

THE PREMIERS JOEY and FRANK

GREED, POWER, AND LUST



BILL ROWE

Praise for **Rosie O'Dell**

“Rosie O’Dell is one of those books with such brilliant writing as to lull you into forgetting you’re actually reading.”

THE PILOT

“Yes, it’s Bill Rowe—back this time with his third novel, which I think is by far his best. Probably one of the better novels to come out in the past few years—depending on your own tastes, of course.”

THE NORTHEAST AVALON TIMES

“[A] deeply emotional page-turner by one of the country’s finest writers.”

MEGAN MURPHY, INDIGO

“This is a terrific story that hinges on a woman who is like quicksilver, running through all the cracks.”

THE GLOBE AND MAIL

“It’s well-written (Rowe is an experienced and accomplished writer), the characters are excellently drawn and much of the writing is just plain funny.”

THE PEI GUARDIAN

“There is not a false note in this book. All the characters are drawn with skillful insight, the descriptions are so vibrant you can almost hear the water and feel the mist of St. John’s, Newfoundland. Although it has elements of a thriller, this is no gothic soap opera, but rather a brilliantly crafted look into the hearts and souls of ordinary people who are thrown into extraordinary circumstances.”

ATLANTIC BOOKS TODAY

“This novel is a real page-turner, with lots of tension and mystery.”

THE TELEGRAM

Praise for
Danny Williams, Please Come Back

“I started to really appreciate Rowe’s ability to narrow down a topic and come up with something pithy and witty to say about it, week after week.”

THE TELEGRAM

“Like any columnist worth his salt Rowe is provocative and a number of the columns deal with topics whose lessons are still relevant.”

THE NEWFOUNDLAND QUARTERLY

“Rowe’s columns on Williams’s persona, bellicose manner and political antics truly shine. What Danny Should Do in the Crab War? (May 7, 2005) puts a delightful Shakespearian twist on Williams’s strategic positioning; Is Danny a Dictator? (June 25, 2005) will stand as a classic.”

THE CHRONICLE HERALD

“A brisk read and a fine book to have in your personal library.”

THE COMPASS

“[Rowe] does it all, of course, with his usual blend of droll good humour and common sense.”

THE GLOBE AND MAIL

“With a mind—and a pen—as sharp as a paper cut, the elegant, affable Rowe remains Newfoundland’s literary agent provocateur, provoking, teasing, sometimes coddling his subjects, but all the time digging towards truths that cause discomfort for the province’s Who’s Who and everyman alike.”

THE BUSINESS POST

Praise for
Danny Williams: The War with Ottawa

“Interesting book about a successful Canadian politician . . .”

THE GLOBE AND MAIL

“Bill Rowe’s *Danny Williams: The War with Ottawa* is an enjoyable read.”

TIM POWERS

“[*Danny Williams: The War with Ottawa*] is captivating.
[Bill Rowe] spares no punches.”

THE COMPASS

“The most interesting political book to
be released in Canada in some time . . .”

THE BUSINESS POST

“Rowe’s Ottawa chronicle [is] absorbing, humorous.”

THE TELEGRAM

“I quickly realized that this was not going to be a dry political memoir. To the contrary, not only is the book interesting and revealing of this contentious time, it is very funny in places.”

THE CHRONICLE HERALD

“An exciting read.”

THE NEWFOUNDLAND QUARTERLY

“[One of] three of this year’s most controversial and
talked about political books.”

THE HOUSE, CBC RADIO

“Rowe has a more humanistic side to politics. It is as if a citizen managed to
be a fly on the wall while Danny Williams fought.”

CURRENT MAGAZINE

More praise for
Danny Williams: The War with Ottawa

“An eye-opening, often hilariously funny, account of life among Ottawa power brokers and civil servants.”

CANADIAN LAWYER MAGAZINE

“Bill Rowe has a lot to say. There are dozens of interesting stories told, and comments passed on . . .”

THE NORTHEAST AVALON TIMES

“A fascinating and frequently funny read.”

DOWNHOME

“Written with the knowledge and insight that only an insider could possess, this book (sub-titled ‘The Inside Story of a Hired Gun’) is a timely reminder of the duplicity of far too many of our elected leaders—no matter what their political stripe.” **ATLANTIC BOOKS TODAY**

“The writer’s good English style—rare today—his knowledge of all kinds of personalities in the political world and his misadventures in getting a basic office set up (which took six of the eight months he was there) all make for amusing and exciting reading.” **THE PEI GUARDIAN**

The Premiers

Joey and Frank

Also by Bill Rowe

ROSIE O'DELL

DANNY WILLIAMS, PLEASE COME BACK

DANNY WILLIAMS: THE WAR WITH OTTAWA

IS THAT YOU, BILL?

