Eugene Forsey
1904-1991

Eugene Forsey, scholar and constitutional expert, was born in Grand Bank, Newfoundland, and earned a BA and MA at McGill University. As a Rhodes Scholar (for Quebec) he studied for another BA and MA at Balliol College, Oxford, and was a Guggenheim Fellow in 1932. He capped his learning with a PhD from McGill in 1941. In later years there followed a torrent of LL.Ds, from the University of New Brunswick, McGill, Saskatchewan, Toronto, Waterloo, Dalhousie, York, Carleton and Queen's. As well, a D.Litt from Memorial, Acadia and Trent universities. He married Harriet Roberts in 1935, and they had two daughters who followed his political footsteps. He ran twice for Parliament under the CCF banner in the 1940s, and was appointed by Pierre Trudeau to the Senate (1970-79).

Eugene was the author of Economic and Social Aspects of the Nova Scotia Coal Industry (1926); The Royal Power of Dissolution of Parliament in the British Commonwealth (1943); Social Planning for Canada (with others) (1935); Freedom and Order (1974);
The Canadian Labour
Movement 1812-1902 (1935);
and How Canadians Govern
Themselves (1979).

Eugene was Chancellor of Trent
University and President of the
Canadian Political Science
Association (1961-2). For many
years he was the research direc-
tor for the Canadian Labour
Congress. He was a Privy
Councillor and a Companion of
the Order of Canada.

His knowledge of Canadian
political, constitutional and
trade union affairs led him into
many public discussions, which
he often prompted through a
regular flow of letters to the
newspapers. He must have held
the record for published letters
over many years, and for their
wit as well as wisdom. One
remembered example of his wit
dates to his later years: asked
his precise age at a supper
party, he replied: “I am in the
prime of my dotage.”

Robert Fulford, in a review of
Forsey’s autobiographical
memoir A Life on the Fringe,
wrote: “His book is, among
other things, an astonishing
guided tour of our entire politi-
cal horizon over three genera-
tions”. Jack McLeod, writing
for the Thomson News Service,
called it “an exuberant, witty,
graceful account of a distin-
guished public career. It is a
splendid book. I cannot think of
another work in the field of
Canadian politics that I’ve
found more instructive or
entertaining during the past
decade”.