

Trudeau by Patrick Gossage, and: Mr. Speaker  
by James Jerome, and: Up the Hill by Donald  
Johnston, and: Honourable Mentions: The  
Uncommon Diary of an MP by.

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 ***Straight from the Heart* by Jean Chrétien, and: *The Rainmaker: A Passion for Politics* by Keith Davey, and: *Close to the Charisma: My Years Between the Press and Pierre Elliott Trudeau* by Patrick Gossage, and: *Mr. Speaker* by James Jerome, and: *Up the Hill* by Donald Johnston, and: *Honourable Mentions: The Uncommon Diary of an MP* by Roy MacLaren, and: *Whelan* by Eugene Whelan, Rick Archbold (review)**

J.L. Granatstein

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REVIEW

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## In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

REVIEWS Straight From the Heart. JEAN CHRI•TIEN. Toronto: Key Porter 1985. Pp. 231. \$19.95 The Rainmaker: A Passion for Politics. KEITH DAVEY. Toronto: Stoddart 1986. Pp. 38. \$4.95 Close to the Charisma: My Years Between the Press and Pierre Elliott Trudeau. VATRICK COSSA. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart 1986. Pp. 71. \$4.95 Mr. Speaker. JAMES JEROME. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart 1985. Pp. 175. \$19.95 Up the Hill. DONALD JOHNSTON. Montreal: Optimum Publishing International 1986. Pp. 304. \$3.95 Honourable Mentions: The Uncommon Diary of an MP. ROY MACLARES. Toronto: Denon 1986. Pp. 6. \$19.95 Whelan. Et•CENE WHELAN with RICK ARCHBOLD. Toronto: Irwin 1986. Pp. 3. \$9.95 In Canada, Liberals are accustomed to power. The Government Party rules by right, and the rare interruptions in its tenure are seen as just that interruptions. The Canadian people, to paraphrase one former Liberal minister, once a generation become lulled by Liberal competence that they assume Canada is an easy country to govern and foolishly elect the Conservatives. Then, realizing their error, at the earliest opportunity they throw the rascals out and give the Liberals another twenty years in power. There is enough truth in that as an explanation of the course of politics in this century to give a historian pause. The election result of September 1984 may fit well into that scenario. In power continuously since the self-destruction of the Dieffenbaker government in 1963, the Liberals had accomplished much. Under Pearson there was Medicare, the Canada Pension Plan, bi-bi, the flag, armed forces' unification, and the autopact. Under Trudeau there was the patriation of the constitution, the defeat of the Parti Qu•b•cois in the referendum, the National Energy Program, and the peace initiative. But under both leaders there was also the entrenchment of party hacks throughout the bureaucracy, the abuse of patronage, the alienation of the regions, the shameless abuse of multiculturalism as a device to divide and rule, and the widening of the chasm between French- and English-speaking Canadians. There was competent government, to be sure (especially when the Grit record is compared to those of the Tory governments that preceded and followed the Pearson-Trudeau era), but there were also the scandals of the mid-1960s that made politics a sten in the nostrils, the Sky Shops affair, and a host of other debasements of the public trust. Competence, in other words, is only relative. 462 THE CANADIAN HISTORICAL REVIEW What is new, however, is the way Liberal politicians have recently rushed to tell their story. While Trudeau was still in power there was only frightened silence; once the powerful chief who had dominated our politics like no one since Mackenzie King was gone, however, the dam burst, and for a time it seemed that every Grit politician had a bad book within him, just waiting for a publisher with a large advance to knock on his door. The flood of books was extraordinary for its number, especially when we consider the historical paucity of political autobiographies in Canada. In the nineteenth century there was Hincks and Tupper, Cartwright and Ross. Later there were Borden's Memoirs, Ned Macdonald's, Laverne's, Drury's, Dandurand's, Manion's, and Massey's, none that anyone would dare call either revealing or literature. After the beginning of the 1960s there were more including S6vigny, La Marsh, Pelletier, Fleming, Lewis, Casgrain, Gordon, Dieffenbaker, and Pearson, the last two being largely ghostwritten. Probably the best political autobiography of the recent past was Dalton Camp's Gentlemen, Players and Politicians, a splendidly written book that unfortunately ended in 1957 just when the story got interesting. The only memoir that compares with his for quality is Paul Martin's two-volume work. In other words, the 1985-6 spate of Grit books is almost an euphemism. But that is a measure of quantity only; in terms of quality, in terms of how little they reveal and how badly they say what little they do offer, these recent books stack up in every way as the equal or worse of their predecessors. Responsible, I suspect, for the number of Liberal books to appear was Jean Chr•tien. His Straight from the Heart was the sensation of the fall 1985 publishing season, as the memoir took off, rocketed to the top of the best-seller list, and stayed there until over 100,000 copies were sold. Le petit gars de Shawinigan, the loser to John Turner at the leadership convention of 1984, was clearly the people's choice, especially as Turner had promptly lost the election in September and seemed mire d in stock clich•s and trapped behind his frozen grin. Chr•tien seemed to be a nice guy, and outside of Quebec his fractured English, delivered out of the side of his mouth, to say nothing of his widely hailed role in leading the 'Non' forces during the Quebec referendum, made him a mired. His book was light reading, apparently open and as frank as a politician's

