

Reinhold Kramer and Tom Mitchell, *When the State Trembled: How A. J. Andrews and the Citizens' Committee Broke the Winnipeg General Strike* (Toronto: University of Toronto 2010)

IT IS DIFFICULT to say something new about the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919, that high-water mark of working-class unrest so many scholars of Canadian labour and the left have interrogated. In *When The State Trembled*, Reinhold Kramer and Tom Mitchell deftly and elegantly exceed this objective.

Challenging a prevailing historiography focused on the role of the *state* in crushing the militant and radical moment of 1919, Kramer and Mitchell illuminate the opaque entity known as the Citizens' Committee of One Thousand and its leader, Winnipeg lawyer and one-time "boy mayor" A. J. Andrews, who for nine decades has lurked in the shadows of the historiography of the strike.

Through meticulous use of previously untapped correspondence between Andrews and acting justice minister (and future prime minister) Arthur Meighen, Kramer and Mitchell depart from the usual protagonists of labour and working-class history: the workers, their unions, and their political parties. Their 322-page interpretive narrative, illustrated with photographs and a selection of printed material, is structured chronologically, offering a day-to-day, play-by-play account of a city where class relations had been turned upside down. This detailed narrative illuminates the actions and motivations of both the Citizens and the strikers, augmented by frequent and valuable analytical forays on the role of Andrews and the Citizens during and after the strike.

What emerges is a compelling case study of a local bourgeoisie in a state of crisis, and how it mobilized closely knit

associations and an array of ideological and legal tools to respond to a defiant and mobilized working class. The book provides a powerful, critical, and long-overdue contribution to the fields of labour and working-class history, legal history, and the political history of Winnipeg, Canada, and beyond.

Initially organized to restore the distribution of bread, milk, and petroleum in the strike-bound city (and informed by earlier "Citizens" movements in Winnipeg, Minneapolis, and other North American cities), the Citizens' Committee of One Thousand deployed the universalist language of citizenship to restore prevailing property and labour relations and defeat the potential of the widest sympathetic strike Canada had ever known. Andrews and his cohesive group of three dozen businesspeople challenged the language and logic of class in their newspaper the *Winnipeg Citizen*, appealing to middle-class sympathies in favour of law, order, and "constituted authority," as well as racist stereotypes against Eastern Europeans and "enemy aliens."

As the strike unfolded, Andrews and the Citizens expanded their ambitions and operations, entering into a private correspondence with Meighen that deftly presented and shaped information on the unstable events in Winnipeg. Warning of a Bolshevik conspiracy (at times amplified into an apprehended "insurrection"), which threatened to descend Canada into the red ruin the country was combating militarily in nascent Soviet Russia, Andrews was appointed as Meighen's personal "representative" in Winnipeg. This amorphous role remained ill defined from the middle of the strike to the conclusion of the privately initiated but publicly financed prosecution of the leaders (which cost the federal government nearly a quarter million dollars [in 1919 currency] in legal fees for Andrews, Isaac

Pitblado, and other Citizen-affiliated lawyers).

Rather than Meighen, provincial Attorney General T. H. Johnson, or Winnipeg Mayor Charles Gray directing the state's response to the strike and the alleged seditious conspiracy of its leaders, Andrews and his class-tinged Citizens (note the capitalization) effectively filled the legal and political vacuum occasioned by the strike, delicately positioning themselves as the legitimate custodians of law and order in Canada's third-largest city.

Navigating the distinct interests and responsibilities of local, provincial, and federal authorities, Andrews and his private organization came to wield important state powers (if not entirely in fact, then crucially in appearance). From the decision to deputize special police constables to replace Winnipeg's labour-friendly police force, to persuading federal and provincial authorities against brokering a mediated settlement, to the preparation of warrants for the arrest of the strike's British-born and Eastern European leaders, to the conduct of Immigration Act deportation hearings and Criminal Code sedition trials (based on legislative amendments they had helped to draft), Andrews and the Citizens shaped – at times conducted – the state's response to the Winnipeg General Strike. “When the state trembled in 1919, the Citizens stepped forward to become the principal “subject” shaping the response to the Strike,” Kramer and Mitchell suggest. (180)

Though concealing their aims in the language of citizenship and law and order, Andrews and the Citizens were motivated by distinctly class goals: first, to prevent a negotiated settlement, and, once this objective had been achieved with the leaders' arrests and the Bloody Saturday violence, to mount ideologically charged immigration and criminal proceedings to ensure that Winnipeg's

working class never again found itself in the saddle.