THE TEMPTATION OF VICTOR GALANTI

CLAPP'S ROCK

The Premiers Joey and Frank

Greed, Power, and Lust

BILL ROWE

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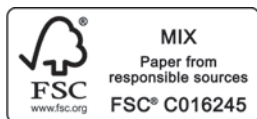
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In memory of my mother and father,
Edith Butt of Woody Point and Fred Rowe of Lewisporte

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Author's Note

For years I had close political involvement, as colleague or adversary, with Joey Smallwood and Frank Moores. This book is my memoir of those first two premiers of Newfoundland and Labrador and the cast of characters around them.

The book is not a work of historical research. It consists almost entirely of my own memories and reminiscences, some of which have been sparked by conversations with acquaintances and by clippings, notes, and documents in my personal files.

I have tried to present remembered facts as accurately and objectively as possible. My opinions are my own subjective musings. With both facts and opinions, I have endeavoured not to pull any punches or soften hard truths. And wherever I could, I have sought to convey the humour of the bizarre situations encountered.

Some readers may deem my memories of events and persons factually wrong or misremembered. Others may consider my assessments of actions and motives harsh or ill-considered. I would urge them to offer and argue their suggested corrections for the public record, perhaps even by writing memoirs of their own.

My hope is to put out another book of candid memoirs later, cover-

ing other premiers I have known and observed through my participation in politics and media.

Bill Rowe

*St. John's
Newfoundland and Labrador
August 2013*

CHAPTER ONE

A Sunny Day Tomorrow

THE VOICE BOOMED out of the sky like God announcing doomsday. The year was 1948, and I was six years old. My schoolmate Rickie and I were playing with a ball in the backyard, but we dropped it to gawk up at the small aircraft swooping low over the St. John's houses. We listened transfixed to the words blaring out of its loudspeaker: "... a rainy day tomorrow." But then the words became "... a sunny day tomorrow." The man up there sounded very sure of himself, but he wasn't making much sense. I ran into our house to ask my mother. Inside, I heard my younger brother crying. He was in bed with a fever today, and he'd been rudely awakened from his nap by the bellowing from on high. My mother was already heading toward his room without seeing me, and I heard her muttering to herself as she went: "Bloody moron."

"Mr. Smallwood," she said later, smiling when I asked her what she'd meant by moron. "Or it might have been Peter Cashin. It was definitely one or the other." And what were they talking about—rainy day tomorrow, sunny day tomorrow? Well, if it was Mr. Smallwood, she replied, he was saying that Confederation with Canada would

mean a sunny day tomorrow, and Responsible Government would mean a rainy day tomorrow. But if it was Mr. Cashin, he was saying the exact opposite.

I was perplexed. “But which one is right, Mom?”

“More than likely they’re both right,” she said. I’d be a few years older before I fully grasped her point.

Meanwhile, my father, Fred Rowe, shared none of Edith’s—his wife’s—skepticism or sense of irony over the issue. He was an enthusiastic supporter of Confederation—so much so that Joseph R. Smallwood made him one of his fifty Confederate vice-presidents. Becoming one of Joey Smallwood’s army of vice-presidents was a “greatness” that was thrust upon men, often without their knowledge. Aiden Maloney told me he’d heard for the first time that he’d become a Confederate vice-president by way of a telegram from an appalled anti-Confederate family member. Aiden was managing a fish plant on the southwest coast of Newfoundland at the time, and Smallwood must have assumed, because the owner of the fish plant was a Confederation backer (the promise of a senate seat being involved), that anyone working for him was ipso facto a Confederate as well. It was the kind of quantum leap in logic, or rosy thinking, that associates of Joey Smallwood would contemplate with head-scratching befuddlement over the next quarter century.

My father openly supported Confederation despite the fact that, as principal of Curtis Academy, a big new school in St. John’s, he was expected by the many anti-Confederate mercantile and professional members on the school board to shut his damned mouth about the boons of joining Canada. Smallwood moved Ramsay, Bill, and Clara—his children—from their other schools in the city to Curtis, off Pleasant Street. Dad would tell me later that Smallwood’s kids had been coming under verbal, and even physical, abuse at school over the Confederation issue, and Joey knew they would be safe at Curtis. In years to come, I recall older students at Curtis Academy reminiscing about Clara arriving in

the mornings on a pony which she'd tether outside the school. She had ridden the animal all the way from their house out on Kenmount Road, where Smallwood had a farm.

My father, like so many of his generation who'd been dumped into the Great Depression just as they were graduating from high school, struggled for years to complete his university education. Thus it happened by coincidence, just before the second referendum resolved the issue in favour of Confederation, that he was able, finally, in his mid-thirties, to make financial arrangements to complete his doctorate at the University of Toronto.

