

politicians' papers and the official records of the departments. The influence on policy of high-level civil servants like Sifton's Deputy Minister of the Interior, James Smart, was slight precisely because they were recruited as supporters of the minister, not as policy creators. This is not to suggest that the personal papers of men like Smart would not be valuable, but simply that they would document policies which had been formed primarily by the minister.

In the later period Granatstein studies, the mandarins became too powerful to omit from any account of political history. James Smart need not be discussed at length in writing about Sifton, but no satisfactory political biography of a key minister in the King or St. Laurent Governments could be undertaken without giving the mandarins their due. For archivists at the Public Archives, this development underlines the need to maintain active acquisition programmes in the area of the public service. Because the recent multiplication of federal government activities has dispersed the power of Granatstein's mandarins among many public servants and advisory and regulatory agencies, the archivist must now be able to identify and appraise a range of records lying far beyond the familiar papers of the cabinet ministers. Of course archivists responsible for the records of provincial and municipal governments face similar challenges.

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**A Victorian Authority: The Daily Press in Late-Nineteenth Century Canada.** PAUL RUTHERFORD, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982. xi, 292 p. ISBN 0 8020 64 59 0 \$12.50 pa.

Long an essential source of information for historians, the daily newspaper has been largely ignored as an object of extended critical examination. Paul Rutherford's *A Victorian Authority* does much to correct this conspicuous deficiency in Canadian historiography. Taking his cue from theorists of mass communications (notably Harold Lasswell and Jay Jensen), he discusses the work of reporters, editors, publishers, the impact of publishing technology, the nature of the newspaper reading public, the kinds of information presented, and the ideological perspective newspapers conveyed.

The study begins with a description of the factors which made possible the growth and development of the press. Industrialization, urbanization, and rising literacy rates were the prerequisites for the urban daily press and the forces which shaped its character. Out of this process of modernization a Canadian middle class emerged, and from that class came many newspaper owners, editors, and reporters. In fact, the press, the author writes, "was at best, only a mechanism of bourgeois liberty." Journalists were driven by values shared with the bourgeois segment of Canadian society. They exhibited the behaviour of the nineteenth-century entrepreneur and sought the rising status businessmen enjoyed. Indeed, Rutherford reminds us that a newspaper was very much a business enterprise requiring close attention to income and expenses, and to prosaic matters such as paper supply, type, newsgathering services, personnel, payroll and advertising volume and rates.

There is a paradox in this story too. The daily newspaper, by its very nature,

promoted change, for it tended to be nourished by dramatic events and constant novelty. But middle-class journalists were uneasily aware that change was a two-edged sword which, falling into restless, discontented, or, simply, ignorant hands, could be wielded with maleficent intent. To prevent this from happening, the daily press, particularly the "popular" journals, fostered a myth of evolutionary and progressive change which presented no real threat to political order and social harmony. The key components of the myth came together in a vision of a political democracy able to resist levelling excesses, a society capable of progress without upsetting delicate social arrangements, and a new nationality to be created despite the broad expanses between regions and differences between ethnic groups. The myth emerged to resolve the tensions and contradictions inherent in these aspirations.

The final chapter examines a persisting assumption: the freedom of the press and the press' role as guardian of the public interest. Rutherford here explains that the press was by no means free from external pressures and constraints. Threats of legal reprisal (libel laws), clerical rivalry, fickle public taste, business influence, government patronage, and the traditional ties to political party cast doubt on the proud proclamations of journalists that they were honest, independent brokers of the public interest. While this claim of independence is not without substance, newspapers did play an important role in legitimizing established means of social control by acting as what a recent British study termed an "agency of popular participation."<sup>\*</sup>

*A Victorian Authority* stands as a valuable addition to our historiography. However, the book may occasionally disappoint those with an advanced interest in the history of the press. For instance, it is unfortunate that the author's apparent enthusiasm for tables seems to have waned after the second chapter. Twenty-five of the thirty tables appear in the first two chapters, most of them dealing with literacy and circulation figures. Only four of the thirty tables indicate an effort at content analysis. While these latter tables provide interesting evidence, it is difficult to see how twenty-eight days of sampling taken from four years across a total of fifty years (1849, 1871, 1896, 1899) can be taken too seriously. We are not told what criteria were employed in choosing these particular days, years, and newspapers, or why line counts were used for the first three tables and an item count for the last table. Also, would these tables not be more appropriately placed in the later chapter on content entitled "The Daily Fare" where we find not a single content analysis table? Perhaps the placement of the four tables in the section on "The Search for Popularity" appearing in an earlier chapter entitled "The Making of the Daily Press" reflects a conceptual difficulty (or bias) in separating the subject of newspaper content from the marketing aspect of the newspaper. A second point concerns Rutherford's assessment of the impact of the press on public opinion. According to the author, the absence of contemporary opinion polls reduces us to examining circulation figures as well as the content of the press itself. This latter method is based on the assumption that the press tended to set the agenda for public discussion by giving prominence to certain issues and, further, to reflect rather than influence public opinion on these issues. For researchers to question even this modest assumption

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\* See Brian Harrison, "Press and Pressure Groups in Modern Britain" in J. Shattock and M. Wolff, eds., *The Victorian Periodical Press: Samplings and Soundings* (Toronto, 1982).

would involve being overly scrupulous in the use of newspaper evidence. Yet a more interesting and rewarding effort to determine the influence of the press might have been made through bolder use of content analysis techniques which could indicate how many and what kind of content exchanges occurred among the urban press and between urban and rural newspapers. Consideration could have been given as well to the possibility that smaller circulation newspapers exerted their wider influence by aiming their product at influential opinion leaders. (This has been termed by Lazarfeld and Katz the “two-step flow of communication”).

The reader will not learn from this study where newspaper content originated. How much information came from staff reporters, other Canadian newspapers, or British, American, and European newspapers and periodicals? Other topics which have been excluded or neglected include the morphological development of the press. For example, how important was it for news and advertising to appear on the front page in a four-page newspaper, given the absence of competition from radio and television? We also need to know more about photographs and illustrations and the importance of “scoops” and interviews. Finally, another area of useful speculation might have been the significance of the “Letter to the Editor.”

What are the archival profession’s responsibilities with respect to newspapers? Because newspapers are a published source, archivists are right in thinking they belong primarily in the domain of the librarian. Archivists have been content to collect the private papers of influential journalists and publishers. But what has happened to the corporate records of newspapers? Rutherford makes little use of archival records of any kind; there are only a few references to records in but one corporate archives: the Southam Archives in Toronto. This may be because few other archival records were available to him. The archival profession may have a responsibility to urge the private sector mass media to accept a definition of corporate citizenship which makes provision for proper; archival programs with reasonable terms of public access to their records. And given the media’s commitment to freedom of the press and the public’s right to know, shouldn’t this definition be advanced all the more vigorously with the media?

*A Victorian Authority* stands as the only recent scholarly attempt to understand the development of the Canadian press. Professor Rutherford is to be congratulated for his willingness to summon to his assistance theories outside the field of history and for his examination of non-Canadian studies of the press. The flaws and omissions this study may have stemmed from its ambitious and difficult purpose. We can only hope that Professor Rutherford’s book will encourage other scholars and the archival community to join him in devoting serious attention to this invaluable record of our past for, like other historical records, the press will be used most effectively when properly understood.

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