Ultimately, this is a project which must be read by all those interested in Canadian political, labour, and legal history.

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**Greg Albo & Bryan Evans, eds., *Divided Province: Ontario Politics in the Age of Neoliberalism* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press 2019)**

IN UNDERSTANDING the character and depth of neoliberalism in Ontario, the recently edited volume by Greg Albo and Bryan Evans, *Divided Province: Ontario*

*Politics in the Age of Neoliberalism*, is an essential tool. Spanning roughly from the Liberal minority government in the late 1980s to the present, the chapters provide a detailed examination of the neoliberal era in Ontario. The four sections of the book range from critical, cutting-edge essays on Ontario political economy, investigations into the restructuring of the provincial state, to analyses of the various forms of resistance that have emerged to the neoliberal agenda. *Divided Province* not only provides a thorough historical account of the political and economic turbulence that has defined 30 years of neoliberalism in Ontario, but also expertly explores some of the paradoxical features that have shaped neoliberal transformations throughout the advanced capitalism world. These being in particular the continued role for the state in the reproduction of the supposedly free-market order of neoliberalism, the spectacular expansion of government debt despite near-continuous rounds of budgetary austerity, and the perpetuation of a neoliberal policy consensus among governing political parties despite significant upheaval and alteration within the sphere of electoral politics.

The opening essay by Albo sets the critical tone for the volume and provides a comprehensive definition of the neoliberalism as a "form of social rule whose modes of administration and policy practices are 'market-expanding'...the state is reorganized to advance the social conditions that allow the propertied classes to extract value from the working classes." (6) While neoliberalism can be perceived as "market-expanding," in the sense that it spreads competitive market dynamics and market discipline into new areas of social life, this cannot be understood as a natural process or order absent of state intervention. Neoliberalism, in other words, is not what you have left after the retrenchment of the Keynesian welfare