

Pour celles et ceux qui n'ont pas les connaissances nécessaires pour réussir leur première année en droit, ce livre les mène à la case « départ ». Pour leurs camarades de classe qui sont plus familiers avec la matière, *La Constitution canadienne* est un bon rappel. La consigne générale est : Attention! La méconnaissance de la constitution est nuisible tant à votre carrière qu'à votre santé démocratique. Donc, lecture indispensable!

## Back to Blakeney: Revitalizing the Democratic State

David McGrane, John D. Whyte, Roy Romanow and Russell Isinger, eds.,  
Regina: University of Regina Press, 2020, pp. 342.

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This collection brings together essays by 14 authors from diverse scholarly backgrounds. Some of the contributors (such as Roy Romanow, former premier of Saskatchewan) knew Alan Blakeney very well; others had never met him. The book is not a biographical account or a reflection on the past contributions of Blakeney to Canadian politics. Instead, each essay examines a contemporary political issue in light of Blakeney's principles and policies. With the recent emergence of authoritarian populism in North America and the rest of the world, the authors write with a sense of imperilled urgency, for "the sake of democracy's future" (xi). The central premise of the book is that in an era of populism, nationalism, Indigenous/settler conflict, Western alienation and the unravelling of some cherished democratic values, it makes sense to reflect on the fundamental tenets of social democracy and one of its greatest Canadian advocates. It is in this sense that the reader is encouraged to think of Blakeney not so much as an important politician but rather as an important historical figure whose "life offers a contemporary guide to realizing a just state" (242).

For those unfamiliar with Alan Blakeney, he was born in Nova Scotia and educated as a Rhodes scholar at Oxford. He moved to Saskatchewan in 1950 to pursue public service in the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) government of Tommy Douglas. He was elected in 1960 as a member of the legislative assembly and quickly appointed to cabinet. He became leader of the New Democratic party (as the CCF was renamed) in 1970 and premier from 1971–1982, after which his government was handed a stunning defeat by Grant Devine and the Progressive Conservative party. Blakeney became a faculty member in the College of Law at the University of Saskatchewan and died of cancer in 2011. At that time, the editors of this collection organized a workshop to honour his life and work. *Back to Blakeney* is the result. Regardless of the reader's prior engagement with Blakeney's life and politics, this book is worth serious contemplation.

The authors tackle issues such as taxes, the welfare state, gender, the duty to consult, electoral boundary reform, religion and pluralism, and cabinet governance. Most chapters either illustrate how Blakeney's policy on an issue created lasting change or how recent policy has veered away from the central tenets of social justice and the democratic accountability cherished by Blakeney. David McGrane's opening chapter on equality is an example of the former. He points to the 1974 multiculturalism act, the first in the country, as the beginning of Saskatchewan's consistent and long-term commitment to diversity. He suggests that today, multiculturalism is one of the "principal components of Saskatchewan's identity" (28). An example of the latter format is Katherine's Walker's chapter on treaty-federalism and the space for Indigenous consultation in provincial politics. She argues that through treaty land

entitlement negotiations, Blakeney tried to “lay the groundwork for a more equitable relationship,” but that it was ultimately undone by the later Saskatchewan Party governments in their adoption of a “position of non-participation” in treaty rights and implementation.

The one glaring oversight of both Blakeney’s politics and this book is the lack of attention to what are arguably the largest threats to humanity—and, by extension, democracy—in the twenty-first century: climate change and biodiversity loss. Blakeney is not responsible for either, of course, but as the volume’s editors argue, “Great political leaders also set templates for future governance” (237). Blakeney’s government doubled down on natural resource production, particularly coal and oil, and opened the door wider to land conversion for agriculture in a post-green-revolution era. In doing so, he did set Saskatchewan down a path in the 1970s that no subsequent provincial government has been able, or willing, to redirect. Economic prosperity, for the sake of social justice outcomes, propelled the government to favour the economy over the environment. Yet despite the authors’ willingness to tackle “dominant issues,” there is no chapter on the environment at all.

Nevertheless, this book is a worthwhile read for an educated public, academics and policy makers—especially those interested in Canadian provincial politics, social democracy, governance and process, and political theory. Indeed, now more than ever—during a period of social unrest over a global pandemic and over police violence against Indigenous and Black citizens—we should debate the extent to which Blakeney was right to see the state as a “positive force for society that should be harnessed to solve the problems of everyday people, protect their rights, and improve their quality of life” (242).

## Entre le marteau et l’enclume. La fabrication d’une hégémonie partisane dans la Russie de Poutine

Clémentine Fauconnier, Villeneuve d’Ascq : Presses universitaires du Septentrion, 2019, pp. 262

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Le parti Russie unie (*Edinaïa Rossiia*) est une créature politique bien étrange. Sous un certain aspect, c’est un parti hégémonique. Fort de deux millions de membres et étroitement associé à la figure du tout-puissant président Vladimir Poutine, il obtient depuis près de vingt ans de larges majorités aux élections législatives à tous les niveaux de la Fédération de Russie. Cette domination rappelle à première vue celle de son prédécesseur communiste à l’époque soviétique ou celle d’autres partis hégémoniques, comme le Parti révolutionnaire institutionnel au Mexique. Et pourtant, sous un autre aspect, Russie unie est un parti sans pouvoir. Ses rapports avec l’exécutif central, en effet, sont profondément asymétriques : le parti approuve au parlement les décisions de l’exécutif sans que ce dernier ne s’engage en retour auprès de l’organisation ou de son programme. Le président russe a participé à la fondation du parti, mais il refuse d’en être membre, tout comme bon nombre de ministres. Russie unie, en somme, est un parti dominant qui a la curieuse particularité d’être lui-même dominé par le pouvoir exécutif central.

Dans la majorité des études sur Russie unie, cette situation paradoxale est vue sous le signe du manque. Au mieux, ce serait un parti inachevé et au pire, un faux parti. D’où le faible intérêt accordé à son organisation interne, considérée comme un écran de fumée destiné à tromper les esprits naïfs. À rebours de cette perspective sceptique, l’intérêt du livre de Clémentine Fauconnier est de « prendre au sérieux Russie unie » (17) et de se pencher sur les modalités