

True Patriot. The Life of Brooke Claxton, 1898-1960. DAVID JAY BERCUSON. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993.

David Bercuson's biography of Brooke Claxton warrants careful reading and thoughtful reflection. We discover much about Claxton as a public figure—driven, hard-working, practical, ambitious, and successful. His deeds are carefully recorded and Bercuson's judgements are closely tied to the evidence. Yet, Brooke Claxton remains elusive. Claxton's nature was sensitive and secretive. It is these qualities, rather than any oversight or lack of insight on the part of the biographer, which seems at the heart of that strange sensation that some piece is missing from this story.

Early in the prologue, Bercuson describes Claxton as "a deeply sensitive man who hid his sensitivity with an impenetrable exterior." An only child, Claxton's early years were marred by his parents' incompatibility, marked in part by his mother's infidelity, and their subsequent divorce. Though the family was comfortable and well connected in Montreal, his was a lonely and difficult childhood. During his service in World War I, Claxton was subject to depression; monotony was his worst enemy. Yet, he showed coolness under shellfire and earned a Distinguished Conduct Medal. After the war, hard work and study became a refuge. He pursued a law degree, joined his father in legal practice, and put enormous energy into public affairs. His interests were broad, including Canadian Clubs and the Canadian League. Claxton's abilities and strengths, as Bercuson records, were in executive duties. He was a doer, not a thinker.

While Claxton was close to members of the CCF and became involved in lobbying on Canadian broadcasting policy, he was somewhat cautious and, perhaps, too realistic to become socialist. Yet, he was well aware of the need for social and economic reforms during the depression. Claxton became involved out of a concern for his country's future, because of his driven nature and through his natural talents for organization and leadership. His remarks in the early 1930s that he failed "to see how any unemployed worker on listening to Mr. King's speeches ... could feel the least hope that if Mr. King is returned to power tomorrow, his chances of getting a job would be increased," reveal not only his ability to cut to basics, but also his concern for the less fortunate. Claxton was less cynical about the League of Nations Society and worked hard to promote collective security and the cause of peace during the 1920s and 1930s.

With the outbreak of war, Claxton overcame his contempt for politics, becoming a Liberal candidate and winning a seat in Montreal in 1940. Bercuson carefully records Claxton's maiden speech—one which might set a tone for his later policies. He urged openness in defence policy, tolerance to French Canadians, and commended the government on its defence arrangements with the United States. He also endorsed the Rowell-Sirois Commission. Bercuson notes Claxton's sensitivity to criticism from the press—something which he returns to again. Well motivated though he was, Claxton's thin skin was an Achilles heel that would lead him to promote policies counter-productive to his own goals.

The details on the appointments of politicians, the gradual changes in Mackenzie King's policies, and the inner workings of the government during World War II are well done. Claxton was an influential, if junior figure. Bercuson does not hide the

many frustrations and difficulties Claxton encountered before and after his appointment as Minister of National Health and Welfare in October 1944. With the implementation of the family allowance, Claxton was able to accomplish something meaningful and practical. That sort of tangible accomplishment was his strength.

As Minister of National Defence from 1946 to 1954, a post that Claxton clearly did not want, he had tremendous impact. His experience and interest in foreign policy benefited the Department enormously and his early commitment to collective security developed into effective policies. Yet, Claxton's need for secrecy and subterfuge increased and his early advocacy of openness in defence policy seemed largely forgotten as his experiences with the press left him angry and bitter. Bercuson does not emphasize this trait, but it is apparent in the evidence he presents. By 1947, Claxton supported policies to leave Canadians deliberately uninformed on basic aspects of Canada's defence policy because of fear that anti-American reaction might impede progress in this area. Politics, not security, became the rationale for withholding defence-related information. Bercuson points out that such secrecy actually backfired as many assumed much greater American involvement than was the case in the Canadian North.

