

BOOK REVIEW/COMPTE RENDU

Dominique Clément, *Canada's Rights Revolution: Social Movements and Social Change, 1937–82*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008, 296 pp. \$32.95 paper (978-0-7748-1480-5), \$85.00 hardcover (978-0-7748-1479-9)

Canada's *Rights Revolution* is an ambitious book on the history of Canadian civil liberty and human rights advocacy over the 1937–1982 period. It grapples with a number of key issues facing social movements, including generational differences among activists, ideological tensions, and the struggle to launch national bodies. Most interesting is its critical engagement of the role of federal government funding in Canadian mobilization.

The book's early chapters introduce readers to concepts that frame the rest of the analysis. These include understandings of negative versus positive rights, differences between civil liberty and human rights advocacy, and generational shifts between early campaigns seeking antidiscrimination for particular groups versus later ones fighting for the universal legal entrenchment of individual and socioeconomic and cultural rights.

Clément argues that early generations of rights activists faced an uphill battle against the Canadian state, which branded many as radicals or communists, and repressed their organizations as a result. The government was reluctant to abandon Parliamentary supremacy in protecting the rights of Canadians, which accordingly generated harsh divisions with the movement between leftists and liberals. Despite these tensions, the book argues that through fighting discriminatory practices early advocates were successful in gaining rights legislation that protected negative rights, or those relating to civil and political liberties. Thus, early rights activists were essentially civil libertarians.

Human rights activism and broader conceptions of rights, seeking to protect positive rights, did not fully emerge until the late 1960s and peaked during the 1970s. Clément notes a generational shift from earlier advocacy, seen in the emergence of new organizations and a younger generation of activists. They sought more than just civil and political equality, instead looking to protect group rights, such as language, and demanding that the state protect socioeconomic and cultural minorities. The new generation had unprecedented political opportunities to mo-

bilize as a consequence of Canadian nation-state building, which saw increased resources distributed by the federal Secretary of State, geared to building a stronger Canadian civil society. They also had new institutional forums open to their advocacy, such as the courts. Whereas earlier activists were divided by political ideologies, the second generation was divided along philosophical leanings of minimalist negative rights versus expanded positive rights, and by harsh debates over the consequences of receiving, and in many cases being dependent upon, federal government funding.

Clément concludes that Canada indeed experienced a rights revolution, with the expansion of the welfare state into matters of rights, which led to increasing use of the courts to protect rights, and then to the emergence of a broader culture of rights seeking to protect both individual freedoms and socioeconomic group rights. Yet, his account also shows continual weaknesses in the movement, including its elitist membership base, its lack of grassroots organizing, its skew towards institutional tactics over disruptive mobilization, its dependence on state funding, and its failure to build a truly national movement.

All of these insights are illustrated in much detail through four case studies presented in the latter half of the book, looking at two civil liberty and two human rights organizations from four provinces — British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec, and Newfoundland and Labrador. Comparative analysis of the cases offers texture to the propositions introduced in the first half of the book.

The presentation of the forty-five year history and the arguments derived from it are framed in the social movement literature; specifically, insights drawn from McCarthy and Zald's work on resource mobilization and social movement organizations (SMOs). A very succinct overview of the literature is presented in the five pages of Chapter 4. Such a sketch is too brief and other insights from the social movement literature, especially from the political process tradition, could have drawn even richer analysis from the historical cases.

Nevertheless, the book remains a good introduction to civil liberty and human rights advocacy, and to important issues facing Canadian social movements. The book is well suited to upper level undergraduate courses and for those researching and teaching on the history of Canadian mobilization. It also has the potential to spark debate over Canadian SMO dependence on federal government funding.

DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

HOWARD RAMOS

Howard Ramos is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology at Dalhousie, Ramos researches and publishes on contentious action, transnational human rights advocacy, immigration and internal migration. howard.ramos@dal.ca