

delivered. The first section ("Archives et Société") is weak and insipid. It never gets close to the enormity of its title and loses itself in a slight listing of micrographic, video, and computer resources. Curiously, these resources are not revisited as applications in the succeeding sections. The second section ("Archives et Administration") is exhaustive on specialized details of what used to be called basic records management; and the third ("Archives et Recherche") dwells in some reflection on the significance of the *fond* and the principle of *provenance* before tackling acquisition methodology, the variety of finding aids according to preferred levels of description, and the means of preserving and diffusing information. None of this, however, finds a philosophical context. It is plainly not the authors' intention to move much beyond the straight and narrow path of instruction they embark upon. Much mention is made of global views and the information explosion — and doubtless this manual hopes to offer something of an infinitely adaptable tool with which to come to grips with "modern" information systems. Yet the contents are curiously traditional and give but a passing nod to current developments. In some ways, *Les archives au XXe siècle* is behind its time; publication in the mid-1970s would have been more appropriate. The 21 x 14 cm format is cramping too and doesn't allow for the spread of graphic work which is crucial to well-produced manuals. On this aspect in particular, it compares unfavourably with the now-famed SAA Manuals series. One wonders, additionally, just how useful the extensive section (181) pages on technical archival terminology really is. It overpowers the rest of the text which, in any case, often incorporates a great many of the phrases and labels in a more meaningful context. A separate and subsidiary volume employing dictionary style, with derivations and historical explanations, could have been afforded each entry even more attention, and would surely have been desirable.

While the value of *Les archives au XXe siècle* as a training tool on archival methodology is undoubted, the book is dour and dry. Long exposure to its many indented pages, clogged with fragmented sections and sub-sections, engenders a pervasive ennui. Perversity does prevail. Despite the authors' admirable earnestness and clarity of purpose, the reader cannot but yearn for some leaven and a little seasoning.

Gordon Dodds
Provincial Archives of Manitoba

A Peculiar Kind of Politics: Canada's Overseas Ministry in the First World War. DESMOND MORTON. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982. xii, 267 p. ISBN 0 8020 5586 9 \$22.50.

How dull, a reader might think, to have an account of Canada's participation in the First World War that promises to be nothing more than an administrative history of a short-lived ministry whose tale took about thirty pages in Colonel G.W.L. Nicholson's *Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-1919*. But *A Peculiar Kind of Politics* is not that kind of book at all. Although he does live up to the dust-jacket promise to tell the "inside story" of the "administrative management" of the CEF overseas, Desmond Morton has also given us a compelling, well-researched, and superbly written study of the politics and the personality clashes that shaped the

relationships between Canada's ministers and generals during the Great War, and which subsequently influenced the growth of Canadian political autonomy.

The old colony-to-nation theme appears throughout, but with a significant difference. Instead of retelling the story of how Sir Robert Borden exploited the Canadian Corps' success on the battlefield to win recognition of Canada's new status by imperial authorities and at the Paris peace conference, the author argues that these "symbolic victories of autonomy" were made possible by developments behind the lines. "Wars involve more than fighting," he explains, "history is about more than great events." And in this instance the crucial element in nation-building was the increased efficiency of Canadian military administration in England following Sam Hughes' resignation as militia minister in 1916. This, Morton insists, "enabled Canada to exercise effective national control over the CEF in France — an achievement which was both a paradigm and a precedent for Canada's own transformation ... to sovereign nation."

The author does not deny that Sam Hughes' considerable influence over the CEF served the country's broader interests. After all, Hughes' demand that the expeditionary force be identifiably Canadian from the outset had guaranteed that it was never an anonymous colonial contingent conveniently melded into a larger and homogeneous imperial army. Canadians would win their own victories and secure their own reputation. But Sir Sam's régime was also harmful to the Dominion's cause. Besides interfering regularly in matters best left to officers who had experience of battle, he permitted a confused — if not chaotic — administrative organization to grow up in England and then did nothing when the friends he had appointed to senior positions there became so protective of their own little empires that they threatened to deny the Corps the reinforcements necessary for it to survive as a self-sustaining fighting force. The wild absurdity of all this was well understood by Acting High Commissioner Sir George Perley who began to wonder if Canada's apparent inability to manage her affairs sanely and capably would persuade the British not to make "the changes in empire relations" expected after the war.

The prime minister knew much about what Sir Sam was doing, but for reasons that are well-explained in the book he felt powerless to act decisively until October 1916, when he finally pressured Hughes into resigning. Sir Edward Kemp received the militia portfolio while Sir George Perley was named to head a new Ministry of the Overseas Military Forces of Canada in London. Accorded cabinet rank, but too remote to attend Parliament, Perley was to look after the Canadians in England and France until 1917 when a second shuffle saw Kemp move to London and Major-General S.C. Mewburn take over the militia at home.

The last half of the book describes how these men, but particularly Perley and Kemp, successfully overhauled the CEF's administration and then forged strong and direct links between Ottawa, the Overseas Ministry, the War Office, and the Corps. Their efforts culminated in the creation of a Canadian Section at Field Marshal Haig's General Headquarters in France. At last, for everything except the conduct of operations, the Dominion could exercise the kind of control over its military forces that was normally expected of a "sovereign, if junior ally." Political autonomy, says Morton, seems to have followed almost naturally.

