

Review Essay Minority Perspectives

David P. Thomas & Veldon Coburn, Editors

Capitalism & Dispossession: Corporate Canada at Home and Abroad

Halifax & Winnipeg, Canada: Fernwood Publishing, 2022.

Patrick C. Douaud, Editor

The Western Métis: Profile of a People

Regina, Canada: Canadian Plains Research Center, University of Regina, 2007

(now University of Regina Press).

James Farney

Social Conservatives and Party Politics in Canada and the United States

Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press, 2012.

Reviewed by Eleanor D. Glor

I like to read several, what seem like unrelated, books at a time. This is my current combination but they are not unrelated. Let me say how I see them as being related, starting with the most recent book.

Capitalism & Dispossession: Corporate Canada at Home and Abroad, edited by David P. Thomas and Veldon Coburn, makes the case, in numerous situations and locations, that capitalism has relied on the dispossession of peoples whose economic system was one of collective ownership. This was true in Britain with the enclosures, Europe, Canadian federal colonial government policy that dispossessed Indigenous people of their land, and is true today with federal government international development policy and Canadian corporate policy in the examples given in the book—Guatemala, Indonesia, Burkina Faso, Latin America and the Caribbean. The role of Canadian companies within Canada and internationally and the role of Canada's diplomatic service is explored.

The writers in this book see the original system of governance, management and relating to nature used by Indigenous people for 20,000 years as superior to the one imposed on them by Europeans and others. They dispossessed Indigenous people of their land.

They have a point. "Civilization" presumably began with agriculture after the last Ice Age, ten thousand years ago. Agriculture was conducted by Indigenous people in North America as well, both in fields and forests. Western colonialism is a political-economic phenomenon whereby various European nations explored, conquered, settled, and exploited large areas of the

world. The age of modern colonialism began in about 1500, following the European discoveries of a sea route around Africa's southern coast (1488) and of the American continent (1492). With the discovery of the Americas, sea power shifted from the Mediterranean Sea to the Atlantic Ocean and to the emerging nation-states of Portugal, Spain, the Dutch Republic, France, and England. By discovery, conquest, and settlement, these nations expanded and colonized throughout the world, spreading European institutions and culture (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Western-colonialism>). The Pope gave the nations permission to dispossess the Indigenous inhabitants of their land, through the Doctrine of Discovery. The Industrial Revolution began in earnest in the 1830s and 1840s in Britain, and soon spread to the rest of the world, including the United States. It was accompanied by further colonization and depended on colonization for its resources.

The Industrial Revolution has led to a growing range of increasingly planetary-scale threats to the environment, the biosphere and humankind. Nine interrelated planetary-scale disturbances have been triggered by human activities over the past two and a half centuries, including climate change (first climate emergency declared in Australia in 2016; declared as of 2100 in 39 countries); ozone in the atmosphere; carbon dioxide concentration in the atmosphere; drinkable fresh water overuse; ocean acidification; size of forest cover; pollution, e.g. interference with nitrogen and phosphorus cycles; stratospheric aerosol load; biodiversity loss (species extinctions, loss of genetic diversity); land use change, e.g. deforestation of the Amazon); and human creation of toxic novel entities, e.g. biochemicals, plastics, gasoline, nanoparticles that are leaking into the environment). Humans have created ecotoxicity (MacKinnon, 2022). Of the nine major threats, four have passed the safety threshold, worldwide, including chemicals, novel products and radiation.

The effects of the Industrial Revolution of the last 150 years on the environment have been to put the survival of large proportions of living beings at risk. We now know our planet has boundaries, due to overpopulation, climate change, pollution and overuse of basic resources (water, food, etc.). We humans are on a collision course with nature, of which we are a part. We have created too many devastating problems and have reached the limits of the biosphere that supports life in a several domains. In doing so, humans have unleashed a mass extinction event. The Indigenous civilization that existed in North America for 20,000 years, and elsewhere longer, did not. It lived in balance with its environment. Current, modern civilization does not. It was not necessarily a better life for those who lived it, but the consequences are terrible.

