

australian ~ canadian studies

- a journal for the humanities & the social sciences -



Vol. 8 No. 2
1991

table of contents

Editorial		1
Feature Articles		
David Elkins	Canada in the 21st Century	3
Gaile McGregor	Imitation and Resistance: The Differential Assimilation of American Popular Culture	17
Christine Prentice	Storytelling in Alice Munro's <i>Lives of Girls and Women</i> and Patricia Grace's <i>Potiki</i>	27
Jennifer Strauss	Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman: Cultural Contexts and the Quest for Identity in Alice Munro's <i>Lives of Girls and Women</i> and in Miles Franklin's <i>My Brilliant Career</i> and <i>My Career Goes Bung</i>	41
C. Michael Hall and John Shultis	Railways, Tourism and Worthless Lands: The Establishment of National Parks in Australia, New Zealand and the United States	57
Elsbeth Young	Marginal Lands and Marginalised People: The Potential Development Contribution of Indigenous People in Remote Australia and Canada	75
Review Essays		
John Atchison	The Murky Matter of Immigration	99
Brian Edwards	The Odd Sanity of Stones	105
	The Eloquence of Silence	109
Taking Issue		
Russell McDougall	Canadian Literature: 'Not For Sale!'	115
In Review		121
Notes on Contributors		131

in review

M. Rachlis and C. Kuchner, *Second Opinion,
What's Wrong with Canada's Health-Care
System and How to Fix It.*

Leone Short

Hazel Boswell, *Town House, Country House.
Reflections of a Quebec Childhood.*
Joseph Elliott, *Our Home In Australia.
A Description of Cottage Life in 1860.*

Jennifer Craik

W. Thomas Easterbrook, *North American
Patterns of Growth and Development:
the Continental Context*

Isabel Anderson

M. Rachlis and C. Kushner, *Second Opinion, What's Wrong with Canada's Health-Care System and How to Fix It*. Toronto: Collins, 1989

Health care costs are a favourite preoccupation with journalists and newscasters in Canada and the two most frequently seen headlines actually contradict each other - 'health care costs are spiralling out of control' and 'health care in Canada is dangerously underfunded' (p.17). In *Second Opinion*, Rachlis and Kushner posit that it is not a matter of simultaneously spending too much and too little, but a serious problem of widespread inefficiencies as a result of mismanagement and a basic neglect of science. Moreover, if quality, rather than cost-cutting, becomes the health care system's objective, then savings are frequently a benefit.

The cost of Canada's comprehensive system expenses has remained relatively stable - increasing from 6% to 8% of Gross National Product between 1960 and 1985. In contrast, the United States costs have increased from 5.5% to 11% of G.N.P. during the same period. According to Rachlis and Kushner, runaway costs are nonsense statements in Canada. However, given the high proportion of health spending hospitals control (40%), it is unfortunate that they are given few incentives to use their resources wisely and they are also least accountable to the public in terms of how they spend that money. Unnecessary surgery, over-long hospital stays and the inappropriate use of institutions are discussed in relation to waiting lists for elective surgery, waiting lists for nursing homes and overcrowded emergency departments.

The fee-for-service system is also heavily criticised by the authors as the professional judgment of doctors may be swayed, consciously or unconsciously, by the economic incentives inherent in this system. On the other hand, national health insurance has saved Canadians billions of dollars when compared with the United States.

One of the most radical chapters of *Second Opinion* labels medicine as being unscientific and this carries the risk of offending doctors and alarming the public. The authors make three observations, namely, we don't know what works, we don't train doctors in critical appraisal and the quality of medical research is highly variable. Furthermore, Rachlis and Kushner believe that iatrogenesis is the result of overdiagnosis and overtreatment, both of which are symptoms of a medical system out of control.

I do not hold science method in the same high regard as Rachlis and Kushner and I reject their claim that reports of case studies are subjective and, therefore, inherently unscientific. Furthermore randomised controlled trials (RCT) are seen by the authors as good scientific methodology. However two studies, cited to illustrate how misleading the placebo effect can be, illustrate ethical problems instead of scientific solutions. In one patients were randomly divided into two

groups: the treatment group, which actually received the internal mammary artery ligation surgery, and the control group which had only a sham operation!

There are excellent chapters on high-technology trade-offs and the drug industry, and a clear discussion of supplier-induced demand in the market for health care.

How should Canada's health care system be fixed? The authors point towards Health Maintenance Organisations as these typically use far fewer doctors to serve their populations because they are offered no financial incentives to overservice and because they use non-doctor personnel more effectively.

Most importantly, Rachlis and Kushner believe that we should be investing our money where it will do the most good and that is on those social and economic interventions which promise the greatest health dividend. The authors expose the fact that we insist on making so much money available for treating 'health' problems and so little for treating 'social' problems - this reveals a dangerous bias and a kind of discrimination (p.189).

