

# MADE IN CANADA

## A Businessman's Adventures in Politics

Alastair W. Gillespie with Irene Sage, Ph.D.

**A**lastair Gillespie was born and raised in Victoria, British Columbia. He joined the navy at the outbreak of the World War II and served on the destroyer HMCS *Saskatchewan* on North Atlantic convoy duty before training as a naval pilot and surviving a hair-raising upside-down landing in a Corsair fighter.

A Rhodes scholar at Oxford University after the war, he went on to become a successful businessman before embarking on a career in politics. Swept into office as a Liberal MP on the wave of Trudeaumania in 1968, he served in three different cabinet positions. He was successively Minister of State for Science and Technology, Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (and thus responsible for the Foreign Investment Review Agency) and Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources

An early mentor was economic nationalist and Liberal cabinet minister Walter Gordon, who believed that massive American takeovers of Canadian businesses imperilled Canada's independence. Gillespie mounts a vigorous defence of controversial measures of the Trudeau period that have been oversimplified in retrospect and unduly criticized, such as the Foreign Investment Review Agency. While never an opponent of foreign investment in Canada, he believes that it must serve Canadian goals and benefit Canadians, not just absentee owners. He believes too that government has a role to play in encouraging scientific research in Canada and its commercialization by Canadian companies.

One of the major challenges of Gillespie's period as energy minister was reconciling the demands of Alberta with the need of all Canadians to have a secure supply of energy and an equitable distribution of economic windfalls. It was the era when oil crises dominated the economic news and the OPEC cartel of

oil-rich nations was intent on forcing up prices.

Alastair Gillespie's cabinet roles took him around the world and he met many political leaders of the time, including Margaret Thatcher, Jimmy Carter, Fidel Castro, Henry Kissinger, OPEC leader Ahmed Zaki Yamani, the Shah of Iran and King Faisal of Saudi Arabia.

After his political career Alastair Gillespie returned to the world of business, pursuing among various ventures a promising scheme to extract oil from coal in Nova Scotia, which ran afoul of bureaucratic and political duplicity.

In this age of financial crisis, business slowdowns and volatile markets resulting from years of the "hands-off" approach by governments, Alastair Gillespie reminds us, provocatively, that it was not always so, and that governments can indeed play a constructive role in partnership with business. His book is the account of a full and remarkable life in the two worlds of business and politics.

"Alastair Gillespie is an extraordinary blend of a first-rate mind, a successful businessman, a senior federal cabinet minister and a western Canadian who is a Canadian nationalist. He is, frankly, unique, and we shall not see his like again because the experiences that shaped him are part of Canada's past. Yet his perceptions of what those influences mean speak clearly, if poignantly, to the problems Canada confronts today."

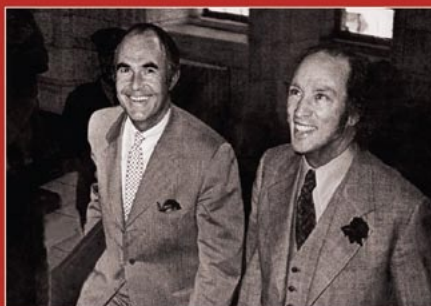
*From the foreword by  
John English.*

Irene Sage, Ph.D., is a Senior Fellow at the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) and the Associate Director of its African Initiative. She has recently returned from the UK, where she served as Director of the Foundation for International Security, 1997-2003, a charitable foundation undertaking Track II conflict resolution initiatives in Moldova, Northern Iraq and Cambodia as well as a global food security program. She previously worked with the UK-based Centre for Conflict Analysis. She received her MA in Political Science from the University of Waterloo and her doctorate in International Political Economy from the University of Kent (Canterbury) in the UK.

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Adventures in Politics

Alastair W. Gillespie  
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Hardcover, 6 x 9 inches, 268 pages.

Includes photos and index.

ISBN 978-1-896941-59-2.

Canada, November 2009. **\$34.95**

U.S.A., January 2010. **\$37.95**

Distributed in Canada by Fraser Direct.

Distributed in U.S.A. by Midpoint Trade Books.

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