

FOREWORD

It is not an easy task to write an introduction to a volume that celebrates the life and career of John English. One of Canada's pre-eminent political historians over the past half-century, English also wrote extensively on international affairs, while engaging in politics both at the front of the parliamentary stage and in the backrooms where politics is really concocted. English is of course a Canadian Liberal, and the Canadian Liberal party is one of the longest-lived political formations on the planet. The Liberal party was and is an omnibus formulation, embodying a rich variety of self-contradiction, and it is appropriate that a broad-minded and tolerant man like English should find a lifelong home in a party often and justly compared to a broad church, drawing its strength and longevity from its incoherence.

While a party man, English has always reached "across the aisle," as the Americans say, in writing and teaching, and in politics. He brought his political experience, but not his partisanship, into teaching and writing. Though a Canadian nationalist, he is simultaneously an internationalist, which flavours his work with realism and, often, pessimism. He even engaged in diplomacy himself at the end of the 1990s and could ruefully agree with Malcolm Muggeridge's characterization of a British diplomat as "forever Jeeves, to an increasingly demented Bertie Wooster."

Jeeves cast an ironic eye on the world, as English does – on academia, on politics, on the waves of political and intellectual hysteria that engaged many of his colleagues over a long professional lifetime. He followed in his

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life Pierre Trudeau's summons to intellectuals to become engaged in the broader world, but he always retained a cognitive distance. Reason over passion was the watchword of the passionate Trudeau. A passion for reason is the appropriate characterization for John English.

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