

from being heard on campus and that enforce restrictions on free speech. Sowell is not exaggerating when he says that "Left-wing storm trooper power has won on elite campuses all across the country." No challenge to the accepted dogmas of the moment is permitted, and this in institutions once dedicated to reasoned argument intended to illuminate diverse points of view. Diversity is the big word on campus today, but it applies only to physical differences, not to intellectual ones.

Like the packagers of innovative programs for the public schools, the nation's campuses are served by a huge industry of race relations specialists and "diversity consultants." The main effect of the confrontations they orchestrate is increasing separatism and polarization, a net result financed largely by the taxpayer.

Sowell is different from most of the authors who have been pointing out what ails American education, and not only because of the breadth of his view. For one, he is an economist, who understands the perverse incentives that institutionalize educational mediocrity and is capable of laying out in sharp relief the interests of the various groups that, in their different ways, feed off federal money and student powerlessness.

For another, he goes beyond merely saying what's wrong to suggest specific remedies. School choice is an obvious one. Another is "ending the monopoly of schools and departments of education as gatekeepers of the teaching profession." Still another is the abolition of tenure and its ensuing lack of accountability, an objective that would also be served by publicizing the results of nationwide tests designed to measure just exactly what students have learned. Such measurement would, of course, have to be controlled and monitored from outside the education establishment. Above all, what is needed is some independent source of information so that parents, trustees, alumni, and legislators know what is really going on in classrooms and on campuses. They could be informed by means of an outside ombudsman, a state inspector general for education reporting directly to the governor, even by alternative student newspapers. These are all proposals worth supporting if we are to take back the schools before they self-destruct. □

LORD BEAVERBROOK: A LIFE

Anne Chisholm and Michael Davie

Alfred A. Knopf / 589 pages / \$30

reviewed by RICHARD LAMB

"Beavercrook," "Beanacrook," "Lord Crooks," an "animated little deformity," "the old brute," a "ruffian," "evil," "a diseased toad bottled in methylated spirits," "a sublime frog," a "golliwog itching with vitality," "one of the most corrupting influences in the country," "amoral," "a genius uncontaminated by moral indignation," "a strange little gnome with an odor of genius about him," or, simply, "a genius," William Maxwell Aitken was born in 1879 in Ontario, the son of a Presbyterian minister.

As a child in New Brunswick he inclined towards anxiety and prankishness, had the obligatory pre-tycoon paper route, and later cherished legal ambitions. He left school, however, at 16, and sold insurance door-to-door until he formed an association with a banking family well known in the Maritimes. Thereafter his fortunes rose, and by 1909 he'd made a pile financing Caribbean utilities and putting together shady, spectacular mergers. In 1910 he went to England—one step ahead of public opinion in his native Canada—and became an intimate of fellow Canadian Andrew Bonar Law, leader of the Tory party. Though he was soon elected a member of Parliament, his career was dogged by stage fright and scuttled by his peerage. In 1916 he acquired a controlling interest in the tottering *Daily Express*. By 1952 he was selling five million papers a day, more than anyone else in the world; had influenced by cajolery, counsel, or hysterical opposition every administration since Asquith's; and had revolutionized the role of newspaper proprietor. Along the way he collected the accolades listed above.

Richard Lamb is a writer living in New York City.

When the case is being made for Beaverbrook as something other than a shady titan and intriguer, he is generally credited with two great—indeed, war-winning—achievements. The first and less obscure of the two is his success as Minister of Aircraft Production in the days leading up to and during the Battle of Britain. But it was as a power broker that he performed the more obscure of his claims to consequence.

The indolent and supercilious Herbert Henry Asquith—who wrote at least one of his famous love letters to his daughter's friend Venetia Stanley while actually in a cabinet meeting—was regarded as being uniquely suited to preside over the supposed country-house calm of the Edwardian era. Beaverbrook used his control over the *Express* and his influence with Bonar Law to cement an alliance with the more bellicose Liberal War Secretary Lloyd George. This was of pivotal importance when, in a game of political chicken, both Asquith and Lloyd George resigned. Aitken-orchestrated support fell to Lloyd George, and he became Prime Minister. Shortly thereafter Aitken, already Sir Max, was created 1st Baron Beaverbrook, against the objections of the King.

Beaverbrook loomed large in the public imagination for four decades. He had a retinue of society women, writers, peers, elder statesmen, and Bright Young Things, with whom he wended his way from nightclub to limousine to country house to Côte d'Azur through the interwar years. To the party might be added at any moment starlets, socialists, poor relations, maharinis, backbenchers, and fellow plutocrats to form a bacchanalian juggernaut celebrated in the pages of half-a-dozen novels, including those of Arnold Bennett, Rebecca West,

Michael Arlen, H. G. Wells, and Anthony Powell. Evelyn Waugh's go-ahead parvenu Rex Mottram is redolent of the "unmistakeable *chic*—the flavour of 'Max' and 'F.E.' and the Prince of Wales, of the big table in the Sporting Club, the second magnum and the fourth cigar."