book can be, but it contained little in the way of revelation, although it offered useful vignettes of Pearson, Mitchell Sharp, his first patron, and Trudeau. The most poignant chapter was that on the leadership campaign where Chrétien, who had endured rubber chicken and canned peas all across the country and who had saved the bacon of his colleagues in the Quebec caucus in 1980, found himself deserted as the party wheelers and ordinary delegates together ran to Bay Street's unbeatable Turner. In all likelihood, Chrétien's memoir was a declaration of candidacy for the post-Turner leadership, but the prime minister of the Hundred Days survived the Liberals' leadership preview and he has benefited mightily from Mulroney's collapse in the polls. Chrétien's chances dwindled daily. REVIEWS 463

Keith Davey's book was the most successful of the 1986 memoirs. The Rainmaker curiously found himself (and even his nickname) transformed into a permanent winner; in the 1960s, however, Davey was the man who was believed to have rained on the Liberal parade, turning the shooinellections of 1963 and 1965 into cliff-hanging minority governments. Davey had merged from Foster Hewitt's Toronto radio station, where he sold advertising, to local politics and then, when Pearson and Walter Gordon were trying to rebuild the Liberal party after the 1985 deluge, to Ottawa. Davey understood politics and the values of patronage (he was made a senator at the age of thirty-nine, after all), and he had a shrewd idea what would sell to the voters. He adored Mike Pearson - how could a man who loved baseball be anything but admirable? even if he wasn't tall that saleable; he was rather less fond of the lonely and patrician Trudeau, who was a highly marketable product; and that combination of hero-worship and shrewdness is probably the factor that makes his book interesting for historians. Certainly his revelations about John Turner and the 1984 election, the secrets that made his book news before Tory scandals drove him off..

## REVIEWS

*Struggle From the Heart.* JEAN CHÉRETEN. Toronto: Key Porter 1985. Pp. 231.

\$13.95

*The Ransmarck; A Passion for Politics.* KATHY DAVY. Toronto: Spencraft 1986. Pp.

352. \$21.95

*Close to the Charisma: My Years Between the Press and Pierre Elliott Trudeau.* PATRICK HUBBARD. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart 1986. Pp. 271. \$24.95

*Mr. Speaker.* JAMES JEROME. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart 1985. Pp. 175.

\$19.95

*Up the Hill.* DONALD JOHNSON. Montreal: Optimum Publishing International

1986. Pp. 304. \$23.95

*Remarkable Mentions: The Uncommon History of an MP.* BOB MACLAREN. Toronto:

Delacox 1986. Pp. 226. \$19.95

*Wheeler.* EUGENE WHEELER with RICK ARCHBOLD. Toronto: Lewis 1986. Pp. 322

\$19.95

In Canada, Liberals are accustomed to power. The Government Party rules by right, and the rare interruptions in its tenure are seen as just that — interruptions. The Canadian people, to paraphrase one former Liberal minister, once a generation become so lulled by Liberal competence that they assume Canada is an easy country to govern and foolishly elect the Conservatives. Then, realizing their error, at the earliest opportunity they throw the rascals out and give the Liberals another twenty years in power. There is enough truth in that as an explanation of the course of politics in this country to give a historian pause.

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