

**Hamowy, Ronald. *Canadian Medicine: A Study in Restricted Entry*. Vancouver: Fraser Institute, 1984. Pp. xxii, 394. \$14.95**

**Barbara R. Tunis**

Volume 15, numéro 1, june 1986

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1018904ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1018904ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine

ISSN

0703-0428 (imprimé)

1918-5138 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Tunis, B. R. (1986). Compte rendu de [Hamowy, Ronald. *Canadian Medicine: A Study in Restricted Entry*. Vancouver: Fraser Institute, 1984. Pp. xxii, 394. \$14.95]. *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine*, 15(1), 100-102. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1018904ar>

So it comes as a limited surprise that there are two books within this volume. The second, comprising the last 82 pages, is a salute to "Partners in Progress," and is written by Mr. Stanley Arthur Williams. Williams has lived in Edmonton since 1943, as a journalist, once writing an "Old Timer" column for the Edmonton *Journal*, and is a well-known local raconteur. Nonetheless, all 51 corporate "Partners" in Edmonton's historical progress, each described in a page or two, and including such seasoned veterans as the Four Seasons Hotel which opened in 1978, are listed on page 307 as "Patrons" of *this* historical enterprise. Anyone who is not a patron is not discussed as a "Partner in Progress." Hence, as builders of Edmonton, we have Woodward's but not the Hudson's Bay Company, Imperial Lumber but not Imperial Oil (i.e. Leduc #1 in 1947). This unctuous exposition is the sort of thing one might anticipate resulting from editing the vainglorious profferings of corporate public relations people possessing close to room temperature I.Q.s (Fahrenheit), and it would be very difficult to cross reference historical 'facts' without doing much more work than the author did. There are no cloudy skies here. Enough said.

The remaining text includes 31 full colour pages of pictures supplied by, among others, Edmonton's Economic Development Authority (Edmonton skyline I) p. 113, Alberta Public Affairs (Wayne Gretzky) p. 118, and the federal Tourism Office (Edmonton skyline II) p. 220. So, by removing these, 13 pages of index, list of patrons, sources, etc., 10 pages of title and forward material, and the 82 pages devoted to the patrons, we are still left with roughly 153 pages of photos, large type and wide margins.

What is to be said? Apart from the silly promotional chaff mentioned above, the 350-plus photographs have been well chosen by Mr. John E. McIsaac, Assistant Chief Archivist for the City of Edmonton. It is evident that considerable work and thoughtful reflection went into their selection and the accompanying captions tend on balance to be excellent. In themselves these comprise a fine photographic history of the city.

But the general text is annoying. Overall it is a cloying tribute to the big business community of the city (the patrons) and is not so much wrong for in almost every instance it is not (except for such distracting mistakes as misspelling Sir Wilfrid Laurier's name on p. 97) as selective. For instance, at the end of World War I Edmonton experienced, as did other Canadian cities, considerable labour strife with the returned soldiers. What mention is made of these events in Edmonton? "Edmonton enthusiastically welcomed the soldiers home . . . the Edmonton business community entertained 500 soldiers" (p. 127). That's it.

The events of the depression are somewhat better described, especially the paranoid response of municipal and provincial authorities, but it is a brief discussion considering that on 20 December 1932, some 13,000 people confronted

city police and the RCMP. Gilpin is ever so irritatingly elusive about being specific. He notes, for instance, "The worst years of the Depression in Edmonton occurred between 1930 and 1937" (p. 157). This provides some leeway. And, on the same page, he comments, "By the late 1930s Edmonton was returning to some degree of normality as indicated by the closure of the soup kitchens and the return of professional football." Perhaps we have uncovered a new variable for the forecast of economic fluctuations? The dominant municipal political figure of the post-1945 era, William Hawrelak, receives but one mention in a picture caption (p. 208).

There are no footnotes, but an exhaustive list of suggestions for further reading is provided.

The book is what it is, a picture book with some text that is unabashedly pro-business. (There is *no* reference to 'labour,' 'trades,' or 'unions,' for example, in the generally well-handled index). No professional historian requires it and the volume is already on sale, on remainder, in Edmonton bookstores.

James Lightbody  
Department of Political Science  
University of Alberta

---

Hamowy, Ronald. *Canadian Medicine: A Study in Restricted Entry*. Vancouver: Fraser Institute, 1984. Pp. xxii, 394. \$14.95.