As Kramer and Mitchell note, “the Winnipeg General Strike would determine how large a union could be, and whether general strikes would now become a regular weapon in the arms race between labour and capital.” (25) Like citizens' committees elsewhere in North America, appeals to law and order and “constituted authority” were contradicted by elite-led actions that contributed to violence and disorder.

Kramer and Mitchell write in a provocative and engaging – at times almost colloquial – style, which keeps their narrative accessible and vibrant. While their sympathies are clearly with the workers, they strive to problematize our perception of this famous moment in Canadian history, conceding that R. B. Russell, Sam Blumenberg, and other strike leaders were motivated by a revolutionary intent, even if this did not translate into explicitly insurrectionary acts. They suggest the decision to issue an ultimatum to regular police, who remained on duty under the authority of the strike committee rather than the mayor, and to deputize special constables was a reasonable response to a situation where the legitimacy of law's violence was in flux.

Further challenging the historiography, Kramer and Mitchell reject the either/or dichotomy characterizing many previous studies of the strike, which sought to cast the dispute either in terms of the innocent pursuit of free collective bargaining or alternatively as part of a world-wide revolutionary plot. Their evidence and analysis point to the events in Winnipeg as being located somewhere in the middle, drawing from accuracies and distortions in the Citizens' claims against the strikers.

Touching on the dynamics of gender, which are otherwise absent from the study, the authors suggest that

the Citizens' legal crusade against the British-born strike leaders represented a wider ideological goal: "to defeat these men would be to defeat British radical masculinity." (237)

Could the book be improved? Certainly. Kramer and Mitchell's sources, though largely untouched by previous researchers, are fairly conventional, consisting primarily of correspondence, newspaper reports, and court records. The authors' day-by-day, play-by-play narrative could have been enriched by oral historical accounts and other less common sources to illuminate the social life of Winnipeg, its élite, and its working class during the strike. Moreover, key elements in the prosecution of the strike leaders, such as Bill Pritchard's address to the jury, are not mentioned. But this criticism does not detract from an otherwise meticulously researched and fluidly written and argued book.

Kramer and Mitchell have provided the most comprehensive and original account of the Winnipeg General Strike to date. Boldly departing from the method and accepted wisdoms of Masters, Bercuson, and others, they tell this labour story from the perspective of Winnipeg's ruling class. In the process, Kramer and Mitchell have inverted the methodology – and raised the bar – for the practice of labour and working-class history and legal history in Canada and beyond.

BENJAMIN ISITT

University of Victoria

*Jean Gaudette, L'émergence de la modernité urbaine au Québec. Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, 1880–1930* (Québec: Septentrion 2011)

DANS L'ÉDITION du 4 décembre 1903 du *Canada Français* de Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, un journaliste écrit : « Nous sommes dans un siècle de progrès ... ».

(167) Les hommes et les femmes habitant cette municipalité sont en effet témoins et acteurs au tournant du xxe siècle, comme ailleurs au Québec, d'une série de transformations de l'espace urbain et de la vie urbaine sur lesquelles porte l'ouvrage de Jean Gaudette. L'auteur se fait ici ethnographe en décrivant les « ... conditions matérielles de la vie des citoyens d'autrefois ... ». (7) Soucieux de rapporter « ce qui a existé » plutôt que « ce qui s'est passé » (8) entre 1880 et 1930, Gaudette offre des chroniques d'une urbanité en évolution. Cette période est marquée par diverses avancées technologiques et de nombreux changements de pratiques, de normes et de représentations, bref par l'émergence d'une « modernité urbaine » sur laquelle, par ailleurs, l'auteur ne s'étend pas au plan conceptuel. Le choix des thématiques abordées est issu des préférences personnelles de Gaudette. Le dépouillement systématique des journaux de Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu est au cœur de sa démarche méthodologique. Il porte sur la presse le regard critique nécessaire afin d'en tirer une interprétation juste. Les procès-verbaux des délibérations du conseil municipal et des annuaires sont également mis à profit, tout comme un grand nombre d'études rassemblées dans une bibliographie touffue.

Dans une introduction aux allures de chapitre contextuel – l'avant-propos constituant sa véritable introduction –, Gaudette présente un historique de Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu et dépeint son évolution sociodémographique durant la période 1880–1930. Il s'attarde également à démontrer son statut de ville par l'analyse des différentes fonctions urbaines en présence. Cet examen lui permet d'annoncer la teneur des douze chapitres composant cet ouvrage de 273 pages fort agréable à lire et fruit d'un élégant travail d'édition. Les trois premiers chapitres sont consacrés à la mobilité de déplacement et aux infrastructures