

## Regionalism and the Social Scientists

Donald Swainson

Volume 10, Number 1, Autumn 1980

URI: [https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/acad10\\_1rv03](https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/acad10_1rv03)

[See table of contents](#)

---

### Publisher(s)

The Department of History of the University of New Brunswick

### ISSN

0044-5851 (print)

1712-7432 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

---

### Cite this document

Swainson, D. (1980). Regionalism and the Social Scientists. *Acadiensis*, 10(1), 143–153.

## Regionalism and the Social Scientists

It is well known that within Canada the balance of federal and provincial authority has gone through a series of pendulum-like phases. We have had periods of tremendous federal power: the early years after 1867, the two world wars and the post-1945 years. There have also been periods, the 1880s and 1970s are examples, of unusual provincial vitality and stridency. Traditionally, most constitutional authorities have bemoaned decentralization, provincial rights agitations and the role of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in weakening central authority, while historians like Donald Creighton and W.L. Morton (in his later phase) have written persuasively about the collapse of the "Macdonaldian" constitution and the ensuing potential for national disintegration. But the tone of much of our scholarship changed during the 1960s. Older traditions persisted, but decentralization and regionalism came very much into vogue.<sup>1</sup> Historians and social scientists, in an impressive display of herd scholarship, went to the regions, the roots, the minorities; this was the way to explain what was distinctive about Canada or, on the other hand, what was wrong with Canada. There seemed to be an inevitability about it all. The old scholarship of Innis, Mackintosh and Creighton did not work any more. The tradition of Goldwin Smith and Underhill could not be espoused because it was too pro-American. Pro-Canadian nationalism was as unworkable and unacceptable as continentalism. There really was no Canada; there were only provinces, regions, limited identities. As J.M.S. Careless recently put it, "Altogether, limited identities threaten to take over, and settle the matter of a Canadian national identity, by ending it outright, leaving perhaps a loose league of survivor states essentially existing on American outdoor relief".<sup>2</sup>

Our real complication, of course, was the fact that the second most important province, and our most cohesive and distinctive culture, was gripped by nationalistic fervor. Scholars in Quebec universities tended to be French Canadian nationalists or sympathizers. Numerous academics in other parts of Canada fell all over each other in attempts to justify French Canadian nationalism and self-determination. For many academics, both in Quebec and elsewhere, the scenario was clear. Jean Lesage cleansed Quebec of the spirit of Maurice Duplessis and modernized the province, which was moving inevitably towards independence. The movement paused under Daniel Johnson and Robert Bourassa, but was put back on track by René Lévesque and the Parti Québécois. The main line of history was resumed in 1976 when the P.Q. won a smashing electoral victory. Many Canadians of goodwill convinced themselves that the breakup of Canada would soon be negotiated. In the process, of course,

1 J.M.S. Careless, "'Limited Identities' in Canada", *Canadian Historical Review*, L (1969), pp. 1-10, and Northrop Frye's preface to *The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination* (Toronto, 1971) best typify this scholarship.

2 J.M.S. Careless, "Limited Identities — ten years later", *Manitoba History*, I, no. 1 (1980), p. 3.

Anglophone sins of racism and colonization would be expiated; we would all be the better for it. Then came the Quebec referendum on 20 May 1980. A deliberately fuzzy question and a demagogic campaign on the part of Prime Minister Lévesque failed to produce the last leg of inevitability. Sovereignty-Association, the code phrase for independence, was not only defeated but crushed. What did it mean? Was it possible that Pierre Elliott Trudeau, and not René Lévesque, the press corps and liberal intellectuals in the universities, represented the main line of historical evolution? Well, not likely. The most common interpretation of the referendum result assured the inevitable: a "yes" vote would give Lévesque a mandate to negotiate the breakup of Canada; a "no" vote would give Trudeau and English Canada one final chance to appease the Parti Québécois through massive decentralization and constitutional rewriting. This line was given a somewhat apologetic cover. After all, Quebec's Anglophones had block voted, the federal government had flooded Quebec with slick advertising, and the federal forces had ignored portions of Lévesque's referendum legislation.