The chapter on prevention is very thorough, particularly the list of questions that can help to determine whether a screening programme does more good than harm. My only criticism here is the unquestioned praise given to the effects of water fluoridation. I would also suggest that orthodontic procedures, which now occupy much of the time dentists used to spend drilling and filling decayed teeth, could be another example of unnecessary surgery and supplier-induced demand.

Rachlis and Kushner suggest that Canada needs to test a number of alternatives. These include consumer power, Health Maintenance Organisations, home and community care programmes like On Lok in San Francisco, deinstitutionalisation as it is implemented through Wisconsin's Mental Health Program, Community Health and Social Service Centres as in Québec, Hospital in the Home Program as in Verdun, Québec, Palliative Care Units such as the one at Montreal's Royal Victoria Hospital, Health Service Organisations such as the Sault Ste. Marie Group Health Centre in Ontario, nurse practitioners, and teaching doctors how to appraise articles in the medical literature.

Some of the key elements found in these alternatives are, a strong corporate culture, financial and professional incentives, a decentralised organisation, and strong mechanisms to ensure high quality.

Rachlis and Kushner define healthy public policy as any policy that creates and encourages a context for health. However, modern health campaigns focus almost exclusively on raising money to support new technologies for diagnosing and treating diseases - not preventing them. Tobacco-related illness is used as an excellent example where the vested interests of the tobacco industry and the government are explored in depth. Moreover, the Non-Smokers' Rights Association's activity is contrasted to the initial inactivity of the Canadian Cancer Society, the Canadian Heart and Stroke Foundation, and doctors.

The final chapter of *Second Opinion* warns readers that the alternative to well-planned long-term reform is the government's last ditch action to dismantle Medicare. This will be by default. Cost-cutting, not quality, will be the objective.

On a positive note, the authors have an excellent analysis of what is wrong with the Canadian health care system and they also have details about how to fix it. A more efficient system would generate savings of \$12 billion annually but it will take 10 to 20 years to fully realise this amount if the reform process is started right now.

Rachlis and Kushner's blueprint for health care reform is guided by these six principles: patients must come first; planning, administration and delivery of health care should be decentralised; quality assurance mechanisms must be developed and implemented; the number of doctors entering the system must be immediately reduced; the financial and professional incentives must be changed to encourage efficiency and quality; and the system needs to be community-based.

To be critical, the first principle is contradictory as a health care system should be based on a healthy 'individual' and not a sick 'patient'. Furthermore, the authors state that 'as long as our consumers are well-informed, we can trust them to make the decisions' (p.299). This is also a contradiction as they have also stated that 'the market for health care isn't like the markets for other commodities' (p.123).

The last section of Rachlis and Kushner's analysis outlines where and how these 'savings' should be ploughed back into the system to make it better (p.312). This includes: a periodic national health survey, health impact assessments, health promotion and community health centres. Furthermore, the basic strategy for health reform is to create a huge demand for it. The broad support for reform will emanate from hospital administrators, nurses, doctors and the public (particularly women, the elderly and those with mental illness).

Overall, this is an excellent monograph; thoroughly researched, well written and ideologically sound in that health is seen in the widest (political, social and economic) sense.

Apart from Canadians, who would benefit from reading *Second Opinion*? Firstly, Americans are becoming more aware of what is happening in Canada - and they are impressed! Haddon points out in *Nursing and Health Care*, (1990, p.22) that the largest percentage increase in the United States took place between 1980 and 1985, a 2% jump, which is significant when one considers that the Medicare Prospective Payment System should have been controlling costs. However, even though 40 million Americans are without health insurance, it will take a very long time to make an ideological shift from a free-market and individualistic health care system to a regulated-market of universal and national health insurance.

Secondly, Australians will be able to see many similarities between our two countries. We have already adopted many of Rachlis and Kushner's suggestions, namely the Australian Institute of Health, The National Health Technology Advisory Panel, Area Health Boards, District Health Councils, Healthy Cities, changes to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, Home and Community Care, Women's Refuges, the Consumers' Health Forum, quality assurance and hospital

accreditation, and restrictions on tobacco advertising.

Health Maintenance Organisations have not materialised in Australia and I suspect that more attention is being placed on implementing a Prospective Payment Scheme based on case-mix or a Regional Allocation Formula based on weighted populations. If we heed Rachlis and Kushner's advice, perhaps we should rethink this imbalance.

Lastly, Palmer and Short state in *Health Care and Public Policy, An Australian Analysis* (1989, p.134) that Australia has one doctor for every 435 persons, which is a higher ratio than Canada's 1:465. Rachlis and Kushner call for an immediate reduction in the number of doctors entering the Canadian system and, as we have more doctors per head of population, we would be advised to do likewise.

