

dans un avenir plus ou moins lointain. Il croient naïvement au retour de l'âge d'or (p. 191).

L'âge d'or, c'est sans doute les temps présents puisque les services d'archives n'ont jamais eu dans l'histoire autant de moyens à leur disposition pour remplir les tâches qu'ils se sont eux-mêmes tracées au fil des années. Ils devront sans doute souffrir quelque peu de la diminution de la taille de l'État et de la raréfaction des ressources financières consacrées à la culture pour éviter la faillite collective. Mais, faut-il croire que nous ayons atteint un point de non retour en matière de sensibilisation du public et des autorités politiques à l'importance du patrimoine archivistique comme outil de mémoire? La lecture de *La pratique archivistique française* nous porte à être optimiste quant à la capacité du métier de trouver des solutions aux difficultés qui ne manquent pas au tournant du nouveau siècle, en Europe ou en Amérique du Nord. D'aucuns prétendent que les services d'archives et les archivistes doivent adopter «*a post-custodial approach*» en laissant les archives dans les mains de leurs producteurs; cela ne semble pas être une orientation qu'envisagent pour l'instant nos collègues français. Peut-être sont-ils encore plus préoccupés par la conservation des documents d'archives à très long terme que nous le sommes. La confrontation avec les méthodes de l'archivistique pratiquée en France que nous procure la lecture de *La pratique archivistique française* peut nous laisser à l'esprit l'interrogation existentielle suivante: l'archiviste nord-américain n'a-t-il jamais été au fond qu'un *records manager*? À nous de répondre.

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Archives nationales du Canada

Barrett: A Passionate Political Life. DAVE BARRETT & WILLIAM MILLER. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1995, 196 p. ISBN 1-55054-426-8.

Dave Barrett enjoyed high school. Sure, he never made the honour roll and he was always getting detentions. But, hey, he made some good friends and he acquired a life-long passion for rugby football. And if this book is anything to go by, he probably enjoyed the sweaty, smutty culture of the boys' locker room.

Readers who think that the art of politics involves a certain subtlety and diplomacy will be surprised by Barrett's lurid definition. "Politics," he tells us (on p. 188 and on the dust jacket) "is like sex: if it's done properly, it's very messy, but the results can be satisfying." Social democrats in British Columbia will be embarrassed by the antics of a man who brags that he's the only person in the "112 year history of the B.C. legislature to be physically tossed from the House" (p. 143). Conversely, supporters of the federal NDP will be mightily glad that Barrett was foiled in his attempt to become national party leader. Archivists who think that records created by former premiers are official papers of state and that such records belong in a provincial archives may be disconcerted by this book.

The son of a Jewish produce merchant, Barrett grew up in East Vancouver where he attended Britannia High. After completing a Bachelor's degree at Seattle University, a Jesuit foundation, he enrolled in St. Louis University, Missouri, where he acquired a Master's degree and "a healthy paranoia about the system" (p. 19). Back in

Vancouver, he joined the public service as a social worker. He was good at his job, though he was constantly at odds with bureaucrats who, he thought, were too timorous and rigid in their thinking. In 1960 the voters of Dewdney, a Fraser Valley riding near Vancouver, elected him to the British Columbia legislature on a CCF ticket. Ten years later he became leader of the CCF's successor party, the provincial NDP. In 1972 he defeated W.A.C. Bennett and so ended twenty years of Social Credit Party rule in British Columbia.

As premier, Barrett introduced a formidable array of progressive legislation. But organized labour groups made some preposterous demands of the government, and the electorate became disillusioned with the NDP's economic policies. After only three years in office, Barrett and his party were defeated by a conservative coalition led by Wacky Bennett's son, Bill.

Barrett spent the next few years as "Brooklyn Brawler" on the Opposition bench. He was Opposition Leader in 1983 when he was ejected from the Legislature, after refusing to acknowledge the authority of the Speaker of the House. Three members of the Sergeant-at-Arms staff had to manhandle the burly ex-rugby player from the chamber. Later, he secured a lucrative contract as a radio talk show host (1984-1987), had a brief stint as visiting lecturer at Harvard and McGill, and was elected NDP member for Esquimalt-Juan de Fuca in the federal election of 1988. The following year he lost the national party leadership contest and in 1993 he lost his seat to a Reform Party candidate. Temporarily sidelined, he collaborated with former legislative reporter William Miller to produce this account of his "passionate political life."