The hard evidence, however, seems to be on the other side. Trudeau's basic constitutional views have never been obscure; yet he won massive majorities in Quebec in the 1979 and 1980 federal elections. In 1980 he also won impressive victories in Ontario and the Maritimes. The referendum result gave Trudeau exactly what he wanted: the rejection of the P.Q. constitutional position by both Anglophone and Francophone Quebecers. The "last chance" argument retains popularity, but does not seem to be motivating the Prime Minister, who apparently regards the referendum result as a re-affirmation of the federalist dualism that began with the Hincks-LaFontaine negotiations in 1839. In a bizarre twist of fate, the referendum result has legitimized confederation and provided Trudeau with an opportunity for a bold stroke that will strengthen the centre and not reduce Canada to a "community of communities".

In short, there might be much more to Canada than many of our writers and commentators during the 1960s and 1970s would allow. This is not to suggest that regionalism is unimportant. It is important, but so is regionalism in the United States and the United Kingdom. The success of the Thatcher Conservatives involved a profound electoral cleavage between the region south of the Thames and other portions of the country; Jimmy Carter's election in 1976 also saw deep regional differentiation, in this case between east and west. Everybody is familiar with regional cultures like those of New England, the deep south, Wales and the western highlands. These are fascinating regions that merit and receive study; so do our regions. But can Britain and the United States, or Canada, be explained by regionalism? Have we not allowed the pendulum to swing too far? Does not the referendum tell us that Canada is more than the sum of its regions? Should not some searching questions be asked about much of the recent literature that seeks to interpret and explain Canada?

*Canadian Confederation: A Decision-Making Analysis* (Toronto, Macmillan of Canada, 1979) by W.L. White, R.H. Wagenberg, R.C. Nelson

and W.C. Soderlund is a small but ambitious study. Its four authors, all political scientists, seek to explain how our federation works by analysing its origins. Such a study is justified, they contend, by a lack of relevant literature. "Much of this work is excellent", report the authors, "but little scholarly work has been done in the way of a close analysis of the political attitudes which this [i.e. the founding] elite as a whole held towards Confederation and federalism" (p. 4). So much, one assumes, for the work of Trotter, Whitelaw, Martin, Creighton, Waite, Careless, Morton, Hodgins and Bonenfant who, along with many other historians, have analysed the confederation movement. This is not to suggest that confederation has been definitively studied. New research will no doubt produce new insights and interpretations. Unfortunately, White, Wagnberg, Nelson and Soderlund were not able to deliver either fresh insight or convincing interpretative innovation.

Their problem is a combination of assumption and methodology. "The focus of this work", they explain, "is an empirical study of Confederation, that is, of the decision by a political elite in the mid-1860s to adopt a federal system of government . . . . The event in the decision-making process on which we have focused our attention is the debates in the Canadian Parliament on the Quebec Resolutions which occurred during February and March of 1865, and which led directly to the dispatch of a committee to London to negotiate the document of Confederation" (p. 8). The research technique employed is a content analysis of the published debates. Elaborate claims are made for this methodology: "a carefully constructed and controlled analysis of the content of the *Debates* will enable us to reconstruct the psychological environment, that is, the way in which this extremely important political elite actually perceived the stimuli which were necessitating a change of constitutional arrangement. Moreover, we believe that from this examination of the elite images of Confederation, we will be able to establish with greater insight, the origin of a number of crucial problems of Canadian federalism" (p. 16). Subjects within speeches are identified, measured and the results toted up in both tabular and prose format.