Capitalism & Dispossession examines how the colonialism of the past continues today and is still based on the dispossession of the original inhabitants from their land and water, without much if any compensation. In Canada, it examines the role of mining and industrial companies and the support offered to them by the Canadian state. Internationally, it examines the role of "Canadian" mining companies and how they have been supported by Canadian diplomats, both directly and indirectly, by ignoring the consequences and the people affected by these companies. In my opinion, this is partly a result of the Government of Canada integrating its diplomatic service with the Canadian Trade Commissioner Service in 1984.

The group of scholars published in this book have taken a careful look at this history of Canadian mining companies. An important non-government organization in trying to create accountability on the part of mining companies has been the Canadian NGO *Mining Watch*. Unfortunately, Canadian governments have not been willing to hold Canadian mining companies abroad responsible for their actions, nor, for the most part, within Canada.

The behaviour of Canadian companies and governments today with regard to international and national inhabitants was already evident in Dominion of Canada behaviour toward the Métis. The Métis (pron. *may-TEE(S)*) are Indigenous peoples who inhabit Canada's three Prairie Provinces, as well as parts of British Columbia, the Northwest Territories, and the Northern United States. They have a shared history and culture that derives from specific mixed European (primarily French) and Indigenous ancestry which became a distinct culture through ethnogenesis¹ by the mid-18th century, during the early years of the North American fur trade.

The Western Métis: Profile of a People, edited by Patrick C. Douaud, is a collection of essays from the *Prairie Forum* journal, published 1978 to 2007. *Prairie Forum* is a Canadian journal published by the University of Regina on Canadian prairie (Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba) topics. Like *Capitalism & Dispossession*, *The Western Métis* demonstrates the way the Canadian Métis originated, survived and were dispossessed. Oddly, no biographies of the authors are included in the book.

The Métis were key to the fur trade. The fur trade was a vast commercial enterprise across the wild, forested expanse of what is now Canada. It was at its peak for nearly 250 years, from the early 17th to the mid-19th centuries. The Métis were the fur trade's working class, paddling the giant canoes, providing provisions to the Hudson Bay and Northwest Company traders and outposts (hunting buffalo, farming) and acting as intermediaries with the First Nations tribes. They were the *courier de bois* ("runner of the woods") or *coureur de bois* (French: plural: *coureurs de(s) bois*), independent entrepreneurial French-speaking traders).

The articles in *The Western Métis* range from family histories to examinations of the two resistances against the Canadian (Upper and Lower Canada, now Ontario and Quebec provinces) colonization and dispossession of (especially) western Canadian Indigenous people, both First Nations and Métis. The Canadian government, representing the monarchy that signed the treaties with the Indigenous peoples, has not kept many of its promises, nor has the USA government, that also signed treaties with American Indigenous people.

The Métis lived a subsistence life for hundreds of years but their economy changed when the mammoth buffalo herds were over-hunted and settlement restricted their ranges. Buffalo became depleted and eventually extinct. The Canadians forcefully colonized the Red River Settlement (Colony) in (current) Manitoba. The resistance, 1869–70 led to promises to provide land to the Métis' children. When the Canadians took ten years (1870s to 1880s) to assign the Métis ownership of the farms they in most cases already occupied and farmed and had farmed

¹ Ethnogenesis is "the formation and development of an ethnic group". This can originate by group self-identification or by outside identification.

for, in some cases, one hundred years at the Red River Colony (later St. Boniface, then Winnipeg), many abandoned hope of ever securing their land (many were forced off their land). They moved further west to survive, to areas where there were still subsistence resources and hunting available. Canadian immigrant settlers also drove them off their land (the right-wing Orange Lodge was very active in Upper Canada/Ontario at the time and were members of the Canadian militia that conquered the Red River Colony for Canada). Métis land was sometimes allocated by the land surveyors to the settlers. Both the Métis and the First Nations people were thus dispossessed of both their hunting and gathering and farming lands, that they considered they owned.

