

Now a memoir, of sorts, *Passion and Conviction: The Letters of Graham Spry*, has been published for Graham Spry, by the Canadian Plains Research Centre at the University of Regina. The memoir consists primarily of excerpts from the Graham Spry papers at the National Archives of Canada. These excerpts are connected by a narrative that explains their context. Precise dates are usually not given and the author of each excerpt can be difficult to discern. A citation for each excerpt would have been welcome. Footnotes could concisely and unambiguously provide this context and thereby alleviate the need for explanation in the narrative.

Rose Potvin was a friend and admirer of Graham Spry and this book was obviously a labour of love for her. This is not a conventional biography but rather a compilation that allows the Graham Spry papers to tell their own story. In the introduction, Rose Potvin aptly describes these papers: "He was open and honest to his friends and especially to his wife. He told of his hopes, aspirations, frustrations and disappointments, as well as his interests and accomplishments. He recorded his innermost feelings, dreams and concerns in his diaries. His writing was clear, descriptive and detailed, sometimes passionate, and often full of humour. Finally, his friends, in their letters, provided the opinion of others" (p. x). Her selections, editing, and linking narrative enable the vitality of Graham Spry's personality and intellect to speak directly to the reader.

Graham Spry's friends and acquaintances were often as literate and engaging as Spry, and together they were a formidable force in Canadian life of the twentieth century. They included Frank Scott, Tommy Douglas, King Gordon, Eugene Forsey, and Lester Pearson, among many others. They had a wide-ranging vision and an admirable energy for building better lives for Canadians, and yet had good fun all the while. Many of them might also benefit from the style of memoir in *Passion and Conviction*. Graham Spry retained carbon copies of his outgoing correspondence, as did many others of his generation. These collections document the dynamic of their interchanges and this type of memoir allows that dynamic to express itself. Rose Potvin has allowed the archival record to speak for itself and deserves congratulations for the obvious respect that she has for the archival record.

Biographical outlines for many of Spry's correspondents are provided and are most useful. Curiously, however, the book does not offer such a biographical outline for Spry himself. Given his multidimensional career, such a biographical outline would have been most valuable. Also, the index only allows the reader to trace the references to his friends and colleagues but not to Spry's career itself.

Rose Potvin has ably shown with this memoir that Graham Spry fully deserves the reverence that many have accorded him. In *Passion and Conviction*, Spry's personal and intellectual abilities spring to life wonderfully. Rose Potvin's labour of love is justified and many public personalities would be fortunate to be so well served.

This style of archival publishing deserves to be copied and repeated. *Passion and Conviction* therefore warrants our attention, both because it documents an inspiring and important Canadian and because it offers an excellent model for archival publishing.

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Labour's Apprentices: Working Class Lads in Late Victorian and Edwardian England.
MICHAEL J. CHILDS. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992. xxiii, 223 p. ISBN 0-7735-0915-1.

It is no easy task to write the history of childhood. If women's voices were muffled in the past, children were virtually mute. History as we practice it cannot exist outside the boundaries set by our documentary heritage, yet the extent of records relating to children is severely limited.

The sparser the documentary heritage, the more evident the mark it places on the writing of history. Early efforts to recover the history of childhood bore the clear imprint of the available records. Generally, they recorded how public institutions (records-creators) responded to (perceived problems associated with) children. These records tell us as much if not more about these institutions and their originators than they do about the children themselves.

Two major streams of historical writing on childhood emerged in Canada during the 1970s. One addressed the child-savers: those individuals and organizations that dedicated themselves to improving the conditions of children's lives. The finest example of this work is Joy Parr's *Labouring Children* (1980), although the numerous publications of Patricia Rooke and R.L. Schnell are also worthy of note. The second stream addressed the history of education. Neil Sutherland's *Children in English-Canadian Society* (1976), the "classic" within the Canadian historical literature on children, is simply among the best known of an enormous literature on education.

A basic problem shared by much of this literature, closely linked to the nature of the sources consulted, is that children are portrayed as historical objects, passive beings for whom welfare and educational strategies are devised. Children are not offered a history of their own: the history of childhood becomes the history of actions taken by others on their behalf. Implicitly, they are impotent bystanders to historical action.

An appreciation of the limits imposed by the traditional sources of evidence led Michael J. Childs, in his examination of British boys, to make heavy use of the oral history archives created by Paul Thompson and Elizabeth Roberts in the course of their well-known research on this period. Whatever the problems associated with its use, oral history has the clear merit of being a record created by the children themselves, albeit a record filtered through decades of experience as adults.