The authors' methodology and assumptions doom the study. First, the site is wrong. The key decision-making unit was almost certainly the Quebec Conference, or possibly the Charlottetown, Quebec and London conferences combined, and not the Parliament of Canada. Second, the personnel studied is not the real political elite of either Canada or confederation. The conferences included Canadians *and* Maritimers, and were conducted within a framework that ultimately involved important British officials. Maritimers are excluded for reasons that are difficult to take seriously: "Arguments stressing the importance of the Province of Canada in the decision-making process leading to Confederation are many. For example, P.B. Waite believes that Confederation was pushed jointly by Canada and the British Colonial office, and that the Maritime Provinces were dragged in kicking and screaming" (p. 139, n. 2). Waite's view, of course, is distorted. New Brunswick did endorse Confederation

in the election of 1866. Charles Tupper and Samuel Leonard Tilley were not "dragged in kicking and screaming"; they were important fathers of confederation, and any definition of the confederation elite, in this case "the Parliament of Canada" (p. 9), that includes non-entities like Hope Mackenzie and James O'Halloran and anti-confederates like J.B.E. Dorion and J.F. Perrault, but ignores major figures like Tupper and Tilley is absurd. Third, the authors seem oblivious to the real implications of party discipline. The confederation debate was controlled by the great coalition that employed all of its very considerable authority to secure approval of the Quebec resolutions and to keep its members in line. Fourth, the authors are convinced that MPPs in 1865 said what they really believed: "We have rejected as unfounded any assertions that the Confederation debates are an unreliable guide to the motives underlying the decision actually taken. We find no evidence to impeach the sincerity of the speakers nor to assume any divergence between public utterance and subjective conviction" (p. 109). No divergence?

Late in 1864 John A. Macdonald wrote to a fellow Tory: "If the Confederation goes on you, if spared the ordinary age of man, will see both local parliaments and governments absorbed in the general power. This is as plain to me as if I saw it accomplished".<sup>3</sup> At the close of the Quebec Conference an exuberant George Brown exulted to his wife: "Is it not wonderful? French Canadianism entirely extinguished!" At the end of this most revealing letter he indicated that the new constitution would be no impediment to the ambitions of Ontario: "You will say our constitution is dreadfully Tory — and so it is — *but we have the power in our hands* (if it passes), *to change it as we like*. Hurrah!"<sup>4</sup> With divergences like these floating about in the published literature, how can serious scholars argue that "it is our contention that verbal articulation aimed at clarifying one's position on such an important issue is indeed a reasonable indicator of one's actual position" (p. 12).

It is hardly surprising that the application of a dubious methodology to the wrong group has produced some curious results. For example, the authors contend that "country of birth" is as an important factor "which hitherto has gone unnoticed" and "that there were two major groups supporting Confederation, Lower Canadian Conservatives and both Reformers and Conservatives representing Lower and Upper Canada who had immigrated from the British Isles" (p. 107). If, however, we look at a different group we get a different answer. One could argue that the *real* confederation elite in British North America consisted of seventeen men: Tupper, Archibald, Tilley, Mitchell, Wilmot, Cartier, Langevin, McGee, Galt, Chapais, Taché, Macdonald, Campbell, Brown, Mowat, McDougall and Howland. This group made the key

3 Cited in Donald Creighton, *The Road to Confederation: The Emergence of Canada: 1863-1867* (Toronto, 1964), p. 165.

4 Cited in J.M.S. Careless, *Brown of the Globe*, vol. II (Toronto, 1963), p. 171.

decisions: eleven were born in British North America; Campbell and Howland arrived at age one; Macdonald came when he was five. Only McGee, Brown and Galt emigrated as adults. In short, the group of British North Americans who made the real confederation decisions was overwhelmingly native born and included only three men who emigrated as adults. This pattern is true even of Ontario. Six of the above groups were Ontarians; only Brown came to Canada as an adult.

*Canadian Confederation: A Decision Making Analysis* is a disturbing book. It injects the red herring of a native versus immigrant struggle into confederation historiography. It grossly distorts the confederation movement by dismissing the Maritime leadership, which was crucial to both the confederation and anti-confederation movements. The argument that the Maritimes were "dragged in kicking and screaming" is an oversimplification that ignores a generation of scholarship and will, no doubt, feed certain regional sentiments of a paranoid sort. Was the real problem the fact that the Maritimers did not publish their debates, and therefore left nothing that social scientists can calibrate? Is this study really just a methodology in search of a framework?

*Unfulfilled Union: Canadian Federalism and National Unity* (Toronto, Macmillan of Canada, 1979) by Garth Stevenson, *The Roots of Disunity: A Look at Canadian Political Culture* (Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1979) by David Bell and Lorne Tepperman, and *Fragile Federation: Social Change in Canada* (Toronto, McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1979) by Lorna R. Marsden and Edward B. Harvey are broad surveys that were written for three different series. *Unfulfilled Union* is the most successful of the three. Stevenson discusses federalism and the creation of confederation. He surveys the history of Canadian federalism and concludes with a set of chapters that analyse government finance, intergovernmental conflict, constitutional reform and our federal prospects. Stevenson is a dedicated centralizer: "the balance of articulate opinion has in the last decade shifted excessively in a direction that I can only regard as disastrous" (p. ix). The problem, it would seem, is that Canadian federalism, with its strong provinces, places too much stress on elite accommodation: "the concept of consociationalism has itself become a rather sophisticated ideological tool to justify the continuing elitism of Canadian politics. Elitism in political decision-making is closely associated with the maintenance of cultural and provincial barriers, real or imaginary, among the people of Canada, so that each serves to reinforce the other. By celebrating both, or at least failing to question them, the theorists of 'consociational democracy' are playing an ideological role. The consociational concept is the compact theory in a new guise" (p. 48). Canadian governments, in fact, constitute little more than slightly disguised covers for special interests: "It appears that governments have in practice selected the 'responsibilities' they wanted whenever those private groups and interests with a direct stake in the outcome of the activity concerned found it convenient for them to do so, and have then scrambled for the revenues

needed to carry out the task" (p. 150).

*The Roots of Disunity* also sees regionalism, or at least provincialism, as an impediment to creative politics. Disunity prevents effective protest: "Hence such subordinated people as women, the young, the old, native people, and racial minorities are kept from protesting their unfair treatment as strongly as they might if the nation were united. By using regional conflict to promote regional loyalties, the elites can sometimes 'divide and conquer' the opposition pushing up from below" (p. 183). From this naive and vaguely paranoid perspective, we need national unity in order to attain the politics of idealism, the details of which are left unexplained: "Politics, as the working out of visions of a better world, have almost disappeared from the national scene in Canada. We find instead politics as administration and a mere balancing of selfish interests. National unity cannot be created out of such flimsy stuff. The political culture must be revitalized; worthwhile collective goals identified; and Canadians must be inspired to overcome the growing balkanization and distrust. Our heritage, rooted in disunity, may hinder as much as help us in making the new start" (p. 250). Presumably, if we achieve the unity advocated by Bell and Tepperman we will be within striking distance of the vision and creativity of the politics of the United States.

*Fragile Federation* also takes regionalism very seriously: "we are saying that regional and cultural interests and loyalties fracture class consciousness in this country, and therefore modify the potential for change" (p. 131). Marsden and Harvey argue that there "is not a single national culture expressing the whole of Canada, which is a feature that is characteristic of a semi-peripheral society" (p. 152). What all of this means is somewhat puzzling to this historian. Presumably the point yet again is that we need more unity and less regionalism in order to have the creative politics of real class warfare.

The works of Stevenson, Bell and Tepperman, and Marsden and Harvey pose some very serious problems. Each book is a broad overview that includes considerable quantities of Canadian history combined with a survey of contemporary Canada. Each work advances a variant of the "divide and rule" interpretation of regionalism and/or federalism, and argues, with greater and lesser degrees of explicitness, for a form of radical politics that is unlikely to emerge until we have much more national unity. There is agreement on the point that our politics is now class based; the problem is that the wrong class is in the saddle. With sufficient unity the oppressed groups, "women, the young, the old, native people, and racial minorities" in *The Roots of Disunity*, will be able to organize to obtain a greater degree of justice.

Two very broad questions should be asked. The first concerns politics. Is this kind of political programme desirable? The answer, of course, relates to each individual's political philosophy. A supplementary question is perhaps more germane. Will more unity lead to more radicalism? The answer is probably "no". We know that the elites are far from homogenous. Industrialists in

Toronto have precious little community of interest with oilmen in Calgary; similarly, unionized industrial workers in Toronto have interests at substantial variance with the Alberta workforce. This point becomes evident when one observes the very broad policy differences that exist in the N.D.P. in areas like nuclear energy and oil pricing. The second question concerns scholarship. What is the relationship between the policy orientation of these books and the scholarship involved? Does the policy, implicit and explicit, emerge from the research? It certainly does not emerge from the historical scholarship which tends to be slipshod. The points that follow are not intended to be picky, but to illustrate the fact that in each book the historical portion of the evidentiary base is highly suspect.

