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Kathryn Rose

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Putting the Puzzle Together

J. de N. Kennedy's Official History of Munitions and Supply

KATHRYN ROSE

Abstract: This article details the great difficulties J. de N. Kennedy faced in writing the official history of the Department of Munitions and Supply in the late 1940s. The very elements of its success – rapid and inspired improvisation in response to the early crises in the war – resulted in disorganized and incomplete records. Kennedy moreover had to work against a nearly impossible deadline as the department, a wartime creation, shut down in 1948–1949.

THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT sponsored official histories of its involvement in the Second World War. The gold standard may well be the volumes (1955, 1960) of C.P. Stacey, who had become official army historian in 1940. About the time Stacey was publishing *The Canadian Army 1939–1945* (Governor General's Award, 1948), he was vetting a late draft of the official history of the Department of Munitions and Supply by its legal chief, John de Navarre Kennedy (1950). The books by the two men differ dramatically in tone and content. Stacey offers information, along with analysis and assessment, while lawyer Kennedy cites briefs, lists, and statistics to document activity at Munitions and Supply, but does little by way of analysis or explanation.

For his herculean mission, Kennedy was short on munitions (consistent, comprehensive records) and supplies (time and money). From his department's inception in 1940 on, no one had organized its records systematically. Late in the war, in 1944, Liberal Prime

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Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King set up what became the Public Records Committee (PRC) to organize the government's war record. In 1946, the PRC selected Kennedy as official historian for Munitions and Supply – as head of the department's Legal Branch since 1940, he knew its operations and internal connections intimately. But Munitions and Supply had already merged with the Department of Reconstruction and was winding down as the government reduced its wartime size and scale, so the PRC pushed Kennedy to work fast and finish soon.¹

Organizing wartime records and completing a manuscript quickly might well have challenged even someone with substantial historical training and experience. Kennedy's assignment reveals the complex interplay between the writing of official history and the problems of keeping war records. Munitions and Supply (1940–1945) was the only truly wartime department, starting with the outbreak of war, and continuing into the postwar to aid with reconstruction efforts. It started without a record-keeping tradition similar to its federal counterparts, expanded dramatically and flexibly, and lacked clear guidelines for managing paperwork, which its branches, divisions, other units, and crown corporations handled in their own way, if at all. The department was winding down, which complicated the historian's search for documentation, and the PRC did what it could to help.

SUPPLYING A WAR

Munitions and Supply began to emerge through orders in council and legislation amid the increasing tension in Europe in the summer of 1939. Parliament passed the Defence Purchases, Profits Control

1 Jack de Navarre Kennedy, *The History of the Department of Munitions and Supply: Canada in the Second World War*, vol. I, *Production Branches and Crown Companies* (Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier, King's Printer and Controller of Stationery, 1950); *History of the Department of Munitions and Supply: Canada in the Second World War*, vol. II, *Controls, Services and Finance Branches, and Units Associated with the Department* (Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier, King's Printer and Controller of Stationery, 1950). "John de Navarre Kennedy," in *Canadian Who's Who?*, vol. IV (Toronto: Trans Canada Press, 1948), 502. Brooke Claxton, the new minister of national defence, wanted to cancel the official histories programme by March 1948. After Claxton was prodded by Lester Pearson, and encountered an angered C.P. Stacey, Stacey's project was renewed. See Tim Cook, *Clio's Warriors: Canadian Historians and the Writing of the World Wars* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), 142–143.

and Financing Act, in effect July 1939, to manage and control domestic industries producing defence materiel. This law centralized procurement through the Defence Purchasing Board (DPB), which had “exclusive power to enter into contracts for the purchase of munitions and the construction of defence projects.”²

After Canada went to war in September 1939, the government launched the department and restructured the board,³ but, uncertain what Canada might be contributing to the Allies’ efforts, proceeded cautiously.⁴ In October 1939, it transferred the DPB’s powers and responsibilities to the War Supply Board (WSB), a temporary agency with “greater freedom of action and authority” vis-à-vis munitions and war supplies.⁵

After King and the Liberals secured a new majority in March 1940, Parliament passed the Department of Munitions and Supply Act on 9 April. The minister took over the WSB’s work, but with power to conscript war materiel and set prices and conditions.⁶ The new minister was Clarence Decatur “C.D.” Howe, an American-born engineer who had made his fortune in Port Arthur, Ontario, building grain elevators where railways from the west met ships at the head of Lake Superior. He had won a seat in the 1935 election that replaced R.B. Bennett’s Conservatives with King – prime minister for most of the 1920s – and the Liberals. Howe became in 1936 minister of transport and soon one of King’s most trusted cabinet colleagues, able to complete difficult projects.⁷

At Munitions and Supply, Howe selected a committee of prominent figures in business and industry – Henry Borden, R.A.C. Henry, Gordon Scott, and Edward Plunkett “E.P.” Taylor – to bring in business skills and communicate with private industry.⁸ Bill Bennett became his secretary; G. Kingsley Sheils, the deputy minister, set up⁹ the department’s Registry Office.¹⁰

² Kennedy, *History*, I, 4.