Childs begins his study with a discussion of the working-class family, the boy's "primary source of identity and security" (p. 3). Because children were a primary cause of poverty — they placed increased demands on the family purse, often removing their mother from the labour market, while contributing nothing themselves for many years — young children were its primary victims. The first experience shared by working-class children was that of dearth. Only when children became wage-earners did the working-class family enter a (fleeting) period of relative affluence.

When of age, the boy was compelled to experience schooling, a consequence of the universal and compulsory state education system erected after 1870. Because of an unattractive curriculum, its irrelevance to their future lives, and the harsh disciplinary atmosphere of the classroom, Childs labels the boy's school years as "a disagreeable period that had to be got through" (p. 39).

Working-class boys consequently left school as early as possible to enter the labour market. Industrial trends towards new divisions of labour and mechanization, and the rapid growth of certain sectors, especially transport, produced a great demand for boy labour. At the same time, the number of available boys was restricted by (school and factory) legislation and by demographic factors (there were few ten- to twenty-year-olds relative to the total population during this period). The favourable labour market made the experience of work relatively pleasant. Boys changed jobs unhesitatingly in search of greater pay or opportunity, or to flee unacceptable levels of discipline. The end of adolescence, however, saw graduation from the relatively attractive market for boy labour to the poor market for unskilled adult labour.

As wage-earners, boys gained increased rights within the family including control over leisure activity. The street was the principal site of leisure pursuits, featuring attractions such as fighting, gambling, "the click" (the gang), and the "Monkey Parade" (the street "arena" where boys and girls surveyed each other for the purposes of courtship). Boys of this generation were

also the first to be subject to new forms of commercial entertainment such as the music hall, sports, and the cinema. As wage-earners, they had the cash to take advantage of commodified entertainment.

The disposable income he enjoyed, his lack of discipline and vocational training at work (both associated with the decline of traditional apprenticeships), and the loose control his family exercised over him generated growing middle-class concern regarding the working-class lad. This concern expressed itself in efforts to organize boys' leisure time in youth movements, among which the Boy Scouts are the most prominent. But here too boys exercised their power: too great an attention to the inculcation of middle-class ideals of patriotism, service, and responsibility chased working-class lads away. Accommodation to the desires of working-class lads was necessary — or they would not participate. The effort to cater to the desires of these lads was most apparent at the boys' clubs, whose variety of sports and games made them the most popular of youth movements among the working class.

Childs concludes by linking his discussion of working-class lads to a process of class formation. He argues that the emergence of a new homogeneous working class in Britain was closely tied to the generation he examines, which exhibited "a heightened and more cohesive feeling of class culture and class identity" (p. 162) than previous generations. The shift in working-class support away from the old parties and to the Labour Party (Childs's index of class formation) was generational: "Labour grew, in other words, not only as the unions grew, but as labourites grew up" (p. 161).

As fine as Childs's book is, it is open to criticism on two points in particular. Questions of gender and ethnicity are largely ignored. It is not simply a class that was created, and created itself, over the turn of this century, but a *gendered* class. Integral to the identity of the lad was that *he* was clearly distinguished from *her*. The mechanisms by which this was done and the relationship between questions of gender and class formation are left unexamined.

At the base of Childs's argument regarding the formation of a more homogeneous working class over the turn of this century is the erosion of intra-class divisions based on skill. Relations between ethnicity and the maintenance of intra-class divisions warranted at least limited consideration. The massive Irish immigration earlier in the nineteenth century may or may not have been assimilated to the emerging homogeneous working class of the turn of this century. More recent immigrants such as East European Jews almost certainly were not.

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The Archival Fonds: From Theory to Practice. TERRY EASTWOOD, ed. Ottawa: Bureau of Canadian Archivists, 1992. ii, 225 p. ISBN 0-9690797-6-1.

In the spring of 1841 Natalis de Wailly admonished the administrators of French departmental archives "to gather together by *fonds*, that is to unite all the deeds which come from a body, an establishment, a family, or an individual." Over time his simple statement has assumed its place as a (if not *the*) central tenet of the archival profession. The concept has taken on the aura of religious doctrine and, like its religious counterparts, has been the object of considerable analysis and interpretation by adherents. Examination of Wailly's message appears to have increased in recent years, perhaps because the temptations of the modern world threaten to interfere with our intent to heed it.

The Archival Fonds is a comprehensive attempt to explore Canadian understanding of Wailly's key concept. The monograph consists of four essays. In the first, editor Terry Eastwood sets out to introduce the other three contributions, but cannot resist exploring the topic on his own. In so doing he calls attention to what is the central problem for Wailly's latter-day disciples: