

## BOOK REVIEWS

**Dominique Clément, *Canada's Rights Revolution: Social Movements and Social Change, 1937-1982* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008).**

Canada's 'rights revolution' took shape through considerable struggle. Canadian historians are now tracing the contours of Canada's 'rights revolution' and, more particularly, the roles played by non-state actors. Driven by a variety of cultural, social, and political forces as well as a large number and range of political actors and rights claimants, Canada's rights revolution developed through three identifiable phases during the Twentieth century (1930-1960; 1960-1982; 1983-present). In *Canada's Rights Revolution: Social Movements and Social Change, 1937-1982*, Dominique Clément presents four longitudinal case studies of civil liberties and human rights social movement organizations (SMOs) throughout Canada across two phases of the 'rights revolution'. In so doing, Clément makes a considerable contribution to the literature on Canada's rights revolution.

Clément contextualizes his study by describing the economic, social and cultural context in which civil liberties and human rights SMOs operated. Focusing on the period after 1960, the author argues that a sustained economic boom (until the mid-1970s), interventionist state, expanding state bureaucracy, the rise of international and national rights discourse, maturing baby-boom generation, rising post-secondary enrolments and growth of the Canadian middle-class shaped Canada's rights associations. Within that context, Clément traces six themes through case studies of the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association, La Ligue du droits de l'homme, Canadian Civil Liberties Association and the Newfoundland-Labrador Human Rights Association. Among the themes he traces are: the effect of state funding on social movement activism (particularly the professionalization of SMOs); generational differences among associations within the same movement; ideological divisions within the human rights movement; SMO tactical strategies; the obstacles to forming a national SMO in Canada; and the relationships among SMOs representing different movements. Clément's themes align with those described by social movement theorists over the past twenty or thirty years and now emerging in Canadian historical studies.<sup>1</sup>

Among the most interesting themes traced is the relationship that existed between rights SMOs and the Canadian state. In the 1960s and 1970s, Canada's governments channelled financial resources to SMOs as a means to serve a range of political objectives. Activists throughout Canada fiercely debated the relative merits of state funding and the potential for cooption. For three of the four SMOs under study, state funding was necessary to survive and defined the range and frequency of tactical interventions employed. Pragmatism trumped arguments about the independence of Canada's rights SMOs even as

generous public funding severed the traditional connection between SMO leadership and a mass-base. Yet, state funding facilitated SMO interventions in a number of Canadian rights controversies including the Gastown Riots, mandatory treatment for drug users, police abuse in Toronto, the October Crisis, the denominational school question and the repatriation of the Canadian constitution. As Clément demonstrates, SMO success was mixed but there is little evidence that any of the organizations failed to engage political authorities because of its financial dependence on the Canadian state. As Clément argues, the conservative and patient approach adopted by Canada's civil liberties and human rights associations was more a reflection of statist conceptions of human rights than any state funding received.

Clément's study contributes to our understanding of several historical subjects including: activist mobilization and the influence of a particular historical context, SMOs and social/political change, the proliferation of SMOs during the 1960s and 1970s, Canada's rights revolution and the power of rights discourse to inspire social or political change. Longitudinal historical case studies hold much promise for further exploring activist mobilization, Canada's rights revolution and, more generally, the role played by SMOs in the process of political/social change. Future studies might explore the creation of a political consciousness among SMO activists. Of all the events that might trigger group formation relatively few events ever do. Social movement theory suggests that group formation only follows a period during which political consciousness is bred among potential activists and is most successful when certain resources — including leaders, communication networks and existing organizations — are available to potential activists. Where and how this occurs within a particular historical context and among particular groups deserves more attention. As Clément so convincingly demonstrates, because activism is so strongly correlated to historical context, the answers posited are likely to be contingent upon the time and place studied. It falls to historians to properly situate extra-parliamentary political action within its historical context. Hopefully Clément's study and other recent works are the first of many.

Matthew Baglole  
University of New Brunswick

**Christopher Armstrong, Matthew Evenden, and H.V. Nelles, *The River Returns: An Environmental History of the Bow* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009).**

In *The River Returns*, authors Armstrong, Evenden, and Nelles decisively raise the bar for river history. If a book can be described, like its subject, as sweeping, majestic, turbulent and full of surprises, this is it. This comprehensive and ele-