



The Art of the Impossible: Dave Barrett and the NDP in Power, 1972-1975

Geoff Meggs, Rod Mickleburgh

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At his first cabinet meeting Premier Dave Barrett takes off his shoes, leaps onto the leather-inlaid cabinet table and skids the length of the room. "Are we here for a good time or a long time?" he roars. His answer: a good time, a time of change, action, doing what was needed and right, not what was easy and conventional.

He set the tone for a government that changed the face of the province. During the next three years, he and his team passed more legislation in a shorter time than any government before or since. A university or college student graduating today in BC may have been born years after Barrett's defeat, but could attend a Barrett daycare, live on a farm in Barrett's Agricultural Land Reserve, be rushed to hospital in a provincial ambulance created by Barrett's government and attend college in a community institution founded by his government. The continuing polarization of BC politics also dates back to Barrett--the Fraser Institute and the right-wing economic policies it preaches are as much a legacy of the Barrett years as the ALR.

Dave Barrett remains a unique and important figure in BC's history, a symbol of how much can be achieved in government and a reminder of how quickly those achievements can be forgotten. This lively and well-researched book is the first in-depth study of this most memorable of BC premiers.

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