This monograph examines medical licensing legislation in Canada from the first Medical Act of the French regime in 1750 to the Canada Medical Act of 1912 and the subsequent adoption of Dominion examination by the majority of medical schools in Canada. Its focus is the economic implications of legislative restrictions on entry to the profession. Among those restrictions cited are: raising standards of medical education, raising costs of entry to medical schools, limiting enrollment of students, eliminating competitive fields of medical practice. Hamowy uses traditional published sources on the history of medicine in Canada, reference works by economic historians, legal experts and sociologists in the United States and Canada, and proceedings of medical organizations and opinions of individual doctors as published in Canadian medical journals since 1844. Out of these sources, and in conjunction with the various medical licensing acts passed decade by decade and province by province, he draws a picture of a profession whose motivation in licensing its members has been primarily a desire for economic gain.

Those who have heretofore perceived medicine, along with law and the Church, as one of the three "true" professions, may be surprised at Hamowy's view of 18th century medi-

cine as a trade. He suggests that when medicine lost the protection of the guild in the 18th century, and thus was no longer able to protect itself from competition, it became merely a trade, along with barbering. He sees medical legislation of the 19th century, with its increasingly restrictive regulations on entry, as the means by which medicine became once more a profession in the sense of the medieval guild. Hamowy does not find it necessary to define professionalization: the process of regaining guild status is revealed in the legislation enacted by the medical practitioners themselves.

Despite claims by physicians that legislation was necessary to protect the public from incompetent practitioners and to ensure the quality of medical care and service, Hamowy shows how the same legislation yielded not only increased status and prestige to the profession, but also financial benefit to its members. Medical licensure, he concludes, has resulted in abnormally high income to practitioners without significantly increasing the quality of medical care offered to the public. Although formal control over medical practice to-day is vested in the respective provincial governments, actual control lies in the hands of the medical profession itself, a monopoly made possible in large part by its own efforts in securing restrictive legislation. Medicine as an "arm of the government," Hamowy sees as the final cartelization of the profession, an "abandonment of reliance on market forces in favour of government intervention." As an alternative to licensure, Hamowy proposes a system of certification which he feels would give the patient more freedom in choosing the type of medical care desired. Thus Hamowy's book, a legal study in an economic framework, has political implications. Commissioned by the Fraser Institute, a Vancouver-based economic and social research organization, it is the sequel to a previous study, *The Health Care Business: International Evidence on Private Versus Public Health Care Systems*, by Professor Åke Blomquist of the University of Western Ontario.

No historian of medicine would deny that economic factors were present in the pursuit of legislation to regulate the profession, but Hamowy selects these to the exclusion of all other influences in support of his thesis. What emerges is a two-dimensional study which ignores other important aspects of the professionalization of medicine in Canada. Omission of broader social forces which affected the profession and society during the last century results in a distorted picture. For instance, massive immigration, the growth of the cities and the opening of the West, each of which affected legislation to control medical practice, receive oblique or no attention. The effect of changing social structure and the rise of the middle class with its increasing demands for medical care is also ignored; in fact, sociologists and medical historians espousing this viewpoint are either severely criticized or noticeably absent from Hamowy's text. The influence on professionalization of improved techniques and scientific advances is likewise dismissed as irrelevant. As

regards education, raising standards is seen purely as a means of limiting entry, not as a response to public demand and changing social values. In short, by limiting his study to the relevant Acts and the opinions of doctors on this legislation, Hamowy has created a narrow base for his conclusions. Public opinion as expressed in newspapers is not sought; even the political dimension of licensing legislation is wanting, a factor which might have been made evident had the Journals of the legislative assembly of the respective provinces been consulted.

Yet, despite the narrowness of its thesis, this book is a significant contribution to the history of medicine in Canada. Firstly, the economic implications of medical licensing are considered in detail and the relevant legislation for all provinces enumerated under one cover for the first time. Secondly, Hamowy's liberal use of extracts from Canadian medical journals and other primary and secondary sources reveals not only contemporary attitudes towards medical legislation, but also much about the practice of medicine, both orthodox and heterodox, during the last century. Thirdly, statistical tables are presented to illustrate demographic and educational change within the profession during the period covered by the study. These include, amongst others: ratio of doctors to population by province, enrollment in medical schools, death rate from infectious diseases, and mean net income of doctors in Canada. A unique table and historical notes on Canadian medical schools is appended.

However, this text should be used with circumspection because of its restricted viewpoint. Yet, the very fact that its particular focus is the economic aspects of medical licensing suggests its usefulness to the social historian as opening up areas for further study. For instance, what was the regional distribution of the profession, rural and urban, in the various decades elaborated? What was the economical differential between rural and urban practitioners? Ethnic and political differences within the profession could also be explored.

This brings me to a further criticism of sources. Already mentioned is the scant reference to the work of certain social historians. But even more obvious is the lack of French-Canadian sources. For example, ongoing work of Jacques Bernier of Université Laval, published since 1979 is not included. With few exceptions, the development of medical licensing in Quebec is drawn from the English-language medical journals of the 19th century. In Victorian Canada these could not have been more biased.

