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Spring 2012

Review of *Alberta's Day Care Controversy: From 1908 to 2009-and Beyond*. By Tom Langford.

Gordon Cleveland

University of Toronto Scarborough, cleveland@utsc.utoronto.ca

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Cleveland, Gordon, "Review of *Alberta's Day Care Controversy: From 1908 to 2009-and Beyond*. By Tom Langford." (2012). *Great Plains Research: A Journal of Natural and Social Sciences*. 1230.

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Alberta's Day Care Controversy: From 1908 to 2009—and Beyond. By Tom Langford. Edmonton, AB: AU Press, 2011. xviii + 406 pp. Tables, appendices, notes, references, index. C\$34.95 paper.

This is a carefully crafted, meticulously researched gem of a book exploring the history and intrigues of Alberta's controversies and struggles concerning child care, focused on the period since the 1960s. It is a work of historical sociology analyzing the interaction of social and political forces in Alberta clashing over the effects of child care in promoting changes in women's roles, over the negative effects of commercial child care on quality, and over the appropriate amount and type of support that governments vs. families should provide for child care. That description may make it sound too analytical and boring, but what is wonderful about Tom Langford's account is how it makes these controversies lively, detailed, and personal, through the use of archival research and contemporary interviews with historical figures.

As befits a study supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the book's first chapter presents its themes and research strategy. A second chapter foreshadows many of the gender-role controversies to come in detailing how Alberta decided not to accept federal 50/50 funding of wartime day nurseries. The story of the child care policy innovations and reversals in the remaining chapters would be bewildering in less deft hands. First, supply-side funding of good-quality nonprofit and municipal centers under the Preventive Social Services Act in the 1960s and most of the 1970s (encouraged by federal cost-sharing). Next, the replacement of this funding with modest income-tested subsidies usable in both nonprofit and commercial child care. Then, dramatic improvements in staff-child ratios combined with generous operating grants that favored a rapid expansion of commercial child care. By the turn of the last century, operating grants had been eliminated. In the early 2000s, Alberta developed a system of accreditation of child care services, along with wage grants. Langford gives us the personalities, the ideologies, the work of advocacy and lobby groups, the institutional details, and the shifts in social and political power that help explain these changes.

Alberta's experiences in child care are relevant for their own sake, of course, but also because Alberta is the spiritual and political homeland of Canada's Republican-style Conservative government. The themes that echo so strongly through political debates in this book are likely to be part of Canada's future as well as Alberta's past.

GORDON CLEVELAND

Department of Management
University of Toronto Scarborough