Stevenson suggests that "the Liberal party, while remaining true to George Brown's ideals, was able to incorporate (and incidentally make harmless) the remnants of anti-Confederation sentiment in all of the provinces" (pp. 66-7). John A. Macdonald's Conservative party absorbed Joseph Howe, the most important single anti-confederate, and many of his followers. In Ontario, the most prominent anti-confederate was John Sandfield Macdonald. In 1867 he entered a close alliance with John A. and the federal Tories. The longest anti-confederation speech in the confederation debate in Canada was delivered by Christopher Dunkin. He remained a Conservative. The *Rouges* group was anti-confederation on a partisan basis, and retained its alliance with the Liberals. A.J. Smith, the anti-confederate leader in New Brunswick, remained a Liberal. The post-confederation careers of anti-confederates did not follow any consistent pattern.

Stevenson states that in "1891 the federal Liberals were persuaded by Mowat to adopt a policy of unrestricted free trade with the United States" (p. 85). This is related to Mowat's opposition to the National Policy and the wants of Ontario's lumbermen. Such an argument grossly simplifies the politics of the 1891 campaign. Federal Liberals like Sir Richard Cartwright agitated for a policy of Commercial Union with the Americans, and in the process attracted the support of annexationists. Unrestricted reciprocity was a watered down economic policy that was forced on the Liberal party by moderates like J.D. Edgar. P.B. Waite refers to "the party's apparently unrepentant commitment to unrestricted reciprocity", and notes that it "made Oliver Mowat uneasy".<sup>5</sup> On basic economic policy, Mowat was a moderate who was closer to Macdonald than to the federal leaders of his own party. Again, Stevenson states, "There is no evidence that the provincial jurisdiction over education was intended to have anything to do with universities" (p. 150). Nineteenth-century politicians were not as passionately concerned about universities as are twentieth-century professors. John A. Macdonald, however, wrote much of the B.N.A. Act and had extremely close ties with Queen's University, whose interests he routinely

<sup>5</sup> Peter B. Waite, *Canada 1874-1896: Arduous Destiny* (Toronto, 1971), p. 224.



defended. When the details of the confederation scheme were made public it was evident to those concerned that universities would indeed fall under provincial jurisdiction and that public grants to sectarian colleges in Ontario, chiefly Queen's and Victoria, would be threatened. An intense campaign was launched to save the provincial grants; the campaign failed and in 1868 the province announced the termination of grants to sectarian colleges. In the midst of this controversy, John A. Macdonald commiserated with Principal Snodgrass of Queen's. He noted that Premier John Sandfield Macdonald's "only claim to public support is his reputation for economy, and to keep that up he sacrifices every principal of justice". Sandfield's political credit was "almost worn to rags".<sup>6</sup> Macdonald made no suggestion whatever that universities should be under federal jurisdiction. He expressed no interest in incurring any such jurisdiction or responsibility. Macdonald believed in a highly centralized federation, and initially regarded the provinces as glorified municipalities. It is hardly to be credited that he said and did nothing about an early violation of federal jurisdiction.