Without question, Barrett's political life has been passionate and much of the passion is conveyed in the pages of this book. But this is also a bawdy, sniggering kind of chronicle by someone who obviously revels in lavatory humour. Indeed, several of Barrett's anecdotes are set in men's lavatories. One anecdote has Barrett crouching on a toilet seat behind the locked door of a cubicle in the men's room of the B.C. Legislature, hiding out from members of the Speaker's staff. In another yarn, Barrett recounts an encounter with a federal cabinet minister during a high-level conference in Calgary. The minister, unnerved by Barrett's candour as the two stood at a urinal relieving themselves, "took one look at me, lost control and proceeded to piss down his leg and splatter his shoes" (p. 74).

A bumptious, intemperate style characterized Barrett's exchanges with the media. He recounts—unabashedly—an incident in 1974 when he was "mightily pissed off" over the way that a female reporter with the Vancouver Sun had criticized his government's treatment of chicken farmers (!). Premier Barrett was absolutely fuming on the day he encountered the woman conversing with another scribe in the corridor outside the legislative chamber. "I lost my cool. It felt great. I called her a venomous bitch and told her to go fuck herself." Following the incident, the Opposition and the press "went on a sanctimonious tear," Barrett says, although their response was not nearly as fierce as the reaction he got from his wife when he got home that night. "Shirley gave me one withering look and I knew without her saying anything what was going on in her mind: You asshole!" (p. 85). Er, well, quite. His wife used the same epithet when he decided, against her wishes, to run against Audrey McLaughlin for the leadership of the federal NDP in 1989 (p. 172).

The book is littered with scatological terms, jock-strap metaphors, and cheeky double-entendres as Barrett describes his political battles. Many of his most celebrated scraps involved the grande-dame of the Social Credit Party, Grace McCarthy, and the supercharged provincial election of 1983. During that campaign, the Socreds ran a television commercial warning voters that NDP candidates were hiding their true colours. The NDP was at heart a party of wild-eyed socialists, the ads averred. One ad showed a figure, purporting to be an NDP candidate, wearing a sober business suit. When the figure is undressed, he is revealed to be wearing Marxist-socialist red underwear!

Barrett turned the Socred ads to his advantage during a rally in Port Alberni, a mill town on Vancouver Island. "I got up in front of a crowd of four or five hundred people and a pair of red shorts came scooting along a wire somebody had strung across the room like a clothesline," he recalls. The crowd whooped and hollered with delight. "I didn't come here to discuss the colour of my underwear," he told them. "I'll leave that to your imagination. But I understand Grace McCarthy is behind this idea. I want to assure the people of British Columbia that Grace McCarthy is one woman who will never see the colour of my underwear." Barrett did not win the election, but afterwards his well-wishers deluged him with "red boxer shorts, red jockey shorts, red G-strings. I have them still" he boasts (p. 138).

Maybe one day Barrett will donate the red underwear collection to a museum. Who knows what a researcher might make of it all in the future? Today, researchers who want to learn more about the tumultuous "three-year decade" when the NDP first held office in British Columbia will have to make do with slim pickings, for Barrett's official papers—that is to say, the records of the Office of the Premier of British Columbia, 1972-1975—have vanished.

Apparently, the records were boxed up and removed from the Premier's Office the day after the Barrett government fell. Considering the vast amount of paper generated by government ministries in those days, the records must have filled a great many boxes. But the boxes are nowhere to be found. They are not in the British Columbia Archives or in any other known archival repository.

Over the last ten years, this reviewer has made repeated attempts to locate the records. Enquiries have been made with former staff in the NDP Caucus Office, with former legislators, and with ministry records officers, government archivists, and records managers. No one has been able to provide any information as to the status or whereabouts of the files. As remarkable as it may seem, the records have simply disappeared.

Records created by the Premier's Office in any province are important, especially in British Columbia where chief ministers wield considerable executive power. Certainly the absence of records for the years 1972 to 1975 leaves a gaping hole in the documentary fabric of British Columbia. Had they been available, the records might have clarified many contemporary issues, including some raised in this book. For example, Barrett claims that Bob Strachan, who led the old CCF party and who was Transport minister in his cabinet, betrayed him during a provincial NDP party leadership struggle. That's not the impression one gets from reading Strachan's papers in the British Columbia Archives. And Strachan, it's worth noting, is the *only*

government minister from the Barrett era who is represented in the provincial archives. (Strachan's papers are accessioned as Add. MSS. 1291.)

Records of the Office of the Premier, 1972-1975, might also help to answer some questions about the relationship between the provincial NDP and a non-profit organization known as the Nanaimo Commonwealth Holding Society (NCHS). It is alleged that for many years the society diverted funds raised in Nanaimo bingo halls away from local charities and into the coffers of the NDP. The "NCHS Affair" began in the early 1970s, when Barrett was premier and held the finance minister's portfolio. Currently, the NCHS is at the centre of two investigations: one enquiry is being conducted by the RCMP's Commercial Crime Squad; the other enquiry is being led by a special prosecutor appointed by former premier Mike Harcourt.

