

seems more relevant to 2021 than 1378. The fact that “Machiavelli puts forward an unapologetically partisan and antagonistic model of plebeian politics in which uprisings, secessions and spectacular violence play a major role” (189) is as uncomfortable to a contemporary democrat as it was for a sixteenth-century oligarch.

Critics may complain that this work is not especially novel since it offers no real thesis or argument that has not been articulated by previous authors (the vast majority of the citations are of secondary rather than primary sources). Nor is it narrowly penetrating, being mostly concerned to prune away centuries of Machiavellian commentators’ paralyzing fear of violence, rather than adding to the critical thicket. However, I think such criticism misses the point that this book fills a much-needed gap in Machiavellian scholarship on violence and will prove to be an essential reference book for graduates and undergraduates alike (I have already enthusiastically assigned it to both). Winter is in line with modern graduate students who tend to see Machiavelli as a subtle promoter of spectacle as a rhetorical strategy rather than as an advocate of power plays involving brute force or fraud (106). As such, his book can be summarized in one sentence: “At issue in the constitution of a political order is not only who controls the means of violence, but also how violence circulates symbolically” (140). Contemporary students might have less of an issue than the critical “old guard” with Winter’s insistence that “like Nozick, Machiavelli conceives of violence as a communicative act” (195). If the reader shares these touchstones, then this book will prove as essential an addition to their library as it is to mine.

Ours by Every Law of Right and Justice: Women and the Vote in the Prairie Provinces

Sarah Carter, Vancouver: UBC Press, 2020, pp. 288.

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Sarah Carter’s much-welcomed *Ours by Every Law of Right and Justice* is only the second published work—and the first in 70 years—to examine female suffrage across all three Canadian Prairie provinces. The book is a synthesis of accounts of suffrage campaigns in the three provinces and highlights “the contributions of . . . activists and the steps they took toward equality and justice while also recognizing the blind spots, shortcomings and exclusions that resulted in equality and justice for only some” (6). Regarding the latter, Carter emphasizes especially the “settler colonial context and the long shadows of racism,” which (along with the Prairie culture of patriarchy) are key themes of the book. Carter asserts that “the Prairie suffrage movement coincided with years of intense colonization” that included the dispossession of Indigenous peoples of their land, livelihoods and rights. In this context, Carter argues, the efforts of settler suffragists helped to “advance the cause of settler domination” (6) and their success was “a step toward consolidating settler power” (99).

While the emphasis on the settler colonial context is a significant contribution to suffrage scholarship, the claim that suffrage was a significant step toward consolidating settler power warrants further empirical consideration. The clearing of the Prairies for white settlement was undoubtedly colonialism at its most brutal. For First Nations peoples, it resulted in “their demographic nadir in the aftermath of the influenza epidemic of 1889–90” (Daschuk, 2013: 180). It was in 1891 that female suffrage was first officially endorsed by any organization on the Prairies—the Manitoba Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (45). To be sure,

suffragists would not subsequently challenge the settler colonial project. They shared in the material benefits of Indigenous dispossession and often held views that were implicitly or explicitly racist. That said, further argument and evidence would be required to compellingly establish that, in comparison with the brutal clearing of the Plains two and a half decades earlier, the “granting” (in Carter’s words) of the vote to settler women was a “decisive step” in curbing the power of First Peoples (145). This claim also raises a puzzle. If female suffrage was such an obvious step in the direction of consolidating settler power, why did male settler-colonialist leaders resist it so vigorously? Why did women activists have to wage such “long and arduous campaigns in each of these three provinces,” triumphing only after defeating “powerful opponents” (1)?

Suffragist success may well have been even more contingent than Carter suggests. Had it not been for a major scandal in Manitoba in 1915, the Conservative Roblin majority government (which had been elected in 1914 and was unalterably opposed to female suffrage) would have persisted through 1918 or 1919. As it was, the government resigned and the Liberals, assured of victory, immediately called an election campaigning on their pre-existing platform (adopted in 1914, when they had no chance of winning), which included a commitment to suffrage. Thus, Carter’s explanatory account would be stronger if she had explored the origins of the 1914 Liberal platform beyond the somewhat vague assertion that this commitment was “part of their strategy to create a coalition of anti-government forces” (89).