Joey had other plans for him and didn't want him to go. But Dad knew that if he didn't realize his lifelong dream now, he never would. He resigned as principal of Curtis and he and Edith took their four sons—Fred, Bud, George, and me—to Toronto for the 1948-1949 academic year. On top of his studies there, Dad gave weekly talks on CBC Radio designed to familiarize Canadian listeners with Newfoundland and our curious ways.

I went into grade two at a school in Toronto where I soon became acquainted with some curious Upper Canadian ways. Feeling extremely shy in this strange, foreign land, I would respond to my teacher's questions with a mute nod or shake of my head. She would thereupon tell me to stop answering "like a little Eskimo," which would make the class titter, and she'd urge me to use spoken words like a civilized child now that I was a Canadian. The charming woman also seated the children in rows ranging, according to her likes and dislikes, from smart to stupid, and she divided the children's singing voices into categories running from "canaries" for the sweetest sounds, to "robins" for the tolerable, to "crows" for the most grating and raucous. A little girl I liked for her quiet humour and her sharp mind found herself seated in the stupidest row and singing with the crows. Even with my child's eyes and ears, as yet unschooled in prejudice, I couldn't help drawing a link between her place in the class and her poor manner of dress and different accent.

Good luck to that little human being in clawing her way out of the Toronto welfare cycle.

As my father finished his studies at U of T, he faced a choice. He could accept one of the offers he'd received to lecture at a university in the United States or Canada, or he could accept brand-new premier Smallwood's offer to become the first deputy minister of Welfare, re-vamp—essentially help create—that department, and then run for the House of Assembly at the first opportunity.

Dad told me that if Confederation had not taken place, he would not have returned to Newfoundland but would instead have made a life for himself and family elsewhere in North America. In the event, though, he accepted Joey's offer and came back. Decades later and retired from provincial politics, he would ask me if he'd made the right decision way back then. I'd reply that, yes, he had: look at the interesting, eventful life he'd lived. And he'd slowly shake his head in humour and disbelief at the travails he'd undergone during his twenty years as Premier Smallwood's point man.

Back from Toronto to St. John's again in 1950, I was happy to enter grade three under Miss Drodge, our caring and cheerful classroom teacher. To say my year in that Toronto school coloured my view of Ontario for life would be an exaggeration. But I did retain this lifelong healthy attitude: some waspy Upper Canadians with mean-spirited bigotry were all too ready to jump to judgment and put other peoples and provinces in their preordained lesser place. When I would hear Mr. Smallwood, our "only living father of Confederation," extolling the multitudinous "blessings" of our union with Canada on the radio, I never had trouble restraining myself from dancing about the room in joy.

IN THE EARLY 1950s, Joey recruited Dad to run as the Liberal candidate in the district of Labrador. Harold Horwood had resigned from the seat because, according to Joey, he could not abide being passed over for a position in the cabinet after all he'd done for Joey's

Confederate cause. Joey's more slanderous explanation to me in the late 1960s for slighting his old Confederate comrade-at-arms was that in those days the electorate was not as easygoing as they were now about a fellow who was too fond of the company of pretty young men. Whatever the truth of the matter, Horwood's newspaper columns for years afterwards showed vicious spite against Joey and his own replacement, Fred Rowe, as well as some others in the Smallwood entourage.

Dad got elected to the House of Assembly and became minister of Mines and Resources. In this role, I remember, his greatest pride and joy, backed by Smallwood's enthusiasm, was planning the string of provincial parks throughout the province, designed to hold these beautiful spots in perpetuity for the benefit of the people. (The two of them would have been heartbroken decades later to see the government of Clyde Wells begin the cost-cutting process of dismantling or selling off many of these provincial parks.)

Throughout his years as member for Labrador, Dad would make long summer visits by vessel to every community in the straits, on the coast, and in Lake Melville. "Pay close attention to your district," he told me Smallwood always urged. "Any fool can get elected once—the real challenge for a politician is to get re-elected next time." Often, Dad would take family members with him on his tours, and when my turn came in the mid-1950s, we headed north from Notre Dame Bay in the motor vessel *Bonnie Nell*. All went well until we reached the Strait of Belle Isle. There the captain had to make a crucial decision: according to the forecast, a storm was brewing, and if we didn't cross over to Labrador right away we could be stuck on the Newfoundland side for several days. He and Dad decided between them to proceed. After all, the narrow waterway was only ten or twelve miles across.

Dad was not a religious man. But he looked like he was praying to the Almighty for salvation that day. Halfway across the straits, at the point of no return, the wind had turned savage. Waves towered far above the vessel and, in the opinion of everyone on board, it was only the skill of the

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