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## Review of *The Political Economy of Manitoba*, edited by Jim Silver and Jeremy Hull

Ralph F. Harris  
*University of Manitoba*

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Shortridge believes that the Midwest has been idealized as an area of pastoral virtue between the technological East, with all its attendant urban-industrial evils, and the raw unstable ebullience of the frontier in the sparsely peopled West; the East is old and stodgy, and the West is young and brash, but the Midwest, like the Mother Bear's chair in the story of Goldilocks, is just right. Shortridge complains that this popular perception of the region has conveniently ignored the very existence of Chicago, Detroit, and its other major urban-industrial centers. The status of the region, he says, rose rapidly after 1900, plummeted between the two world wars, but has risen again on a wave of nostalgia in the last decade or so.

Shortridge has relied heavily, perhaps too heavily, on an article by one Charles M. Harger, "a respected journalist from Abilene, Kansas" (p. 18) for his insistence that the name "Middle West" originally was applied only to the middle Plains states of Nebraska and Kansas, but later (p. 105) he slips and admits that the name was also applied to Ohio before 1900. He supports his belief that "the core of what is considered the Middle West now . . . has returned to its birthplace on the Kansas-Nebraska plains" (p. 10) by citing the results of a survey of 1,941 (p. 75) or 1,933 (p. 84) college students in thirty-two states; an alternative interpretation might suggest these results are merely another manifestation of the widely publicized geographical ignorance of American undergraduates.

The author uses maps mainly as illustrations rather than as analytical tools. He makes little attempt to explore and explain some of the intriguing discrepancies between the maps on pages 85, 86, 93, and 98, and he is astonishingly uncurious about a map (p. 93) that shows the heart of the Midwest stretching southeastward from Minot, North Dakota, and pinching out near Sioux Falls, South Dakota. **John Fraser Hart**, *Department of Geography, University of Minnesota*.

**The Political Economy of Manitoba.** Jim Silver and Jeremy Hull eds. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1990. Graphs, tables, and notes. xxiii + 340 pp. \$28.00 paper (ISBN 0-88977-059-X).

*The Political Economy of Manitoba* analyses the evolution of social, economic, and political marginalization concomitant with a wide range of struggle and conflict experienced by the people of the province. Its chapters provide significant empirical evidence of the nature and scope of this evolution. Underlying objectives of the contributions to this book are the support of activists in their popular struggles and the stimulation of progressive innovations in political policy. Two main perspectives are used in presentation. Historical analysis is used to show the origins and

progression of growth. Analysis of more recent developments portrays the changing social and economic structure of Manitoba and reveals the increased complexity of the issues addressed. The volume is organized in six sections for effective control of the work of authors with a wide variety of specializations.

Section one provides an historical view of economic structure. Paul Phillips perceives the fundamental character of the years 1870 to 1940 in terms of conflict between farmers and commercial, industrial, and financial capital. For subsequent years Cy Gonick shows the vulnerability of the Manitoban economy and comments on the political implications. Historical insights into the Métis follow in section two. Don Bailey reveals their dispossession and dispersal through a process of capitalist intrusion exacerbated by racism. In a study of a Métis village Nicole St.-Onge demonstrates the rise of a class structure through social and economic change.

The chapters in section three deal with class, gender, and the evolution of struggle. Errol Black interprets the impact of struggle on the style of the labor movement, while Reg Skene presents the ideology of theater in terms of class conflict. Ustun Reinart identifies elements of the women's movement and defines their class and cultural dimensions and limitations. In the fourth section, John Hosley analyzes structural change in household formation and shows its implications, while Patrick Falconer reveals the specific, tragic situation of native single mothers in urban settings.

Economic performance is the focus of section five, which identifies costs imposed on the work-force that are often obscured in macroeconomic statistics. The serious impacts on workers of uneven industrial and sectoral development and plant closures are presented in studies by Parvin Ghoraysi (two), Jim Silver, and Jeremy Hull. In the concluding section, Neil Tudiver critically reviews federal fiscal squeezes, binds in tax reform, and the need for alternative solutions to public finance. John Loxley provides a trenchant examination of planning under social democratic (NDP, New Democratic Party) government. Despite important work on planning, results were largely constrained by political and ideological factors.

Jim Silver and Jeremy Hull conclude the volume by sharpening the focus on the political elements found in the studies. Important questions are raised about the NDP's style of social democracy and the issue of alternative approaches emerges.

This book is seriously researched, well organized, and lucid, and successfully treats marginalization and conflict. It would be sad if its readers were to be limited to those already committed to its basic approach. It has the capacity to interest all who wish to gain a better

understanding of the development of societies. This volume illuminates much of social importance that is often misunderstood, hidden, or ignored. **Ralph F. Harris**, *Department of Economics, University of Manitoba*.

**Farming the System: How Politicians and Producers Shape Canadian Agricultural Policy.** Barry K. Wilson. Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1990. Notes and index. ix + 296 pp. \$24.95 paper (ISBN 0-88833-317-X).

Canadian agricultural policy has been undergoing major multidimensional changes over the past decade. They include how policy is developed, how different actors have become major and minor players, a redefinition of the major (and the mix of) objective function(s), and how the whole process is orchestrated. *Farming the System* is an exercise in describing and analyzing this decade of change. The book contains a vast amount of anecdotal information on the Canadian agricultural and political system. The content, structure, and style relies heavily on Wilson's background as a political scientist and as a journalist. The book contains thirteen chapters, however a more useful way of analyzing the contents is to divide it into three sections. In the first two chapters, Wilson lays the groundwork by defining the nature of the agricultural system in Canada and does a credible job of portraying the situation within which agriculture finds itself. He provides this description as a base for defining the problem with which the Mulroney government found itself faced as it began its first term in the 1980s.

The last chapter of the book provides a section in which Wilson summarizes the outcome of the decisions taken by the Mulroney government in coping with the problem which he defined in the first section. The ten chapters between are a detailed history of the developments prior to the coming to power of the Mulroney government. Much time and detail is devoted to analyzing particular players, events, and settings.

Given the structure outlined above, the style of the book is one of submerging the reader in a mass of detail. In one sense, Wilson has done a magnificent job of describing the agricultural policy system in Canada. Upon completing the book one feels that one has reviewed two decades of newspaper headlines or agricultural TV news clips, but one begins to wonder whether this description has provided an understanding of the agricultural system. For example, the final chapter seems to bear little relationship to the main body of the book. The material in this book would be excellent background material for academics interested in agricultural policy, as well as for those actors in the private sector or in the