Similarly, female suffrage in Saskatchewan would likely have been significantly delayed had it not been for the governing Liberals being publicly accused in early 1916 of accepting bribes to oppose Prohibition. The Liberals knew that their survival in the next election depended on demonstrating an unflinching commitment to Prohibition, and women’s votes were key in this endeavour. Suffrage legislation was enacted just in time to allow women to vote in the upcoming plebiscite on bar licensing, ensuring Prohibitionist victory and reaffirming Liberal *bona fides* on the issue. Suffrage activist Alice Lawton’s now famous exclamation, “Mr. Premier, this is so sudden,” was most likely a facetious reference to the premier’s blatantly opportunistic volte-face on suffrage—coming as it did a mere four days after the bribery allegations were made public.

Regarding Alberta, Carter concludes that “unlike in Saskatchewan, farm women leaders and organizations played a secondary . . . role” and focuses her account instead on urban suffrage activists (156). Suffragists at the time (and suffrage scholars more recently) did not appear to be aware that when the premier publicly told suffragist leader Nellie McClung in February 1915 (in the suffragist-occupied legislature) that he could not make promises in regard to suffrage, he had privately promised government support for suffrage just days earlier to the United Farmers of Alberta (UFA)—support that would only be publicly announced eight months later. The UFA demand for suffrage likely reflected male leadership’s perceptions of the organizational capacity of female members in the “women’s section” to mobilize rural women to vote in support of the UFA program. In this alternative account, grassroots rural women’s organizational potential within the UFA explains why suffrage was achieved in Alberta in the absence of a precipitating political crisis. Indeed, were it not for political crises in the other two Prairie provinces, we might well now be asking why Alberta moved ahead with female suffrage while Manitoba and Saskatchewan did not. It would be challenging to account for such differences, had they emerged, by recourse to suffrage as a tool for the consolidation of settler power or with reference to the efforts of organized card-carrying suffragist activists, although both remain important factors.

A contemporary account sparking such debates is most welcome and suggests myriad avenues for further empirical research. As such, Carter’s book is undoubtedly required reading not only for students of suffrage history, Prairie history and Canadian history more generally but also for scholars interested in the empirical investigation of that history.

References

- Daschuk, James. 2013. *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life*. Regina: University of Regina Press.

The Quest for Revolution in Australian Schooling Policy

Glenn C. Savage, Milton Park: Routledge, 2021, pp. 176.

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The pervasiveness of “alignment thinking,” the ways in which policy reforms that aim to instill order simultaneously disrupt the existing order of a sector, and the value of an assemblage approach to policy analysis are three topics productively explored in Glenn C. Savage’s work *The Quest for Revolution in Australian Schooling Policy*. The book, which provides a detailed examination of transformations to the Australian schooling sector, will be of interest to Canadian policy scholars and political scientists, as it enables us to better understand our own idiosyncrasies in the politics of education while gaining a richer appreciation for the potentially widespread consequences that programmatic changes can have on the logic and functioning of a policy sector as a whole.

As in Canada, where authority over education rests with the provinces, the responsibility for schooling in Australia technically falls to the states and territories. In 2007, however, Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd launched what would become the most wide-reaching reform of Australia’s schooling sector. These reforms adhered to what Savage calls “alignment thinking.” According to Savage, alignment thinking involves “a specific form of technical rationality that seeks to standardise, harmonise and impose order on systems” through such measures as standards-based reforms, evidence-based reforms and creating new data and accountability infrastructures that “privilege national and transnational commonality over subnational and local diversity” (2).

The reform agenda centred on smoothing over state and territorial differences in elementary and secondary education through a broad suite of interconnected reforms that included the Australian Curriculum developed by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA); the National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN); the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers; the Australian Professional Standard for Principals; the National Schools Interoperability Program to harmonize data collection and sharing; and Education Services Australia (ESA), established to provide technology-based development and support for all governments in relation to national reforms.

The book’s overview of the education reforms, which were adopted in the span of just a few years, leaves the reader almost breathless at the end (9). From a Canadian perspective, the speed, scope and significance of the transformations accomplished in Australia are almost unfathomable.

Here in Canada, there is no “national” policy space in education. Ottawa has virtually no role in schooling policy, as provinces and territories maintain almost exclusive jurisdiction in the field. Even if would-be federal policy entrepreneurs desired to facilitate some form of national revolution in elementary and secondary education policy, any actual effort would be immediately struck down with vigour and resolve by provincial and territorial decision makers. Canada similarly lacks the necessary administrative structure in the form of a national ministry of education, housed in Ottawa, that could issue such directives if desired. Fiscal