Book Review

B. Guy Peters. 1996.
The Future of Governing: Four Emerging Models.
Lawrence, Kansas : University Press of Kansas

David C. Wilson. 1992.
A Strategy of Change: Concepts and Controversies in the Management of Change.
London, England: Routledge

Harold Innis. 1951.
The Bias of Communication.
Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1951

John Ralston Saul. 1997.
Reflections of a Siamese Twin: Canada at the End of the Twentieth Century.
Toronto: Penguin/Viking

George Woodcock. 1980.
A George Woodcock Reader.
Edited and with an Introduction by Doug Fetherling
Ottawa: Deneau & Greenberg Publishers Limited

Jack Hodgins. 1977.
The Invention of the World (Fiction).
Toronto: Macmillan of Canada

Glor's Favourite Books of 1998
Reviewed by Eleanor Glor

I read some fascinating books during 1998: The way that I can tell is I read them cover-to-cover. As a person who normally has 15 books and journals on my bedside, completing a book is a rarity, and finding one that grips me a joy.

As I thought over what characteristics (if any) these books shared, I realized that each of them had a coherent and comprehensive view of the world or of an issue. This, perhaps, was what appealed to me. Also of great interest was what they had to say about the world or issue explored.

B. Guy Peters:

In The Future of Governing: Four Emerging Models, B. Guy Peters has written a helpful analysis of reform in government today. He suggests that most of the reforms being implemented are a mixture of what are actually four quite different and distinct reform models that do not mix well. These models Peters calls the market model, the participatory model, the flexible government and the deregulated government. The market model for reforming government (also known as new public management) is the most favoured by politicians and academics. It uses the market and

favours private sector management methods. While there is no single market model, its analysis is based on belief in the virtue of competition and an idealized pattern of exchange and incentives. It has at least three intellectual roots - belief in the efficiency of markets for allocating resources in society (neo-classical economics), self-interest of members of public bureaucracies and generic management (new public management). The market model sees government as a monopoly and departments and civil servants responding to incentives to maximize their own utility.

The participatory or empowerment model rejects the market and promotes the empowerment of citizens vis-a-vis government. Flexible government is focused on the capacity to change by getting rid of permanent budgets, organizations and employment and replacing them with contract work. Deregulated government seeks to unleash the potential power and creativity of government by reducing the rules that control its internal management. According to Peters, none of the models has demonstrated that it is a better way to manage government than is traditional bureaucracy.

David Wilson

(A Strategy of Change: Concepts & Controversies in the Management of Change) has created an equally interesting assessment of the concept of the management of change. Rather than promoting one approach, as most writings on change do, he analyses the concepts that have been developed to explain and to encourage change. Wilson makes an important point - that most analyses and proposals take the point of view of management and outsiders. Only a few studies look at change from the perspective of the employees of an organization. When employees are considered–even those that consider the needs and perspectives of individuals–it is almost always as an impediment to change. For example, Rick Maurer of the Gestalt Institute looks at individual responses to change from the perspective of resistance. Wilson makes clear that staff of an organization sometimes support change and innovation, and suggests some ways of looking at this perspective.

Harold Innis'

(The Bias of Communication) book of essays, completed about fifty years ago, introduced into social discourse a fundamentally new perspective. Through his "quest for the causes of change", as Marshall McLuhan describes it in his Introduction to The Bias of Communication, he identified the possibility of conflict between space and time, a possibility which his colleague McLuhan would later exploit with considerable success. A recent Canadian Department of National Defence workshop on strategic planning illustrated these two elements. The military has always been an element that (often forcefully) took control of space. In the new world context, and as an adjunct to initiatives of the United Nations to create and maintain peace, the military role needs to be one of quick response. One instance of such a need was outlined by a recent CARE Canada report "Mean Times: Humanitarian Action in Complex Political Emergencies–Stark Choices, Cruel Dilemmas" (Bryans, Jones and Stein, 1999). The military needs to be able to provide on-the-spot protection to humanitarian aid workers, especially in civil wars. If the United Nations creates a quick-response force, it will be attempting to address an issue of time. While instant response is one relationship to time, typically the time element has been an issue of continuity, as represented in culture, oral communication and (often) religion. In The Bias of Communication Innis published a series of analyses that look at the patterns of history and perception from the perspective of a particular communications innovation or technology, such as the alphabet, writing, printing, newspapers and the radio. The kind of wide-spread military presence that would be required to allow an instant response took place with the technology Innis analyses at a more measured pace yet also in a

conflict-ridden environment. Would the attempt at quick response enhance peace or conflict? The bias of culture and communication and the dominant technology will be sure to play a role in determining the outcome.

John Ralston Saul

(Reflections of a Siamese Twin: Canada at the End of the Twentieth Century) has also taken a broad-based view, of Canada in his case. He argues that Canada is an old country that has slowly and with persistence built a nation on the northern half of the North American continent. This continuity of both time and space has been built on the will to create a tolerant and egalitarian collective consciousness. Arguing that Canada is the ultimate North American nation, and that the United States is the more European nation, he makes the case for intention and continuity in a country known for its diversity and divisions.

George Woodcock

(A George Woodcock Reader) was a prolific writer, due in part to his having written full time from the age of thirty well into his eighties. Woodcock wrote on many subjects–anarchism, history, biography, art, religion, literary criticism, aboriginal nations and travel among them. In this book of essays he reveals his personal, political, historical, and religious views. As an anarchist Woodcock argued against the benefits of centralized national governments and for the advantages of organizing politically at the level of and living with a focus on communities. In a world increasingly dominated by cities, his approach takes on special relevance. Woodcock carried his theme of the need for a local focus through his writings, and thereby illuminated his subjects in new ways. His A Social History of Canada (1988) highlighted the dynamics of the fur trade - the way in which the trade brought aboriginal people into its economy and thereby influenced the culture of aboriginal peoples. Woodcock, too, functioned in more of a time than a space perspective, and reflected on both the oral culture and the written culture of Canada.

Jack Hodgins'

The Invention of the World (fiction) is a rollicking trip through time, space and the outrageous, magic-tinged world of a group of Irish-Canadians on Vancouver Island. The gorgeous, red-headed, fearless, earth-mother Maggie, who keeps it all together, despite the irresponsible men around her. The larger than life, part-bull part-human swindler Keneally, who convinced a whole village to follow him to Canada. Wade, Julius - each character shows us completely different worlds that intersect but do not really cross. A wonderful storyteller, Hodgins built his voice upon the family tales he heard growing up in the logging country of Vancouver Island. He has imagined a world full of magic and strong people with visions so clear they reflect back to our world like a carnival mirror the combination of clarity and confusion that is our state. Hodgins has created a world peopled by giants, weasels, those who wait and accept.

Hodgins' vision is much more interesting and gripping than any created by professors of business management, public administration or history, but of course it does not as a consequence speak as directly to our immediate world of government.

About the Author:

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