Bell and Tepperman approached the basics of Canadian history with an attitude so cavalier as to be breathtaking. Hence the rebellions of 1837 occurred "over the issue of responsible government" (p. 68, n. 42). One wonders where such a notion can be found in any respectable scholarship produced during the past twenty years. During the period of the union, we learn that "the capital moved back and forth, periodically, between Kingston and Quebec City". This, of course, was never the case. Further to enrich our understanding of the hapless Union, Bell and Tepperman inform us that "Legislation that interested only one-half of the united Canadas was placed under the exclusive jurisdiction of members from that half" (p. 117). This mangled version of history, which ignores aspects of the union as fundamental as the Taché Act and the Scott Act, is then used to explain how the Union worked: "These and other similar measures allowed the English and French to live together on 'the landing of politics' without either pushing the other over" (p. 117). Jack Horner was appointed to the cabinet in 1977 and became the "first Albertan in forty years to hold a major federal portfolio" (p. 187). Inexplicably, Douglas Harkness, who played a key role in the destruction of the Diefenbaker regime and held the Agriculture and Defence portfolios, is dismissed as having "held two moderately important cabinet posts" (p. 205, n. 30). It is true that Alberta has been a maverick province, but surely ministers like Harry Hays and Bud Olson, who held the Agriculture portfolio in the Pearson and first Trudeau governments respectively, cannot be dismissed as unimportant.

Marsden and Harvey also treat us to a strange version of our past. Hence, the "timber trade led to important economic development . . . and the creation of

6 Cited in Bruce W. Hodgins, *John Sandfield Macdonald, 1812-1872* (Toronto, 1971), p. 96. See also Hilda Neatby, *Queen's University*, vol. I (Montreal, 1978), p. 113.

centres which ultimately evolved into the major cities of today" (p. 53). This might be true of Ottawa, but what of Toronto, Hamilton, Calgary, Winnipeg and Vancouver? Or again (using the work of J.A. Banks), "the nationalist movement in French Canada arose from the rapid industrialization of Quebec after World War II" (p. 171). Surely any generalization about French Canadian nationalism should not exclude figures like Garneau, Papineau, Dorion, Mercier, Bourassa and Groulx. Constitutional history is out of fashion these days. Even so, should scholars suggest that "in 1929 the British Privy Council amended the British North America Act" (p. 194)?

Marsden and Harvey quote S.D. Clark's well known comment: "What the historian presumably is interested in are the facts of history; what the sociologist is interested in is the way these facts are related in some sociologically significant pattern" (p. 6). The historian grubs about; the social scientist is trained to take this raw data and find the significant patterns. The three volumes reviewed in this section seem to reveal something else. Were the patterns there before the commencement of research? Do we have here much more than a series of political credos that are dressed up with footnotes and survey material?

John Crispo's *Mandate for Canada* (Don Mills, General Publishing Co., 1979) and the Fraser Institute's *Canadian Confederation at the Crossroads: The Search for a Federal-Provincial Balance* (Vancouver, The Fraser Institute, 1978) are, at least, not at all disguised: they are manifestos that make very specific recommendations.

Some of Crispo's suggestions are simplistic. He advocates, for example, a salary of \$100,000 per annum for M.P.s, and believes that this will bring better qualified people into public life. He also wants a form of proportional representation for the House of Commons, and better leaves of absence arrangements so that high quality professionals can enter politics without doing serious damage to their careers. Such reforms might be helpful, but it is doubtful that Canada's political problems relate all that significantly to the talent pool for politicians.

Crispo describes various assaults on the federal authority and summarizes succinctly "the costs of [further] decentralization" (pp. 65-6), which will be very heavy. Nonetheless, he endorses the notion that Quebec, and Quebec alone, should decide the future of Canada: "I believe Québec would be foolish to go its own way, but I believe even more strongly that it must have the right to make such a tragic mistake. I take this position even though I am certain that it would eventually prove fatal to the survival of both English Canada and Québec" (p. 64). Crispo's position on self-determination for Quebec and decentralization in general brings to mind the query of Aldous Huxley, "We know that the pursuit of good ends does not justify the employment of bad means. But what about those situations . . . in which good means have end results which turn out to be bad?"

7 Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* and *Brave New World Revisited* (New York, 1960), the latter work, p. 20.

While further decentralization will be enormously costly, Canada "will probably have to become even more decentralized if it is to survive" (p. 67). *Mandate for Canada* is a thin little tract that has about it the tone of the professor-on-the-street.

