

The politics of

Shrug - a - lug

Shrug: Trudeau in Power
Walter Stewart
New Press, 288 pages
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What can you say about a guy who was born into a bourgeois Montreal family, spent his youth running with a group known as Les Snobs in that city, got kicked out of the Reserve Officer Training Corps during WWII, dressed in a German uniform and a fake Iron Cross, dropped out of a Ph.D. program being pursued under a well-known socialist economist and, after wandering around Europe and crossing Aisa, was arrested as a spy, then captured by desert bandits, and ended up in civil war China, finally coming back to Canada to found *Cite Libre*, supporting the NDP and fighting Duplessis in Quebec?

Quite a bit, actually, and Walter Stewart says a lot of it in this book. The author has laid aside objectivity, "the myth of the impartial observer", acknowledged his political bias - NDP out of CCF parents - and has gone to work on Canada's fifteenth Prime Minister, generally hanging him on ropes made from his his own speeches. Stewart states that Trudeau is not "a politician hammered into shape by the bruising and educating scramble up the rungs of power; he is a Montreal snob slung into governance of a nation that many other men have decided was ungovernable." It is Stewart's contention that by any available standards, Trudeau has "done a bad job, and should be replaced." The book opens with an examination of Stewart's own attitude toward Trudeau: he finds the P.M. "arrogant and snide", and points out that everything Trudeau did before and after his election as Liberal leader was coldly worked out and done for maximum effect. The assumption of leadership changed nothing; Stewart, then a member of the press corps which manufactured "Trudeaumania", gives us a remarkable picture of just how easily the media was used by Trudeau and his imagemakers.

We were made to believe, he says, that Trudeau didn't really want to be Prime Minister, and after his election "Canada had chosen a man who, when you think about it, had never really held a job." Stewart takes apart all the "Just Society" promises, and shows how badly we were sucked in: reform of Parliament? - we get the "Supergroup", a "personal power bloc", who have taken the running of the country away from the Parliament, the cabinet and the party in power. Participatory democracy? - it was a great phrase, but now we have Information Canada, (Stewart calls it the Ministry of Truth) which hides or touches up even insignificant Trudeau policy from the people who elected him. An end to American ownership in Canada? - we are presented with a philosophy which states that "good corporate citizens" are what we want, regardless of where their head offices are located. The result of these and other developments has been the disappearance of what Stewart refers to as the "civilized bickering" a representative government, and the emergence of rule by an autocratic clique. Canada, he warns, is on the road to becoming a "one-party state." Given the evidence in *Shrug*, one cannot help but agree with him. Some of the most often-mentioned proofs of Trudeau's fearless liberalism are attacked and brought down in the book. Abortion reform, the author states, has been a failure because there was no companion legislation to compel the country's 275 Catholic hospitals to comply with the new rules.

Social legislation such as the Family Income Security Plan insults the needy with payments which are below the Government's own "poverty line" set by the Senate Committee on Poverty; these and other "holding actions" such as the "getting rid" of Federal responsibility for Indians and the dismissing of a Report on Housing are cited as "frauds", committed by a

corrupt government. The list goes on and on. But Stewart's harsh criticism is saved for two specific areas in which he sees Trudeau's record as being irredeemable: The handling of Federal-Provincial relations in Quebec, and the mis-management of the Canadian economy. Trudeau's actions in the former have driven the population even further into the Parti Quebecois pocket, since Federal interference in Quebec has always been resented, and no War Measures Act was actually required to restrain what was essentially the actions of a local group of mis-guided radicals. The battle against inflation was based on false figures, Stewart claims, and ended up hurting the lower income groups far more than the corporate bodies responsible for much of the inflation in this country. The book ends with a depressing statement to the effect that Trudeau is probably unbeatable in the next election, and that conscientious Canadians should attempt to whip up some kind of opposition to the Trudeau machine, even if they have to cross party lines of refuse to cast a ballot at all in order to do so. The alternatives to Trudeau are pretty grim, but maybe next time... I personally found the book fascinating, and a real change from the sort "objective" political reporting we get from our newspapers and magazines. Also, it served as a sort of vindication for me of personal beliefs which stopped me from catching "Trudeaumania" seven years ago, after reading Trudeau's *Federalism and the French Canadians*. If Stewart's book has a weakness, it is in his failure to state that Trudeau has never been more than a dilettante, and that he personally never promised us anything. Of course, he didn't have to: his publicity flacks placed the bait and the media rushed into the traps, and a lot of us followed them.

by Sid Stephen

Nowlan to read

Alden Nowlan, who is currently writer-in-residence at the University of New Brunswick will read his poetry in SUB Art Gallery at 8 p.m. on Wednesday, January 12.

Nowlan, who won the Governor-General's Award for Poetry in 1968 and was elected a Guggenheim Fellow in 1967, has been widely published both in Canada and throughout the world, and his poetry has been translated into many foreign languages. He writes out of a wide experience as a logger, farmhand, newspaper reporter and teacher, and his poetry and short stories tend to be direct and personal statements of his

own feelings and opinions. He has had published eleven books of poetry, among them *Bread, Wine and Salt* (1967), and *Between Tears and Laughter* (1971), and a collection of short stories, *Miracle at Indian River*.

In addition to writing poetry and fiction, Alden Nowlan also writes a weekly column for the *Telegraph-Journal* in Saint John, N.B., and monthly feature in the *Atlantic Advocate*.

This reading, one of a number which Nowlan is doing as part of a western tour, is sponsored by the Department of English, and offers an opportunity to hear a unique and strong "eastern" poet on the U of A campus.



The above is an example of the fine photography of Howard Davidson, now being displayed in the theatre lobby of SUB. Mr. Davidson who imaginatively captures hidden meanings in the natural environment, has been influenced by Hubert Hohn who teaches with the good 'ol U of A's extension dept. If you are interested in creative photography take a look at the exhibit and listen to Mr. Hohn talk about creativity at 8 p.m. Wednesday at Corbett Hall.

Manitoba piano duo to play at Corbett



The Edmonton Chamber Music Society's fourth concert of the season will feature duo pianists Garth Beckett and Boyd McDonald Wednesday, January 19, in Convocation Hall at 8:30 p.m.

Members of the staff of the School of Music of the University of Manitoba, Professor Beckett and McDonald have been playing as a professional duo-piano for the past five years, following several years of independent music study in Europe. Their repertoire comprises music originally written for two pianos or one piano and four hands from musical periods spanning three centuries, and in their

Edmonton concert they will play Schubert *Fantasie in F Minor* for one piano-four hands, *Epigraphes Antiques* by Debussy, Igor Stravinsky's *Concerto for Two Pianos*, and Bruce Mather's *Sonata for Two Pianos*, commissioned by the University of Manitoba.

This concert by duo pianists Beckett and McDonald is open only to members of the Chamber Music Society and their guests. There are two more concerts remaining in the season, the Warsaw Piano Quintet in February and the University of Alberta Quartet in March, and seasons tickets for these three concerts will still be available at the door before the duo-pianists' concert on January 19.