In other areas, Claxton had enormous success. In 1947, he implemented huge cuts, re-organizing the three defence departments into one, integrating many functions, improving planning, and emphasizing the training of the officer corps. To some extent, he laid the foundations for improving opportunities for francophones in the forces. He also placed emphasis upon Canadian participation in defence scientific research with the establishment of the Defence Research Board.

Bercuson carefully corrects misimpressions about Claxton as he goes along, especially any notion that Claxton was happy to chop defence spending without due consideration of the consequences. During Claxton's service as the Minister of National Defence, Canada became a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, participated in the Korean War, and continued joint continental defence with the Americans, including the building of the various early warning lines that formed the foundation for air defence. Newfoundland became a part of confederation and a host of complex agreements were put in place to protect Canada's sovereignty while placing emphasis upon collective security measures. Claxton had a sophisticated understanding of defence policy and its place in furthering Canada's diplomatic goals, including the pursuit of peaceful negotiation.

The demands upon the Department of National Defence and its Minister were enormous. Scandals rocked Claxton's defence administration. Greed, incompetence, and poor administration plagued the department. Bercuson takes one from the mutinies in the Canadian navy to poor Canadian performance in Korea, from problems with the defence of Canadian territory because the Mobile Striking Force was far from operational, to difficulties with the 27th Canadian Infantry Brigade in Europe, and finally to the revelations of corruption and poor administration contained in the Currie Report. It was a difficult time and Claxton took his responsibilities very seriously indeed.

Bercuson is careful to place Claxton's actions in context. My own research reveals a man who cared about his department and its forces deeply. Claxton's

papers, held at the National Archives of Canada, amply demonstrate his close attention to details, to every aspect of defence policy, and to the press. Much reform was initiated under his tenure. The Mainguy Report and the Currie Report, which caused so much alarm, were written at his instigation in order to identify and correct problems. It was small wonder that he worked eighteen-hour days and drank far too much. His crushing workload led to the appointment of Ralph Campney in 1952 as Associate Minister in order to free Claxton to concentrate on over-all defence planning, relations with other countries, and general policy while Campney concentrated on daily administrative matters.

Claxton left politics for work at Metropolitan Life in 1954. By 1956, he also became the first Chair of the Canada Council and was influential in its early policies. Claxton continued to contribute until his death from cancer in 1960.

Bercuson records that Claxton's wife, Helen, destroyed almost all their letters after his death. This action made it more difficult for Bercuson to capture the complete man. Regrettable as that loss is, one respects the choice that was made. Helen Claxton was entitled to protect her privacy and I think most archivists would agree that the disposal of personal papers must be at the discretion of those who originate them. Bercuson deals with this action and with Claxton's family life with sensitivity and insight. He was protected and supported by his family. To the outside world, he was an enigma. And he remains so.

As an archivist, I am less able to approve of Claxton's decision to keep aspects of basic defence policy secret. Bercuson's revelations that this decision was purely political and that it backfired are telling. Claxton found the Canadian press irresponsible and sensationalizing. He went from advocacy and trust to feelings of anger and betrayal. If accurate knowledge of defence policy is valued, then the price was high. Yet, Claxton's accomplishments were many. As a biographer, Bercuson has provided a well-balanced piece and does well not to dwell on his flaws. There is something old fashioned and absolutely accurate in his portrayal of Claxton as a true patriot.

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The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. Canadian Involvement Reconsidered. PETER HAYDON. Toronto: Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies, 1993. xii, 297 p. ISBN 0-9197640.

In *The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. Canadian Involvement Reconsidered*, Peter Haydon tells the story of Canadian military cooperation with Americans during a crisis that many in this hemisphere remember as the most extreme moment of the Cold War. The story is placed in the broader context of Canadian civil and military relations. Haydon is well qualified for this task, having served on loan to the Royal Navy as the navigator of the British Submarine ALDERNEY during the crisis and with many years of experience in the Canadian navy, including time as a strategic analyst in Ottawa and Norfolk, Virginia. This work, a contribution of original scholarship, appeared first as a Master's thesis at the Centre for Foreign Policies Studies at Dalhousie University.