A major drawback to the book is its lack of bibliography. With 92 pages of notes, it is a time-consuming task to trace a reference to its original entry. This results in confusion in identifying sources, inability to assess those used, and thus reduces the usefulness of the book. The organization of material within each chapter is also confusing. The reader is constantly jumping back and forth between Ontario, Quebec, the Maritimes and later the West. Unfortunately the

sub-headings do little to guide the reader through the muddle, and the index is equally unhelpful. In fact, this book is most frustrating to use as a source, despite its useful content, while its deserved place in the historiography is diminished by its restrictive viewpoint.

Barbara R. Tunis  
Ottawa

---

Qadeer, Mohammad. *The Evolving Urban Land Tenure System in Canada*. Report No. 10. Winnipeg: Institute of Urban Studies, 1985. Pp. iv, 47. \$6.00.

Professor Qadeer's thesis in this extended essay of "theoretical interpretation" is that "modifications and revisions in the rights associated with land ownership since 1970" have had the cumulative effect of fundamentally changing property rights in virtually all Canadian provinces. As he notes, this claim would also be supported by such organizations as the Canadian Real Estate Association and the Fraser Institute. In his view, however, the changes involved are largely to be welcomed, rather than made the subject of "nostalgic lament." Moreover, they are less ideologically motivated (at least in a traditional left/right sense) than their opponents typically recognize.

The changes include, among other things: new environmental protection and land use planning legislation in all ten provinces; various actions to protect scarce agricultural land; assorted public land banking schemes; legislation to restrict land ownership by non-residents in some provinces; experimentation with land speculation taxes in others; public action to protect such unique areas as the Fraser and Cowichan River Estuaries in British Columbia and the Niagara Escarpment in Ontario; legislation to preserve "vista corridors" in Halifax; rent review legislation in various places; such tenurial innovations as condominiums and time-sharing arrangements; and even ostensibly private actions by large financial and real estate institutions.

Professor Qadeer allows that much of the revision since 1970 flows from earlier developments in land use planning, particularly since the Second World War. He acknowledges the historic peculiarities of the hybrid of French, British, and American traditions that has always made public regulation of private land uses somewhat easier in Canada than in the United States. He allows as well that many of the changes since 1970 "may not have been very effective." And he concedes that some new popular "conservation ethos," which he sees as the political driving force behind these changes, has been thwarted in important ways by the national and international economic difficulties that became clear in the later 1970s. In the most recent revisions to provincial planning legislation — in Ontario, for example, — "review procedures have been streamlined and the approving

authority has been decentralized," while the "Governments of British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan have relaxed some of the more stringent regulations."

Nonetheless, *The Evolving Urban Land Tenure System in Canada* argues that the broad thrust of a major trend toward a new degree of public involvement in private (and 'corporate') decisions about land use, in the interests of "rights to common property," remains intact. In fact, the changes since 1970 simply reflect haphazard and largely unconscious "attempts to accommodate the externalities of urban land and the demands of a post-industrial economy. . . . If most of the present regulations were to be rescinded today, they would have to be reinvented on popular demand to ensure everybody's access to the common goods — air, water, sunshine, land, etc." The "unfinished agenda of urban land reforms in Canada" is to stop quarrelling over archaic ideologies about property rights, and embark on a new debate that will sort out the anomalies wrought by the haphazard changes of the past decade and a half in a businesslike way. This new debate would redefine both private and common rights to real property for the Canada of the twenty-first century, and ultimately guarantee these redefined property rights in the new Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Of course, a variety of objections to this particular theoretical interpretation can be raised, even by those who feel more sympathy for the values espoused by Professor Qadeer than for those espoused by the Fraser Institute. Like many who share his values, it might be argued, he does not grapple seriously enough with the genuine challenges that the new economic development priorities in North America and elsewhere present for his argument. (To take one specific case, he seems somewhat naive about the long-term implications of permanent regimes of rent control.) He also radically underestimates the extent to which, in Canada as in the United States, popular demand for an end to at least excessively bureaucratic and 'statist' forms of government regulation has also emerged as a major trend during the period since 1970.

At the same time, his argument does explicitly recognize the continuing importance of private property rights, and the need to deal with the inefficiencies and random injustices of the new regulatory processes (the most recent changes in provincial planning legislation notwithstanding): "The present processes are only means to social ends. Better ones can be devised." Moreover, a generation ago Franz Neumann, the expatriate German social democrat who grew to admire democracy in America, observed that though there is "an almost universal agreement" in democratic political theory on "the supreme significance of private property," it is also "obviously necessary to redefine the social function of property in each historical stage." If, as so many commentators of virtually all ideological stripes now claim, we are indeed entering some new "post-industrial" historical stage,