Yet despite the revelry, the glitter, and the chatter, the inordinate consumption of exotic vintages, the junketing, the dalliances, his "household bore little enough resemblance to what the outside world thought of as West End society; it was rather a private Hyde Park Corner." His own soapbox was the *Express*. Never a particularly deep thinker, Beaverbrook had one great idea, which went back to "jingo Tory" Joseph Chamberlain, and was forcefully espoused in Beaverbrook's time by Leo Amery. Amery called his idea "imperial preference" and conceived of it as an "unbroken tariff wall" surrounding Britain and her "possessions." Beaverbrook, with typical flair for disingenuous rhetoric, took advantage of public support for the opposite principle by calling his own plan "Empire Free Trade." During the twenties and thirties he flexed his proprietorial muscle by campaigning for tariffs, going so far as to field "Empire Crusade" candidates for Parliament.

His control over his newspaper's editorial content was total. He was rarely in his office, preferring to travel armed with telephone and "soundscriber" dictating machine, by means of which he kept his newspapers on a tight rein—once delivering 147 directives to the *Daily Express* offices in a single day. On another occasion he reached one of his editors at his golf club. The man was summoned in from his game. "I just wanted you to know that you work for me 24 hours a day," said Beaverbrook, and hung up.

This preoccupation had its rewards. Beaverbrook immediately gave the run-of-the-mill paper an energetic tone. He spent freely, introduced serialized novels and crosswords, renovated the layout; by the twenties the *Express* was "worldly, optimistic, and classless." He was a brilliant talent scout. He employed the more promising Bright Young Things (Waugh lasted seven weeks as a reporter), and ex-foreign service officers like Harold

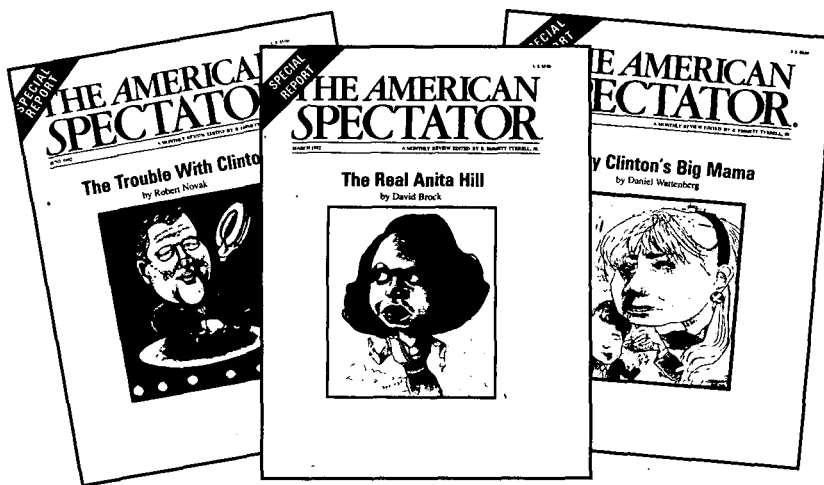
Nicolson (who didn't last long either), and found it "very soiling to live among people so extremely empirical, quotidian, shallow, and mean."

Meanwhile, his long-suffering wife was raising their children. He treated his wife churlishly, carrying on a twenty-year affair with socialite Jean Norton, whom he also cheated on. Yet he was desolated, by both his wife's death in 1927, at age 39, and Jean Norton's in 1945 at age 47. His relationship with his children was fraught with the

stresses between self-made man and the second generation: his son Max inherited his father's tendency toward dissipation without his brilliance or drive, became a fighter ace in WWII, and, tellingly, never used his father's title. His younger son Peter fell off a yacht and died; and his daughter, Janet, said to have inherited his temperament, married a pair of caddish aristocrats, one of whom pawned her jewelry to finance a honeymoon gambling spree for himself.

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Full of such intimate anecdotes, this is a wonderful biography. It is detailed, informed, and vivid. Its subject led a long, richly-peopled life, and Anne Chisholm and Michael Davie do an admirable job of explaining Beaverbrook's often murky role in events like Edward VII's abdication (the King once called Beaverbrook at the offices of the *Daily News* in New York to seek advice).