Barrett doesn't mention the NCHS in this memoir. Nor does he discuss the vanished Premier's Office papers. In the acknowledgements section, however, he expresses gratitude to a former secretary who "provided access to her appointment diaries, which span a twenty-seven year period" (p. 191). That's the only reference to a primary document in the whole book.

What, then, is the documentary legacy of Dave Barrett? Perhaps the most visually striking record is a large colour photograph, with a psychedelic background, that hangs in the Premiers' Portrait gallery of the Provincial Legislature in Victoria. The head and shoulders shot was taken in the living room of the Barrett residence on the morning after his 1972 victory. Barrett reports that he was drunk the night before and that he was suffering from a hangover the morning the picture was taken. He tells us (snicker, snicker) that while he'd thrown on a shirt, tie, and sports jacket for the sitting, he hadn't bothered to put on socks or trousers. Alas, he does not mention whether he was sporting red underwear.

Towards the end of the book, Barrett admits to being intemperate in his behaviour when he was premier, but excuses himself because of his youth! "Youthful exuberance [sic] probably had a lot to do with that; I was pushing forty-two when we were elected government" (p. 182). He was pushing fifty-four when he was dragged across the floor and ejected from the provincial legislature.

Clearly, Barrett wants to be regarded as a feisty yet loveable bad boy who was close to the common people and who did not give a fig—not his word—for tradition, authority, or "the system." And maybe he will be remembered as the *enfant terrible* of Canadian politics. But after closing this book, it's hard not to bracket Barrett with some other well-known bad boys—notably Beavis, Butthead, and Bart Simpson.

It's too bad that Barrett has chosen to present himself in this manner, because the man has many admirable qualities. Certainly no one could question his sincerity or his convictions as a social democrat. He and his colleagues are to be applauded for their progressive approach to public education, the environment, human rights, and social welfare. Moreover, the archival profession benefited from Barrett's "three-year decade." The Provincial Archives of British Columbia (as it was then known) enjoyed unprecedented growth and, thanks to innovative, government-funded outreach programmes, archives in small communities throughout the province flourished as never before. During the Barrett era, the government also published documents of great value to archivists and researchers. The *Annual Reports of the Provincial*

Secretary, for example, contain extensive reports on the activities of the Provincial Archives and an invaluable electoral history of British Columbia since Confederation.

Maybe, when a critical biography is written—and if the official papers of the Premier's Office from 1972 to 1975 ever come to light—Barrett's contributions to the documentary heritage of British Columbia can be properly assessed. In the meantime, those who are interested in Barrett's administration and his "passionate political life" will have to make do with this ribald, outrageous memoir.

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Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning. JAY WINTER. Cambridge University Press, 1995, 310 p. ISBN 0-521-49682-9 hardback.

The Great War saw massive destruction as unending lines of men were fed into the charnel-house of the Western Front. Most thought the war would be over by Christmas 1914. But as the professional soldiers of all armies were annihilated in the first months of the war and no end seemed to be in sight, it fell to the fathers, husbands, and sons of the various empires to see the conflict to the end. Britain, France, and Germany alone suffered some four million dead—almost one in six who served. For the millions of men who died in the rat- and lice-infested trenches, killed indiscriminately by shell, bullet, or poisonous gas, they left behind families scarred by the emptiness of their passing with little to console them except an official condolence letter with the inevitable beginning: "We regret to inform you..."

Jay Winter's new book, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*, is an ambitious examination of the cultural patterns of collective memory and remorse used by the bereaved to deal with having had millions of their loved ones killed and dismembered on some foreign battlefield. Using the "construction of memory" as a broad form of analysis, Winter probes how people processed, understood, and acted upon their war losses. Employing an impressive array of sources in German, French, Italian, and English, Winter has successfully pieced together the grieving process during and following World War I. From isolated individuals to whole communities, there was an attempt to comprehend the sense and reality of loss. Mysticism, art, literature, history, architecture, photographs, film, and memoir all became methods of coping; in a sense, millions and millions of people were attempting to shape memory to reflect their individual tragedies, to create relevant concrete monuments and documentary testimonies to the fallen. Through the construction of such war memorials, the sacrifice of a generation could be commemorated and understood.

Was there any "meaning" to the war or the countless dead? For those who lost friends and lovers, there had to be, for anything else was unthinkable. Although the British and French fought against the Germans in the trenches, their subsequent collective grief was the same. It sprang from the same need for understanding, and reflected the harsh realities of the same shallow graves. Winter argues a revisionist view, rejecting new forms of modernization that broke with the past and the "big words" of honour and sacrifice, which the horrors of the trenches had ground into