

he has erred on the side of the uncritical. Moreover, Grant died a very few years ago, in 1988. It is a bit soon to expect an objective criticism of a body of work that he was still creating at the time he died. This is a biography of a fascinating man, with fascinating ideas. The future will make its own judgement about his ideas; Christian has brought us the man behind those ideas.

George Grant did not believe that philosophers needed biographies. Their work was enough, it was all that mattered. In fact, for a man who had started his university career studying history at Queen's, he had a very ambivalent view of the historical record. Christian recalls one occasion when Grant and Murray Tolmie, a former student, were discussing the subject. Grant suggested that certain records should have been destroyed. Tolmie argued the conventional line: history demands that documents be retained, etc. "Fuck history, Tolmie!" exploded George. "Just fuck history!" True to his convictions, Grant made no provision to place his papers in an archives and they passed into Sheila Grant's care. Fortunately, Sheila is very much her own woman. She has chosen to disregard her late husband's views in this matter and has given Christian very nearly complete access. In fact, Christian's use of archival sources is in itself a good reason for archivists to add this book to their shelves. He has, of course, mined the Parkin/Grant papers at the National Archives, as well as a number of other sources. He even, it seems, has created his own considerable George Grant fonds in the making of this volume.

The real value of this work for an archivist, however, comes from our need to understand more about the society that we seek to document than a knowledge of records scheduling and *RAD* can provide. This book gives us a perception of a part of the nation's intellectual and cultural history. It is for this reason, more than any other, that William Christian's biography of George Grant is worth our attention. That and the not inconsiderable fact that it is also a very good read!

**Stewart Renfrew**  
Queen's University Archives

**The Muses, the Masses, and the Massey Commission.** PAUL LITT. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992. 331 p. ISBN 0-8020-6932-0 (paper)/0-8020-5003-4 (cloth).

"To promote high culture was to defend the liberal democratic civilization of the West. It was only through the type of education provided by high culture that the individual could become an aware and responsible democratic citizen." This belief which, according to Paul Litt, motivated the work of the Massey Commission, immediately arouses the interest of archivists; for enabling an informed and responsible citizenry in a democracy is one of the *raison d'être* of archives.

The Massey Commission has generally been epitomized as the symbolic beginnings of Canadian cultural activity. In this scholarly and well researched volume, Paul Litt examines the origins and activities of the Massey Commission by placing it in an historical context and presenting the political and social forces that had such a powerful impact on it. From documentation in archival papers, Litt proposes that initially, the commission was created as having a broad mandate in order to act as the government's "Trojan Horse." Its covert task was to sound public opinion on

politically contentious issues, and thus “chart a path that the government could safely follow.” Two of these issues for which the commission could test the waters and avoid controversy for the government were the problems involving the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and the National Film Board, and the financial crisis plaguing the universities.

Regardless of the government’s concerns or intentions regarding broadcasting policy, this issue was of the utmost importance for the commissioners, since the cultural lobby regarded public media as the most important tool in promoting the education and cultural edification of the masses. Briefs submitted to the commission are used to demonstrate the fear and distrust that the cultural lobby and its supporters had for the mass media, which not only failed to “improve the individual’s intellectual and critical faculties” but more importantly also “left an ignorant citizenry vulnerable to manipulation and exploitation.” Furthermore, the apprehension of the Bomb and the Cold War, which underlined the feelings of anti-communism and anti-totalitarianism, resulted in an unquestioning public endorsement of any cause purporting to reinforce democracy. Therefore, the arguments of both the briefs of the supporters of the CBC and those of the competing private interests tried to demonstrate that their approach was the one most closely representing the ideals of western democratic civilization. These papers delineate not only opinions and sentiments prevalent in the society of the time, but also illustrate how these societal views were used to full advantage by the cultural lobby. The perceived threat to the Canadian national identity from the American mass culture promulgated by the media, and the strong nationalistic feelings generated by Canadian achievements in World War II, were maximized by the cultural elite to champion the role of public broadcasting in the support and dissemination of Canadian culture.

With regard to the crisis in post-secondary institutions, the commission was originally instructed only to advise the government on methods of aiding research through scholarship grants. However, the ideology of the commissioners, which defined culture as a form of education and the forceful lobbying of the universities, brought the issue of federal funding for universities to the public forefront. When the hearings provided evidence of broad public support for federal aid, and a surprising lack of objection to interference in provincial matters, the government was convinced that this was a winning political issue. Archival sources inform the reader that, consequently, the commission was accorded the government’s blessing to pursue the matter.

According to Paul Litt’s dissertation, however, the most significant social factor exerting an influence on the commission was the liberal humanist ideology espoused by the commissioners and the cultural elite of the day. Paul Litt uses documentation found in briefs submitted to the commission, records of its hearings, minutes of the meetings of the commission, and correspondence among the commissioners to expound the liberal humanist philosophy of the majority of the people comprising the cultural lobby. This elite group sincerely believed that a high standard of culture was a form of education that led the individual on a path of self-improvement leading to self-realization and intellectual freedom. This education was necessary in order for people to become responsible, informed citizens

capable of making decisions to uphold the values of western democracy. The cultural lobby identified its interests with those of the good of the nation, and thus, Canadian cultural identity was defined in terms of the cultural elite's own humanistic values. According to Litt, "Massey thought the commission's great purpose was to reinforce and expand the unique culture which defined and protected Canadian nationhood." Time and time again Litt uses quotations from briefs from a diversified group of associations that support these convictions.

How far beyond the echelons of the cultural lobby described by Litt had this philosophy permeated, and did it find support in the masses? One would like to find answers to these questions documented in archival sources. Admittedly, Litt does present briefs from two or three individuals who criticized the paternalistic attitude of the cultural elite in trying to establish a Canadian culture by government decree. However, one cannot generalize on the opinions of the Canadian public from these few examples. One of the commissioners, Hilda Neatby, stated of the public hearings of the commission: "It may have been a mistake to describe these as most representative of Canadian listeners." The other commissioners also conceded that most of the briefs came from organized societies who had an interest in the final findings of the commission. Nevertheless, perhaps other archival papers or newspapers could have been used to present a more global view of the masses' opinion on the commissioners' overture that culture was the ultimate panacea for all societal evils, and of utmost necessity in establishing a Canadian identity. In addition, since Litt proposes that the strong liberal humanist convictions of the cultural elite was a most decisive factor in the proceedings of the commission, papers of other influential people who would have constituted part of this group, could have been examined to document whether these views were as widespread among the intelligentsia as he seems to indicate.

Although Litt uses archival sources extensively to present the beliefs and philosophies of the commissioners, he is limited in his discussion of Vincent Massey to quoting from Claude Bissell's biography, *The Imperial Canadian: Vincent Massey in Office*, and from Massey's own work, *On Being Canadian*. Access to Vincent Massey's papers, at the University of Toronto Archives, has been closed for twenty-five years in accordance with the stipulations of Massey's will. The ethical struggle between the two important but conflicting values of the scholar's right to know and the individual citizen's right to privacy protection has been and will continue to be a question of debate among archivists.

Despite this lack of access to the Vincent Massey Papers, Paul Litt has successfully used the papers of some of the leading political personalities of the day, the official records of the commission, and the available private papers and correspondence of the commissioners to study and reevaluate what has been considered one of the most famous of Canadian royal commissions. Supported by a large buttress of secondary sources, Litt has presented the commission in its historical context. In so doing, he has offered the reader an interesting analysis of the true legacy of the Massey Commission to Canadian society.

**Julie Stabile**

Faculty of Information Science, University of Toronto