Second Opinion should be essential reading for all health care analysts. However, if you do not want to read an opinion that is critical and that calls for change, this monograph is not for you.

Leonie Short
University of New England

Hazel Boswell, *Town House, Country House. Reflections of a Quebec Childhood. Montreal and Kingston, London, Buffalo: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990.*

Joseph Elliott, *Our Home In Australia. A Description of Cottage Life in 1860. Sydney: The Flannel Flower Press, 1984.*

The phrase 'Home, Sweet Home' has had a curious resurgence in recent years as publishers compete to find family recollections of domestic life. At the same time, the domestic realm has become an issue: everyday life, mundane routines, unpaid and unrecognised labour, the architecture, interior design, furnishings and appliances of homes, and, above all, women's lives, have belatedly received attention in academic, popular and policy worlds. Home, it is argued, is not always quite the idyllic, transcendental world that it seems.

Town House, Country House and *Our Home in Australia* reflect the current concern with domestic life. Both are recollections of the late nineteenth century in new settler societies. Boswell's book, set in Quebec in the 1870s, recalls her mother's stories of her childhood. Elliott's rather more unusual book centres around a long letter written by the author to his mother in 1860 in an apparent attempt to persuade her to join his family in Adelaide. Whereas Boswell concentrates on escapades and events remembered from the childhood of a previous generation, Elliott provides a detailed description of the family cottage and everyday life.

While there are similarities between the privations and primitive quality of life in the two colonial societies, the books poignantly reflect the contrasting life chances of different classes. The Joly de Lotbinière family were descendants of French landowning aristocrats who settled in Quebec in the early years of the colony. The family became prosperous loggers, dominating the local industry, and building a manor house on their farm employing tenant farmers. Henri-Gustave, the grandfather of Boswell, became premier of Quebec. Accordingly, the lives of Boswell's mother, Julie, and her six brothers and sisters, were not your average childhood. These children benefitted from the advantages afforded by money and status: a town and country house, servants, family retainers, boarding school and plenty of everything. Apart from childhood illnesses, they led charmed lives.

Not so, their employees. Their nurse almost drowned when a logging raft went out of control and hit the ferry that was taking the family back from their summer house. The family assumed the worst and continued their journey. The nurse had to find her own way back. When one of the firm's woodsmen was badly injured, Henri-Gustave recommended that the injury be bathed in hot water to which the logger replied:

'Do you want to kill me, monsieur? I haven't put my feet in hot water for forty years. The last time was the night before my wedding. If I do it now it will kill me for sure'. Henri was shocked because he thought everybody in the world had a bath every Saturday evening [p. 65].

The family's lack of awareness of the lot of their fellow citizens somewhat undermines the rose-tinted recollections of children with the opportunity to enjoy the best things of Quebec life: seasonal activities, Christmas and festivities, log driving, and the Easter sugar bush trip. Boswell paints delicate narratives of the pleasures and details of these and other customs, creating a compelling panorama of colonial life in Canada.

In contrast, Elliott's canvas represents harsher conditions of everyday life. Described by Robert Moore, Sheridan Burke and Ray Joyce in their *Australian Cottages* as 'one of the most eloquent and tangible records of the miscellany of life' in a crowded four-roomed cottage, Elliott provides 'a meticulously detailed picture' (1989, p. 108) of a hard-working family. Elliott was a printer and, as such, relatively well-off by South Australian standards. The house, though small, was a typical design and larger than most.

Joseph Elliott migrated in 1850 at the age of sixteen, marrying eighteen year old Elizabeth a year later. She died in childbirth in 1853, leaving a son. Within a year, Joseph had remarried, to Rebecca, Elizabeth's friend (a common pattern in colonial societies). Shortly after, the baby died. Rebecca had nine children, several of whom died young. Fate was cruel in the new colony, though Elliott expressed no bitterness in his letter. Elliott had modest success in public life, becoming a town Councillor and a J.P., a very different pattern from Henri-Gustave.

Elliott's legacy is a unique, unpretentious portrait of an ordinary working life

through a family's use of the home. In his long letter, illustrated with line drawings of aspects of the house and furnishings, Elliott takes the reader through his house, pointing out all its features - however mundane - and describing how things were used. For example, in describing the kitchen, Elliott writes about the meat safe, candle box, crockery cupboard, scales, school books, fireplace, kettle, oven, shelves, etc. On the mantelpiece, Elliott records the following objects:

Pot Preserved Ginger Jars: the one on the right holding coffee, & the one of the left tea. A small Dutch oven stands in the middle containing sundries: children's old boots, a Jews' Harp (!), blackleading & Painting Gloves etc etc etc. On either side of this stands a black Japanned square tin: the one holding sugar, the other Sago & bills & Receipts for week! Now you must also know that I am a tinsmith & made & painted (Japanned) these tins myself! And very nice & useful & good looking they are - just as well as if we had bought them [p. 64].

