

Bruce W. Hodgins, Don Wright, and W. H. Heick, eds. *Federalism in  
Canada and Australia: The Early Years.* Waterloo Canada: Wilfred  
Laurier University Press, 1979. Pp. xiv, 318. \$13.75.

There are many ways of knowing things, and the disputes of epistemologists ring to high heaven. To find comfort among so many contending camps is not easy. But ultimately, as we each carry our own world on our shoulders, so, too, our epistemologies and methodologies. Is this not written in Heidegger, Adler, Nietzsche and others? For this reviewer at least, there is nothing that matches history (*pace* Tolstoy) as a mode of coming close to the nature of social experience, and, of course, if

one can bring off a cross-cultural history, then so much richer the perspective.

This is precisely what the editor and contributors to this excellent collection of essays have achieved. In a cross-cultural history that looks to the dynamics of men, movements, change and the unpredictability of circumstance rather than sociologically irrelevant materialist theories to explain the interaction of politics and culture in two societies, they have thrown considerable light on the federal experience of Canada and Australia.

There are seventeen essays in this work; an introduction by the editor--Professor Hodgins--an epilogue, and in between, eight essays on Canada and seven on Australia. The title of the introduction ("The Plans of Mice and Men") and the title of the epilogue ("Canada and Australia: Continuing but Changing Federations") give the dominant themes, and the fifteen essays play out these themes with a cohesion unusual in symposia.

The editorial argument which sets the direction for the contributors is this: that the Founding Fathers of both Canada and Australia began with very different intentions in mind. The Canadians wanted to create not a federation, but a system in which the union would supervise the units, and protect the minorities. By contrast the Australian Founding Fathers wanted an arrangement which would give the greatest emphasis to states' rights. In neither case, however, did affairs take the course intended by the Founding Fathers. In each case, within a short period of time after union, a pattern emerged that reversed the founding intentions. By 1880 in Canada and 1914 in Australia, "the trend was significantly different." And today, "Canada is one of the most decentralized operative federations in the world, and Australia one of the more centralized ones."

How does it come about that the plans of mice and men turn about in such a way? Hodgins' answer is that "the reasons are complex and elusive, but primarily social and cultural." This is a sensible, if unexceptional answer. But if the answer begins with a generality, it does not end there. For both his introduction and the valuable contributions to the book give ample evidence how it came about that two nations, Canada and Australia, "driven socially by comparable populist or democratic elements and without significantly amending their formal constitutions, . . . were switching sides within the federal spectrum."

Of Canada, I know too little to appraise Hodgins' argument. But what of Australia? Of the seven essays that treat of the Australian experience, two write on the genesis of the federal system, and the others deal with the centrifugal influences that brought the Commonwealth to mastery

and the states to their lowly condition. Much of the material is familiar. But to say this is to do little justice to the distinguished quality of the work. While the authors have trodden familiar paths, they have also re-examined many of the time-honored explanations with a refreshing iconoclasm. Indeed, there is little question that this group of essays have cleansed a great deal of deadwood from Australian federal history and in the process they have also beggared almost every kind of explanatory federal theory.

Norris, for example, in a notable essay on the factors that led to the Australian federation, lays to rest the ghost of the argument that military fear or siege neurosis had anything to do with persuading Australians to federate. If Norris is correct (and his evidence is very impressive), then he has destroyed with one stroke William Riker's binary theory of a military and expansionist drive to explain the beginnings of federation everywhere. Or again in the same vein of pinioning the fact-less tongues of polemicists, Eddy makes plain that the Australian states were not the creation of "Colonial Office clerks." He writes, "It has been fashionable to say that the Australian states had their origins in arbitrary lines drawn on the map by Colonial Office clerks, but this does scant justice to the very real dilemmas faced by nineteenth century administrators."

And so from Norris' and Eddy's introductory essays the following five chapters on Australia spell out in great detail how by the exercise of their powers alone, not by constitutional reform, the Commonwealth came to be master and the states supplicants. Thus, whether it is Wright's discussion on the use of the purse, or Tanner's chapter on the introduction of military conscription, or Eddy on the influence of imperial sentiment, or Norris on Labor's pressure on the constitution to yield up ameliorative industrial policies, it becomes very plain that, in the circumstances, the center of gravity had to move to those who held the purse strings, or to those who were constitutionally obligated to defend the country, or to those who had to decide what nature of people would be allowed to enter and inhabit the country. It wasn't necessarily so. There is-- *pace* James Bryce--no social physics here. But this was the way that politicians and circumstances aided and abetted the gravitational pull in this instance.

It is a pity that the concluding chapter is not quite up to the very high standard of the previous chapters. They deserved a less hurried and more reflective conclusion. But so satisfying is everything that has gone before that it is a minor disappointment. In the main this work makes a notable contribution to the rewriting of the Australian federal experience. And if, as one may assume from Professor Hodgins' disciplined editorship that the Canadian material is of the same quality, then this work must become in-

dispensable to anyone who wants to see this incredibly chaotic world of Federalism as it is, rather than through the plastic models of positivist federal theory.

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