An interesting aspect of the research that was included in this book was that only Hudson Bay Company records were accessed. The HBC traded in the northern parts of the Northwest Territory, now northern Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and the northern territories. The North West Company records were not accessed. It traded in the southern parts of the Northwest Territory and somewhat into what is now the United States until 1821, when they merged under the name HBC. The HBC records are in Winnipeg, the NWC records are at the University of Laval, Québec. The lack of research from the Northwest Company records, could be because the researchers only read English and because of the distance to them (3173 kilometres from Regina to Québec). The Métis generally spoke French, plus one or more Indigenous languages. They did not, therefore, communicate effectively with the HBC traders nor could they read the agreements they were required to sign with the Government of Canada.

Another interesting aspect of the book is that Thomas Flanagan had two articles included. The only other author to have two articles included was John E. Foster, respected Alberta historian. Flanagan is a former editor of *Prairie Forum*, the journal from which the articles are sourced. He is a prominent right-wing scholar; a former professor at the University of Calgary, home to Canada's largest gathering of right-wing scholars; newspaper columnist; and former employee of and advisor to right-wing Canadian political parties (Reform Party, Conservative Party of Canada). His articles argue the traditional Canadian perspective, that the Métis (and Indigenous people) were not deliberately dispossessed, that this effect was due to such factors as individual incompetence, the surveyor's inability to speak French and a slow-moving system.² Only one article, by D.N. Sprague, was included that argues the opposite. The second of Flanagan's articles rebuts Sprague's position but a rebuttal of Flanagan by Sprague is not included. This is too bad as it is an interesting and important debate. Sprague argues the Métis were deliberately dispossessed, as does *Capitalism & Dispossession*.

The third book reviewed is *Social Conservatives and Party Politics in Canada and the United States* by James Farney. Farney's PhD thesis was titled *Social Conservatives and the Boundary of Politics in Canada*. He is currently Director and Associate Professor at the Johnson

² Interestingly, a book essay on books promoting abolition of USA prisons (the USA imprisons more of its population than any other developed country) outlines much the same arguments. The authors reviewed suggest "(T)he reality (s) policing is not 'broken', it is operating exactly as it was intended: dealing out daily violence to contain, control and criminalize." The reviewer suggests "This conspiratorial view of the criminal justice system informs most of the abolitionist canon, and I think it gives too little credit to incompetence, prejudice, and the vindictive side of human nature" (Keller, 2022: 14-15).

Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy, University of Regina, Saskatchewan. He has also written other books on right-wing issues, such as *Conservatism in Canada* (with D. Rayside), *Open Federalism Revisited: Regional and Federal Dynamics in the Harper Era*, and articles such as *Balancing Family and Work: Challenges Facing Canadian MPs*; *Stability amid Change: Ontario's Religious Schools and Canada's Regime of Secularism*; and *Charting the Rise of School Choice across Canadian Provinces: A Policy Index*.

While Dr. Farney's choice of topics and access to conservatives for interviews suggests he may be a solid right-winger himself, he has provided a valuable analysis of the role at the federal levels of social conservatives and their relationships with the American Republican Party (GOP) and the various recent versions of Canadian conservative parties (especially Reform, Alliance, Conservative Party of Canada). He suggests that two key issues have primarily marked whether social conservatism has been accepted and promoted by these parties and their elected representatives—the parties' positions on abortion and gay marriage/LGBT³ rights. Social conservatives and their political representatives have been opposed to women's rights, abortion, gay marriage, inclusion of LGBTQ rights in bills of rights and constitutions, and assisted dying.

