

## *The university today*

reviews about university education

**Dorothy McMurray.**  
**FOUR PRINCIPALS**  
**OF McGILL:**  
**A MEMOIR 1929-1963.**  
 Montreal:  
 Graduates' Society  
 of McGill, 1974.  
 73 pp. \$10.00.

In a compact, homespun style, Dorothy McMurray has surveyed three decades of McGill's history and has drawn clear sketches of the four principals whom she successively served: Sir Arthur Currie, Arthur E. Morgan, Lewis W. Douglas, and F. Cyril James.

The first chapter vividly recounts the horror of the 1917 Halifax explosion, but, apart from its interesting autobiographical data, it has little to do with the rest of the text. Fortunately, the largest portion of the book focuses on Currie and James who remained in office for thirteen and twenty-two years respectively; Morgan and Douglas lasted barely two. The central theme of the book is that of individual dedication and loyalty. Even the ill-fated Morgan dedicated himself, not to the institution *per se*, but to its students whom, upon his inauguration, he vowed to serve and befriend.

It was Currie's lot to lead the university during the troublesome years after World War I and in the Depression era when "there was just no money and no way of getting any. . . ." In spite of these difficulties, enrolment and faculty doubled, assets rose by a third, old plant was replaced and new buildings erected.

Currie's crowning achievement, which he did not live to enjoy, was the establishment of the neurological institute under the leadership of Dr. Wilder Penfield. When Currie died of a stroke in November, 1933, even the King cabled his sympathy. Currie was mourned by not just the McGill community but the entire nation, both of which he served selflessly.

The choice of Arthur Morgan as Currie's successor was unfortunate. At his former post Morgan had been absolute master and he was unable to accept being subservient to the Board of Governors. After eighteen months of constant bickering with the Board and especially with the chairman of the finance committee, Morgan admitted defeat and returned to England. His successor, Lewis W. Douglas, was not only a very able administrator but also sensibly amenable to accepting direction from the Board. Had the war not broken out, he might have had a much longer and highly successful sojourn at McGill. However, he felt very strongly that, as a U.S. citizen, he should not remain at the head of one of Canada's leading universities with the country at war. Thanks to his efficient management, he left the university in an improved financial position, to the happy advantage of his successor, F. Cyril James.

Although James was not a Canadian either, he settled into the university and life in Canada eagerly. He was not only a brilliant leader, an artful and tireless negotiator, but underneath a rather impassive exterior presence, he was a very warm human being. Not only was he, in Mrs. McMurray's judgment, the architect

of modern McGill but, as chairman of the Federal Government Advisory Committee on Reconstruction, he became one of the chief architects of the plans for Canada-after-the-war. As president of the National Conference of Canadian Universities and chairman of the finance committee, he successfully led the campaign to persuade the federal government to provide the funds necessary for the further development of higher education in Canada.

Readers would surely welcome other casual but perceptive historical vignettes which could provide additional dimensions of academic life not found in official histories. Aside from her portrayal of the men for whom she ran interference, protecting them from cranks and other time-wasting intruders, Mrs. McMurray has left a unique record of a "golden age" when, within the limitations of the institutional statutes, university heads could use their special intellectual and administrative talents to do their jobs as they saw fit, and the universities themselves were neither accused of being public liabilities, nor was there any attempt to convert them to public utilities.

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**Graeme C. Moodie and  
Rowland Eustace.**  
**POWER AND AUTHORITY  
IN BRITISH UNIVERSITIES.**  
**Montreal:**  
**McGill-Queen's**  
**University Press, 1974.**  
**256 pp. \$10.50.**

First, it is important to be clear about what this book is not. It does *not* concern itself — except by implication — with such issues as the university's responsibilities to the community, or the proper balance between professional and non-professional schools, or the pro's and con's of academic freedom. Rather, it is a study of how British universities are governed, or, perhaps one should say, govern themselves. The authors describe their work as a "general and methodologically old-fashioned sur-

vey of the processes of decision-making within British universities today." Their evidence was gathered from interviews, informal discussions, internal university documents, official publications such as university charters, handbooks, commissions—royal and otherwise—and, of course, from their own experience.

Their description, however, is too modest. The book gives a lucid, illuminating and, at times, entertaining account of the decision-making processes in British universities. Chapter II, "The Development of Modern University Government," will be of particular interest to historians of education since it deals with a topic ignored in most histories of education — recent developments within university governance. Subsequent chapters deal with particular parts of the universities' system of government and their contribution to and participation in the making of decisions. Thus, the role of academic departments (and department heads), of faculties, senate, council (i.e. board of governors), vice-chancellor, registrar, are all described and examined. One of the strengths of the book is the authors' avoidance of the pitfall of mistaking appearance for reality. They are well aware of the difference between the way decisions are supposed to be made and the way they are, in fact, made. For example, they have some sensible observations on the intertwined roles of vice-chancellors and registrars and the impact of personality thereon. In the same vein, they quote at length and with effect from an unpublished lecture by Sir Eric Ashby on the importance of "happy tact" in making major decisions.

Chapter VIII of the book contains a particularly useful — if necessarily brief — survey of programming-planning-budgeting systems (PPBS) which are apparently now being introduced into British universities. For those who are unfamiliar with PPBS this chapter will be especially useful, containing, as it does, a brief description of what such systems entail and an examination of their strengths and weaknesses.

In their last chapter ("What Kind of Government?") the authors depart