

History Club hears Bothwell

By DERWIN GOWAN
Managing Editor

Is a wartime cabinet minister who died in 1960 of any possible interest to present day Canadians?

Robert Bothwell says the political career of C.D. Howe is important to study for anyone interested in understanding the way business developed during World War Two.

Bothwell, a professor of history at the University of Toronto addressed the UNB History Club last Tuesday. He is presently researching a biography of C.D. Howe, a minister in the government's of William Lyon Mackenzie King and Louis Saint Laurent.

Bothwell said Howe recruited "extraordinarily able, bright" people to the Department of Munitions and Supply during the war, and that these later became senior executives in a lot of Canadian companies.

Therefore, said Bothwell, Howe had a good relationship with these executives. These businessmen knew Howe, and they came to have confidence in him, irrespective of party lines.

However, Bothwell said that Howe did not always have the sympathy of the business community, but he had to build it up over time.

Howe was originally an American, born in Maine. He studied at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In 1907, he got a job teaching engineering at Dalhousie University. Howe fabricated a genealogical link with the family of Joseph Howe, the great Nova Scotian reformer, but this was an "unmitigated falsehood," said Bothwell.

Howe went from Dalhousie to the Canadian Wheat Board where he got a job as chief engineer. He

became interested in the grain business, said Bothwell, and in 1913 he went into the grain elevator building business.

Bothwell said that by the late 1920's or early 1930's Howe was the biggest elevator builder in the business.

Howe was recruited into politics in 1935 and won a federal seat in Port Arthur. Bothwell said Howe had an "exceedingly efficient political machine."

Howe immediately became minister of Railways and Canals and Minister of Marine which he combined into the Department of Transport. He helped to form the National Harbours Board, saw the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation through some of its teething troubles, and was the "father" of Trans Canada Airlines," said Bothwell.

Canada went to war in 1939 and Howe became Minister of Munitions and Supply in 1940. In 1944 he became minister of Reconstruction and Minister of Trade and Supply in 1948.

Although Howe later became a symbol of the arrogance of the St. Laurent government, Bothwell said Howe minded his own department and did not interfere with other cabinet ministers. However, Bothwell did say that Howe got his way on the issue of the Trans Canada Pipeline, the issue which defeated the St. Laurent government.

Howe lost his seat in the 1957 election, and Bothwell said, "He minded it very, very much." He was 72 years old.

Howe moved to Montreal where he became involved in the business community, and he died in 1960 while watching a hockey game on New Year's Eve.

Bothwell said Howe did not have the sympathy of the Canadian business community when he took over the Munitions

and Supply portfolio. However, this changed.

When the British lost most of their equipment in France following the Dunkirk evacuation in 1941, the Canadian war industry started. Howe assembled a group of lawyers and businessmen and forged them into an efficient production team, said Bothwell.

When Howe had someone he wanted to get rid of, said Bothwell, he "organized them out of their positions." He also realized the "value of titles" and "perfected the use of the office of Lieutenant-Governor" to remove unwanted employees.

Bothwell said Howe delegated authority and did not "ride herd" over his department.

Howe began to establish himself as a leader of Canadian business, and he "gained the whole-hearted respect of the people he worked with," said Bothwell.

Bothwell said his attitude towards organized labor was typical of the business community



Robert Bothwell of the University of Toronto addressed history students Tuesday, speaking on C.D. Howe, wartime cabinet minister in the liberal government.

Photo by Malcolm Brewer

of the day. When the workers at the Arvida aluminum mine went on strike, he attributed the work to "enemy saboteurs", probably connected with the CIA.

Bothwell said Howe believed in free enterprise and, although willing to intervene in the economy, did not believe intervention to be a "panacea".

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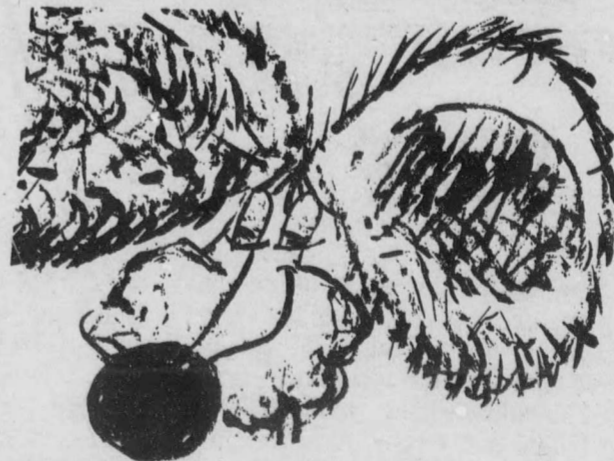
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By GERRY LASKEY

The New Democratic Party New Brunswick held its annual convention in Saint John over the weekend of October 15-17. The conference was for the purpose of selecting a new leader to replace the former party chief, J. Alvin Richardson, as well as the normal business of formulating policy resolutions and election of officers.

The convention of over 600 delegates, sixty of whom were party and labour leaders.

Keynote speakers were Lorne MacMillan, national secretary of the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC); retiring leader Alvin Richardson; and Saskatchewan Lorne Nystrom.

MacMillan stressed the need for labour to rally behind the NDP, the only party that is dedicated to creating a more just society for ordinary Canadians.

Nystrom related an experience of travelling hundreds of miles to a northern Manitoba meeting, where he was greeted by a crowd of four. He said this was just eight years before the NDP achieved its greatest electoral majority in Manitoba history. He urged optimistic hard work for the party in New Brunswick.

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