Social conservatism became an important element in American and Canadian politics during the 1980s. While both countries officially favour separation of church and state, a number of provinces have funded religiously-run education. In Canada, this is particularly true in Alberta and Ontario. Alberta's move was promoted by American evangelical churches while the Ontario move was promoted by the Roman Catholic Church. Professor Farney describes the core of this approach as “the personal is political,” a term borrowed from the feminist movement. It is also called the private is political, a political slogan expressing a common belief among feminists that the personal experiences of women are rooted in their political situation and gender inequality. Farney asserts this is the basis of social conservatism.⁴

Social conservatism originated in the evangelical and Roman Catholic churches. The political parties open to social conservatism have been the right-wing parties in both the USA and Canada. While social conservatism emerged in the 1960s, its acceptance by conservative parties has different histories in the two countries. In the USA, the GOP was the anti-slavery party in the 1860s and the Democratic Party was the pro-slavery party. Slavery today is described by American right-wingers as an economic system rather than as being about human rights. The GOP of the 1950s began its move toward greater social conservatism with the campaign of Barry Goldwater for the Republican presidential nomination in 1964. At the time, under both American and Canadian law, abortion and contraception were illegal. Republicans opposed contraception, especially when effective female contraception became widely available in the late 1960s. They also opposed women's liberation; affirmative action and civil liberties for blacks after the 1960s. Ronald Reagan's 1981-89 support was real and meaningful, as was that of George W. Bush and Donald Trump. Trump set the stage for social conservatism to become

³ The abbreviation LGBT stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender. The abbreviation LGBTQ adds queer or those questioning their sexual or gender identity.

⁴ In Canada, at least, borrowing other movements' expressions and giving them new meaning has been a right-wing tactic. Right-wing churches, for example, have adopted the term “social responsibility”, meant to hold corporations accountable, to mean men should support their families.

USA federal policy even more than it already was by appointing social conservatives to the USA Supreme Court. He appointed one third of the Supreme Court's nine judges. During the 1990s, social conservative movements emerged, especially opposition to abortion by the Roman Catholic Church. George H. Bush's support, 1989 to 1993, was real but largely rhetorical. The Tea Party that emerged in 2008 emphasized small government, national and anti-elite themes more than traditional family values, despite Sarah Palin, its leader's pro-life (anti-abortion) stance.

According to Farney, Canadian and American conservatives have two basic beliefs—resistance to change and belief in God and religion. They have exhibited three types of conservatism since the 1960s—traditional, laissez-faire and social conservatism. Traditionalists favour old institutions and resist change, starting with the French Revolution. Laissez-faire conservatives resist government involvement in the economy. Social conservatives resist social progress. Canadian Progressive Conservative Party (existed 1942 to 2003) governments were traditionalists and favoured government involvement in the economy. They considered that social issues were personal and not an appropriate subject for politics. Laissez-faire conservatives were pushed aside in the latter half of the 20th-century, when Canadian conservatism embraced neoliberal economic policies that included free trade, balanced budgets, and privatization of crown corporations (state-owned corporations).

Canadian conservative ideology has its origins in British "Tory-ism", but over time has been influenced by American conservatism. The Canadian political system has been more open to new parties than the American system. From Canadian Confederation in 1867 until 1942, the original Conservative Party of Canada participated in numerous governments and had multiple names. However, by 1942, the main right-wing Canadian force became the Progressive Conservative Party. Following a discredited Progressive Conservative government federally from 1984 to 1993, in the 1993 federal election western Canadian conservative support transferred to the Reform Party. When it became clear that neither the Progressive Conservative Party nor the Reform Party/Canadian Alliance could beat the incumbent Liberals that governed after the 1993 election, an effort to unite the right-of-centre parties emerged. In 2003, the Canadian Alliance and the Progressive Conservatives merged, forming the Conservative Party of Canada. Alberta always had conservative governments (Social Credit, 1935-1971; Progressive Conservative 1971—2015). Quebec has also had extreme right-wing parties, including the Cr ditistes and Coalition Avenir Qu bec. Canada's newest extreme right-wing party is the People's Party of Canada but the Conservative Party of Canada has just elected a leader with views similar to those of the PPC.