*Canadian Confederation at the Crossroads*, multi-authored by a group that is dominated by economists, is in a different class altogether. It is a full-scale, sustained assault on federal power that constitutes the *reductio ad absurdum* of regionalism and decentralization. The objectives are set out in the preface: "This Fraser Institute study arose from the judgement that much of what is interpreted as separatist sentiment in Quebec, and in the West and in the Maritimes, could well, in fact, represent a deeply rooted reaction to a rising feeling of alienation from government . . . . The central thrust of the book is an assessment of whether *decentralization* of government might improve our ability to retain our dedication to a unified destiny" (p. xiii). Nine humourless chapters provide a loud affirmative response: decentralization will save Canada.

The budget must be balanced, and this principal must be "enshrined in the constitution" (p. xviii). Why? "To better ensure the financial independence of the provinces and to place confederation on a firmer financial footing" (p. xviii). Most transfer payments from the federal to provincial governments should be abolished, since transfer payments, like welfare, sap initiative and self-respect and consequently are not in the best interests of the recipient regions. Provinces should have greater access to tax revenues, and federal spending should be curtailed. Since the C.B.C. is "not pursuing the goals that it was originally established to pursue" (p. 254) and is not accountable, "we see no merit in having a federally financed public broadcasting corporation" (p. 258). Ottawa should virtually withdraw from the language policy field. Manpower training programmes should be handed over to the provinces, which should also acquire more responsibility for law enforcement. The federal authorities should abandon all involvement with education. Even fiscal policy should fall under the axe of the decentralizers: "The idea of a truly independent provincial fiscal policy is naturally very speculative . . . . The power to conduct independent fiscal policy will not eradicate the conflict, but it would reduce one element in the ongoing federal-provincial debate. If it can be done without too high a cost, it would be worthwhile for the future of confederation" (p. 282).

*Canadian Confederation at the Crossroads* is not totally anti-federal. A common market is to be retained, and it is conceded that immigration policy must remain in federal hands. Presumably the federal government should continue to run the army, appoint ambassadors and administer federal territories. But the programme of the Fraser Institute would leave us with a truncated and ineffective federal administration. And why should we implement these proposals? We should do it so that we can accommodate the "separatist sentiment" in Quebec, the Maritimes and the West. A right-wing fantasy should be accepted because of a non-existent movement in the Maritimes, a lunatic-

fringe movement on the Prairies and a movement in Quebec that has been overwhelmingly rejected.

Regionalism — or perhaps more broadly, limited identities — was probably the most important concept employed by Canadian historians during the 1970s. It also saturates the writings of many of our social scientists. But while scholars used the concept extensively in their scholarship, they have employed little terminological precision.<sup>8</sup> The books reviewed in this article provide ample justification for a plea for more precise definitions. Although all have much to say or imply about regionalism/provincialism/limited identities, in no case is the result satisfying.

Let us by all means study regions and a vast array of other limited themes, but surely it is time to give precision to the definitions of the concepts that we use. Let us also bear in mind the implications of 20 May 1980. There is much more to Canada than limited identities. The people of Quebec have made abundantly clear that Canada is not about to be reduced to Professor Careless' "loose league of survivor states essentially existing on American outdoor relief". The people of Quebec sent a message to the politicians; perhaps it should also be received by our historians and social scientists.

DONALD SWAINSON

<sup>8</sup> This might now be changing. J.M.S. Careless, in his "Limited Identities — ten years later", works towards a definition: regionalism is only one of an untold number of limited identities. However, one derives the impression that Professor Careless would subsume everything to the topic except possibly the tariff and the central bank. It might be that a belief in limited identities is really an act of faith, a conviction that Canada does not exist. In an even more recent article, "Approaching Regions and Regionalism in Canadian History" in *The History and Social Science Teacher*, 15 (Summer 1980), William Westfall pushes the pendulum in the other direction. He finds political, economic and cultural regions, and argues that within the framework of regionalism one can and should study poverty, ethnicity and numerous other themes. Westfall argues that "a region must be part of something". He analyses those features that make the prairies distinctive, and argues that each such feature "demonstrates not the weakness but the power of the national government to shape the character of regions. Here is an example of a 'national' policy creating a system of regional imbalance" (p. 257). Professor Westfall thus restores the nation to the centre of analysis. That is what the referendum of 20 May did for Canadian politics.