

3 Lakeview Terrace,
Ottawa, February 2, 1946.

Dear Mr. Meighen,

Your letter arrived just before I had to leave for Montreal, and I got back only late last night. Hence my delay in answering.

I have not seen Brebner's book, and am all agog to know the subject of your "swift run-in" with him. But I am afraid I cannot add much to what you already know about his two "authorities". I am sending Miss Armstrong's book under separate cover. I read it some years ago, and indeed reviewed it for the Canadian Forum. I do not now recall anything much about it, though my review was favourable. But I am inclined to think I was then a good deal more innocent than I am now, and think it therefore perhaps as well for my own reputation (if any) that by an error of the editorial staff the review appeared over Underhill's initials instead of mine! I note that, even then, I drew attention to several errors of fact; and later, having occasion to look the thing up again I noted with horror that Miss Armstrong's sole references to you (two in number) were what purported to be quotations based on, of all things, articles by Bourassa in Le Devoir! This last certainly suggests a lack of critical acumen, if nothing worse, in Miss Armstrong.

Charlie Stacey was at Oxford when I was. He was on some sort of scholarship, Massey, I think. I always regarded him then as a very strong and belligerent Conservative. I lost track of him completely after we left Oxford, and the next thing I heard of him was when a young American student from Princeton turned up looking for information on the C.C.F., and said that his theme, or whatever it was, was being directed by Professor C.P. Stacey, who had told him that the C.C.F. had "ants in their pants", but that if he was determined to write on such a subject he had better see me, among other people. I have also occasionally seen articles by Stacey in the Canadian Historical Review, always on military history, and, I think, rather obscure parts of it in the last century. As I had no particular interest in the subjects of the articles, I never read them. Like you, I had never heard of his book.

In short you have pretty well drawn a blank. Stacey may be an "authority" on military history, or parts of it; I don't know, and am not qualified to say. Miss Armstrong certainly knows a lot about Quebec, but whether it has been drawn from a sufficiently wide list of sources, or sufficiently reliable ones, or how good her judgement is, I can't say, at any rate without reading her book over again, which at the moment I don't feel I have time to do. I am afraid I must add that my own experience in writing my book has given me a rather jaundiced view of "authorities". Too often they seem to be people with considerable self-assurance and wide gullets, and very little discrimination. They can and do swallow almost anything, without taking the trouble to find out whether it is based on anything more solid than some previous "authority's" ipse dixit; and the result is a merry game in which errors acquire the prestige of truth because so many successive writers have put them on paper. Of course there are exceptions, I hope many; but there is a terrible lot of shoddy work done.

Incidentally, you will be pleased to know that I have just had a letter from Professor Brown assuring me that he has incorporated in a new printing of his booklet on Canadian Democracy in Action as many of my suggestions as he could manage to work in to the space available. As I understand the booklet is used in Ontario schools, I am much relieved and pleased.

Yours sincerely,
Eugene Forsey

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