On occasions, Elliott pauses to ask: 'Am I too particular? If so, skip all these little things, but I guess you say no' (p. 65). After documenting the layout and contents of the house, Elliott describes the (typical) backyard, bisected by a path, with water tank, garden and shed-cum-playhouse on one side, and wood pile, toilet (denoted by '!!'), and fowl house on the other. He finishes his letter with a day-by-day account of 'A week of our Australian life'.

Both books contribute considerably to our knowledge and appreciation of late nineteenth century living patterns and domestic architecture. Elliott's book has enriched reconstructions of domestic life in colonial Australia, as Boswell's has informed accounts of the lifestyle of the ruling class in Quebec. Both books are pleasurable and informative, as well as being beautifully presented and illustrated. Which you prefer may well come down to your preference for the topside or underside of histories.

Jennifer Craik
Griffith University

W. Thomas Easterbrook, *North American Patterns of Growth and Development: the Continental Context*, edited, with an introduction by Ian Parker. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990.

This book provides serious students of the history of the Canadian economy, indeed of the North American economy, with a new look at the ideas of the Innis school, the achievement of Harold Adams Innis and his colleagues in the Department of Political Economy at the University of Toronto. Gratitude is due to Ian Parker for making this manuscript of Easterbrook available separately from the collection of his papers. It is a treasure, full of ideas and concepts which help to

explain the evolution of economic decision-making, the conceptual framework of the Easterbrook and Aitken textbook *Canadian Economic History*, and Easterbrook's work itself. For those fortunate enough to have been his students, the book could be *déjà vu*; for others, it is a delight.

This book does not replace Easterbrook and Aitken, the textbook. Rather, it goes beyond. It helps to explain how the textbook has survived for almost 40 years, through the shift of economic history to cliometrics and empiricism. Its theme does not lend itself easily to measurement; it is about structural changes in economic decision-making in the centres and at the margins of social relations; it is about the search for ways to control macro-uncertainties; it is about the economics of constitutions, even of failures like the Meech Lake Accord.

The book is divided into three main parts, followed by a postscript. Ian Parker's introduction is a commentary on Easterbrook's ideas. The first part, 'The Continental Context', lays out the conceptual framework, the heuristic, as Parker explains it, which guided Easterbrook's search for an explanation of the way in which long term investment strategies have evolved in North America. Through centre-margin interactions, the entrepreneur, the essential element of investment decision-making, responds to macro-uncertainties, like variations in external markets, by creating a security zone within which the uncertainty can be controlled. Seldom is the resulting pattern one of transformation, of changes in the whole structure of economic decision-making. More often there is a pattern of structural persistence, dominated by a bureaucracy, sometimes a government one, sometimes a private corporate one.

The second part, 'The Initial Phase', shows how these structures evolved in early colonial North America. Entrepreneurs in each of the European centres and in each of the colonies responded differently to the macro-uncertainties they faced. This led to differences in the centre-margin interactions across North America; in the central sector of the United States; in Canada, the northern margin; in the South, the southern margin within the United States; and in Mexico, the southern margin of the continent.

The third part of the book, 'Uncertainty-Response in the Nineteenth Century', covers the later patterns of decision-making in North America. Structural transformation was short-lived (1830-60) and limited, occurring only in the central part of the continent. It was preceded by, and led into, periods of persistence when laws and bureaucracy developed to promote economic growth, but not structural development. Entrepreneurs in each of marginal areas, the South, Canada, and Mexico, created their own security zones to control uncertainty. In Canada, for example, confederation in 1867 provided a security zone which, in turn, determined the pattern of investment decisions and the course of economic growth.

For devotees of measurement and positive economics, Easterbrook's book is a challenge to develop the techniques of analysis to the point where periods of relatively homogeneous uncertainty-response mechanisms and periods of structural transformation can be isolated and studied.

Easterbrook's ideas are not easy to understand, especially for students trained primarily in the techniques of empirical analysis, or neoclassical economics, but, as Parker suggests, that was probably of little concern to Easterbrook. The writing style requires careful attention to distill the meaning of words and phrases, and constant attention to the context of the discussion. But every part of the book is illuminating, not just for what it says about Canada, but for what it says about the way in which economies change and about the way in which economic growth and development occurs, especially in colonies. It is a book in the vein of the 'old economic history', not of cliometrics and neoclassicism. It tells an important part of the story of resource allocation, a process which is seldom exceptionally dynamic and, as Easterbrook shows, is sometimes excessively insular.

Isabel Anderson
University of Saskatchewan