An assiduous friend to the great, Beaverbrook had his own retainers. Chief among these was the suave glutton, pathological spendthrift, and femme fatale—bait nonpareil Valentine Castlerosse, son of the relatively impoverished Catholic Earl of Kenmare. Lord Castlerosse met Beaverbrook during World War I, and later became his procurer and court jester. His appealing mixture of the abject and insolent was calculated to appeal to the Presbyterian playboy. (Chastened for regularly arriving late to work at his uncle's bank, Castlerosse replied "Yes, but think how early I leave.") Beaverbrook later made him gossip columnist for the *Sunday Express*, and on the eve of World War II sent him to Paris to suss out the French attitude towards war. "I haven't got much further than the bar at Fouquet's," was his response, "but no one at the bar at Fouquet's is going to fight for Danzig." He died of a heart attack in 1943, having told Beaverbrook, "I don't suppose any man owed so much to another as I do to you."

Beaverbrook had little use for the postwar world, for imperial decline, American pre-eminence, or the Labour government. There are few people, not even soi-disant anachronism Evelyn Waugh, whom one can see prospering less in the nitrogen-rich socialist chill of Clement Attlee's postwar Britain. Beaverbrook made a slow yearly orbit from London to New York to New Brunswick to Nassau to the South of France, where he entertained Churchill, by then a drooling octogenarian. He wrote several histories, and in 1963 he married the half-Greek widow of his Canadian friend Sir James Dunn, a woman who had parlayed an 8-to-1 pay-off in a horse race into a sizable fortune, and with her inheritance had a bank balance to rival Beaverbrook's own. He died in 1964, and the greater portion of his ashes are apparently secreted inside a statue of him in Fredericton, New Brunswick. □

PROMISE AND POWER: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF ROBERT McNAMARA

Deborah Shapley

Little, Brown/734 pages/\$24.95

reviewed by FRANZ M. OPPENHEIMER

In the days of Camelot the name Robert McNamara was a synonym for administrative genius. Now Deborah Shapley has written a magnificent book about him. With the readability of a Raymond Chandler mystery, it brings alive not only Robert Strange McNamara but also twenty traumatic years of American history. Shapley's research is meticulous, but after 700 pages we are still left wondering about her subject: Is he a latter-day Don Quixote, shaped not by knightly romance but by case studies of the Harvard Business School, tilting against demons to redress the ills of the world? Or a latter-day Mrs. Jellyby, feeding her ego with missionary zeal for African heathens while neglecting to feed her children? Or none of these, but just an ambitious careerist, devious and mendacious in climbing to titles, awards, and publicity, groveling before his masters while bullying his subordinates? Or is there, as David Halberstam put it, "no gentler word" for him than that he is "a fool"?

McNamara emerges as a most complex man, uncomfortable except among the few—like the Kennedys, Tom and Joan Braden, and Katharine Graham—in whose prominence he can reflect his own. No matter how his conduct looks to himself, when it is seen from the outside, lying, lust for power, servility, and bullying are constants in his life. Another constant is blind faith in the capacity of an elite of top managers to achieve results in large organizations, which, he thought, were "all the same, whether . . . the Ford Motor Company, the Catholic Church or the Department of Defense. Once you get to a certain scale, they're all the same."

Franz M. Oppenheimer is a Washington lawyer.

For someone with that conviction, listening to individual or institutional experience is superfluous. As president of the Ford Motor Company, McNamara gave short shrift to engineers; as secretary of defense he ignored the views of soldiers, sailors, and airmen; and as president of the World Bank he held the "old hands" of Eugene Black's Bank in scorn. This arrogance seems to have been the principal cause of the havoc he wrought with every one of those institutions. The highlights are widely known: the Edsel at Ford, the TFX and Vietnam at the Department of Defense, and the wages of megalomania at the World Bank.

Shapley tries to exculpate McNamara when possible. She describes how, at Ford, McNamara thought the plan to produce the Edsel "absurdly risky" and "a bad idea." But McNamara's sound judgment was never translated into timely dissent. The Edsel was Henry Ford II's baby, and McNamara, on becoming group vice president in 1957, with direct authority over all Ford cars including the Edsel, had to give the appearance of nurturing it for a while.

McNamara cannot be similarly exculpated for the TFX, eventually known as the F-111. That project was his baby, and his alone. He could brook no opposition to the logic that to build one type of plane meeting the requirements of both the Navy and the Air Force was more efficient than building two. "Commonality was the key to efficiency and profits in manufacturing automobiles at Ford," and so it had to be the same in the Catholic Church and the Department of Defense. No matter that the secretaries of the Navy and the Air Force reported that a plane meeting the requirements of both services "is not now technically feasible and would place severe operational penalties