The significance of the Overseas Ministry and of the Canadian Section for Canada's constitutional evolution has been hinted at before, but up to now these

organizations have never been subject to such thorough scrutiny as in this book. Though few British sources are cited, Morton has missed none of the important collections, public or private, now in the Public Archives of Canada and he has obviously consulted many of the minor ones. As a result, he has succeeded in weaving several disparate strands — Hughes, conscription, the 1917 election, the CEF in England, and repatriation — into one coherent pattern. The nature of Canada's overseas administration (and by implication the limits of Canadian independence) were, in Morton's opinion, political problems that had to be resolved "by political means." Hence his view that the "peculiar kind of politics" practised in order to undo the damage caused by Sam Hughes' singular brand of the same art was a central factor in making the Canadian nation.

This is a broad and powerful assertion, and one may well argue with aspects of it. Whether or not one agrees with the notion that the Canadian victories in France and Flanders had less political impact than previously imagined, there is not enough about the Canadian Corps here. In particular, Professor Morton's efforts to establish the importance of the Overseas Ministry in initiating administrative changes in England glosses over what was, in effect, a symbiotic relationship between the Corps and Perley's department. For example, from 1915 on, a number of officers in France (as well as Corps Headquarters itself) passed on suggestions to London and to Ottawa that would have corrected many of the faults inherent in Sam Hughes' design. Yet these are largely missing from this account, as is the fact that several of the reforms credited to Perley simply implemented recommendations that had originated at the front.

This, in a way, leads to a second quibble. Though the author freely acknowledges the importance of "many characters and innumerable circumstances," *A Peculiar Kind of Politics* points clearly to the influence of structure. Only an overseas ministry with a resident minister "could possibly have eliminated Sam Hughes ... could have brought the necessary prestige to a major task of reform ... could have removed unfit officers, disposed of surplus officers, or curbed the struggle for regional patronage ..." Only an overseas ministry, it seems, could have made the CEF organization efficient and wrested rightful Canadian control from the British.

Perhaps this was so. But the book and the documents make an equally compelling case that personality (always Morton's strength) was the key. Sir Sam had to go for the sake of administrative efficiency; however, the thesis that his responsibilities had to be divided between two departments — one at home, one abroad — for things to improve is not entirely convincing. Did it matter whether his successor was in Ottawa or in London for him to consolidate command in England, to give the generals at the front sufficient scope to develop and display their competence in battle, or to respect their judgement regarding promotions and appointments? Was it essential that Kemp reside overseas to protect the continued existence of a four-division Canadian Corps, to negotiate a financial settlement with the British, and to restore a measure of civilian control over the army? Was it important that the personalities of Perley and Kemp and their attitudes to the military differed from Hughes'? And was an overseas institution really a necessary precondition for Borden's "symbolic victories" in 1917, 1918, and 1919? In sum, was it the Overseas Ministry, as structure, that reformed things, or the people who

happened to be involved? That these questions can be posed, however, in no way lessens our appreciation of *A Peculiar Kind of Politics* — a remarkably good book.

Stephen Harris
 Directorate of History
 National Defence Headquarters

Clifford Sifton: Volume 1, The Young Napoleon, 1861-1900. D.J. HALL. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1981. xii, 361 p. ISBN 0 7748 0135 2 \$27.50.

The Ottawa Men: The Civil Service Mandarins, 1935-1957. J.L. Granatstein. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1982. xiv, 333 p. ISBN 19 540387 8 \$14.95 pa.

Students of Canadian history will welcome David Hall's professional and independent biography of Clifford Sifton. For too long J.W. Dafoe's *The Life and Times of Clifford Sifton* remained the only full effort to record, albeit from treacherously close quarters, Sifton's career. In this respect Hall's work is a major addition to the inventory of biographies of major Canadian historical figures.

It is to be underlined that Hall's book is a political biography and that it bears the major characteristics of the genre. Sifton is viewed as a Manitoba politician who elevated himself into a position of considerable political power in Ottawa in part by calling attention to the unfulfilled promises of the National Policy. If Sifton was adept as a provincial spokesman at blaming the federal Conservatives for failing to devise an equitable tariff and railway policy, he was equally determined to overlook those failures as a federal cabinet minister. Although as a Manitoba provincial politician Sifton had very decided views on the necessity of a national school system, one senses that he later wished that the purists from the Roman Catholic and, even more so, the national school camp would cease interfering with his efforts to govern, and especially abandon the use of his own rhetoric against him. The harping of the critics only obstructed his use of political power for the development of the Canadian west. Hall summarizes it aptly: "For Sifton ... the political game was a means to an end. Political power was essential to the implementation of the policies of development that he considered vital to Canada."

Hall sheds light on the alliances and dissembling to which Sifton resorted in order to hold onto power. It is noteworthy that the author provides the first clear explanation of Sifton's relationship to the *Manitoba Free Press*. Perhaps clarity is a misleading term here since knowledge of Sifton's ownership of the newspaper was carefully kept from contemporaries and seemed to provide Sifton with the skills needed to construct his later corporate labyrinths. On the other side of the ledger, it is a shortcoming of the book that fuller attention is not given to Sifton's use of political power to amass substantial economic power. Hall cannot be completely faulted for this since his major source, the Sifton Papers in the Public Archives of Canada, is primarily a collection of political papers and offers only fascinating and tantalizing glimpses of Sifton's business links.

If the absence of documentation is largely responsible for this shortcoming, it is difficult to be as generous towards Hall's brief treatment of the policies of the Department of the Interior. Certainly these policies are summarized, however one