Dr. Farney uses the term "conservative movement" considerably but he does not define it. He holds that: social conservatism has evolved differently in the USA and Canada, Canadian conservatism has often not been characterized accurately, the power of social conservatism in Canada and its similarities with American social conservatism has been overplayed.

Farney perceives important differences in the way governments and parties are run in the USA and Canada. American senators and members of Congress are more independent and hence, personal networks, social movements and social entrepreneurs/lobbyists have more influence. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms that entrenched a bill of rights in the Canadian constitution is very popular in Canada, while the American Bill of Rights is contentious and fought over and not greatly supported by the Republican Party. In Parliament, Canadian parties are tightly disciplined. The social makeup of the populations is also different. Americans are more religious. The Roman Catholic and evangelical churches have been key to the social conservative movement. Evangelical Christians compose about 25-33 percent of Americans and 10-12 percent of Canadians. Canadian Roman Catholics have been less involved in social conservatism than American Roman Catholics. Social issues drove many southern Democrats to the Republicans but the Liberal Party of Canada did not divide to the same degree.

Dr. Farney does not address in substance any of the divisive issues with which social conservatives engage, such as the implications of social conservatism for division of church and state, of the attempt by a small religious minority to impose its beliefs on all Americans and Canadians, of imposing a moral code on the population. Interestingly, even the Puritans did not do this. Farney's book is about politics, a description of how social conservatives managed to integrate themselves into the conservative parties in the USA and Canada. The analysis focuses on the tactics used and the change implied for the parties.

The integration of religion and politics has occurred in Canada before. The Loyal Orange Institution, known as the Orange Order, is an international Protestant fraternal order based in Northern Ireland and primarily associated with Ulster (Northern Ireland) Protestants (Anglicans). It also has lodges abroad. The Orange Order was founded by Ulster Protestants in County Armagh in 1795, during a period of Protestant–Catholic sectarian conflict, as a fraternity sworn to maintain the Protestant Ascendancy in Ireland. The Orange Order is a conservative, British unionist and Ulster loyalist organisation. Thus it has traditionally opposed Irish nationalism/republicanism and campaigned against Scottish independence. The Order sees itself as defending Protestant civil and religious liberties, whilst critics accuse it of being sectarian, triumphalist and supremacist. As a strict Protestant society, it does not accept non-Protestants as members unless they convert and adhere to the principles of Orangeism, nor does it accept Protestants married to Roman Catholics.

The Orange Lodge of Ontario, from the 1840s to its ongoing influence today, is a form of right wing, religious extremism in Canada. It grew out of the British Anglican Church, that continues to have bad relations in Northern Ireland with Roman Catholics. In the United Kingdom, the Anglican Church is the official church and is headed by the British monarch. The Orange Lodge proposed the Anglican Church be the official church in Canada as well, and tried to impose it on the French-speaking, Roman Catholic Métis of the Red River Settlement when Canada conquered it in 1870. The Red River Colony was a settlement on the Red and Assiniboine rivers whose boundaries crossed parts of what are now Manitoba, Canada and North Dakota, USA. The Colony was founded in 1812 by Thomas Douglas, 5th Earl of Selkirk, and grew through times of extreme hardship into a multiracial society. The Red River Settlement was

the site of the Red River Resistance before Canada forced it to join Canada as the province of Manitoba.

Ideology and politics are reflected in all three of these books. Some of the articles in *Capitalism & Dispossession* draw on Karl Marx's analysis of the transition from feudalism to capitalism to understand the transition of the Canadian West's from a hunter-gatherer and mercantilist economy to capitalism and so might be considered left-wing if everything Marx wrote is considered left wing. Farney's *Social Conservatives* only draws on right-wing theories, scholars and positions and is mainly descriptive. *The Western Métis* includes more politically-mixed authors, albeit with more representation of conservative than progressive positions.

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