³ Robert Bothwell and William Kilbourn, *C.D. Howe: A Biography* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979), 123.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Kennedy, *History*, I, 5.

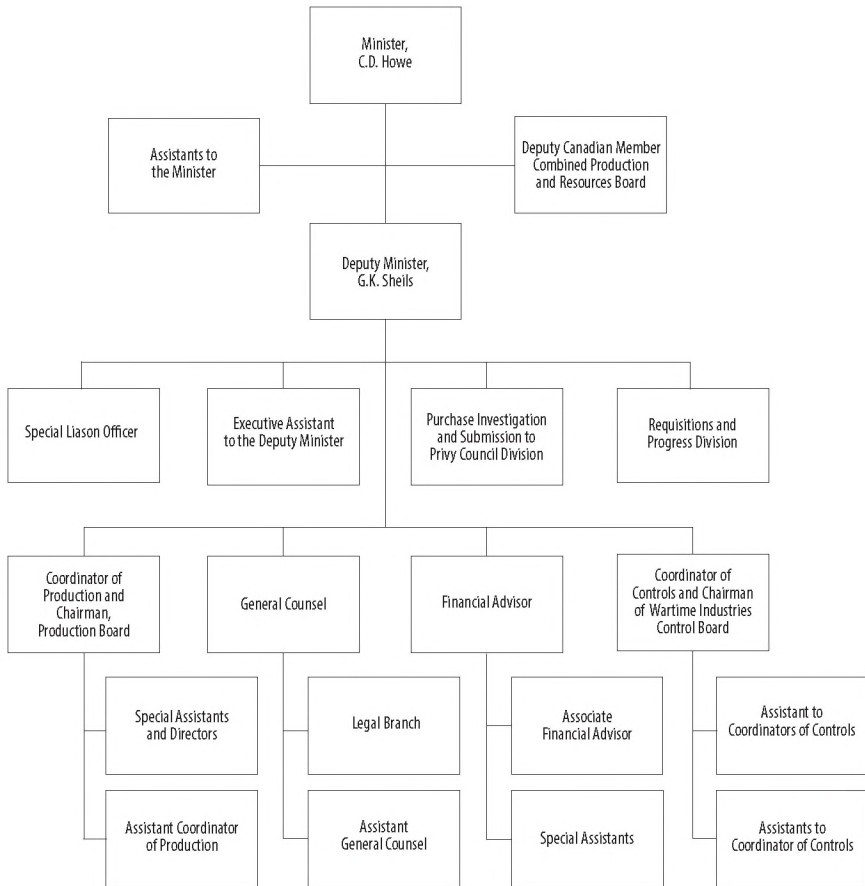
⁶ Library and Archives Canada (LAC), RG 28-A, vol. 48, Structure and Operation of the Canadian Department of Munitions and Supply, 22 April 1941.

⁷ Bothwell and Kilbourn, *Howe*, 128.

⁸ Scott would later fall victim to a torpedo attack on the SS *Western Prince*.

⁹ Kennedy, *History*, I, v.

¹⁰ Bothwell and Kilbourn, *Howe*, 130–132.



Minister's office and senior management. [Kennedy, *History*, I, back insert, dated 3 June 1944].

Munitions and Supply started to expand just as major parts of western Europe fell to the German army in the spring of 1940. In May, the British Expeditionary Force lost much of its equipment in its cross-Channel retreat from Dunkirk in France. Britain turned to Canada for much of its materiel, and Howe's department started to process orders as quickly as possible, with little time to establish procedures as staff began to mobilize private industry and gather materiel. By 1943, the department had 26 branches, 19 controls, and 28 crown companies.¹¹ See the following pages for more charts detailing this expansion.

¹¹ Ibid., 133–4; Kennedy, *History*, I, xvii.

Howe set up the War Industries Control Board (WICB) in June 1940 to ensure the supply and allocation of supplies for war needs. Starting off with only a few members appointed by Howe, as the war effort expanded and the needs for materiel increased, the challenges of uncoordinated activities, and conflicts, increased. In August 1941, a set of WICB Regulations was passed that centralized the activity of the boards under an appointed chairman.

The 17 controllers for the various industries and the wartime administrator for the Canadian Atlantic ports sat on the WICB to coordinate the actions of the controls. By enrolling representatives from machine-tool, metals, oil, power, steel, and timber producers, among others, Howe could take control of whole industries and acquire aircraft, ammunition, artillery, rifles, shells, ships, tanks, and trucks.¹² Board representatives could “buy, expropriate, manufacture, ration and, generally ... take such steps as might be necessary to further the war effort in their respective fields of operation.”¹³

A PATCHWORK QUILT

This large network did not standardize or centralize administration. Nine service and finance branches ran the department, 16 production branches manufactured war materiel, controls regulated scarce war supplies, and crown corporations avoided bureaucracy.¹⁴ Another category – units associated with the department – included the Auditor-General's Office, the Canadian Mutual Aid Board, the Cost Inspection and Audit Division, the Inspection Board of the United Kingdom and Canada, the Treasury Office, the War Assets Corporation, and the War Contracts Depreciation Board.

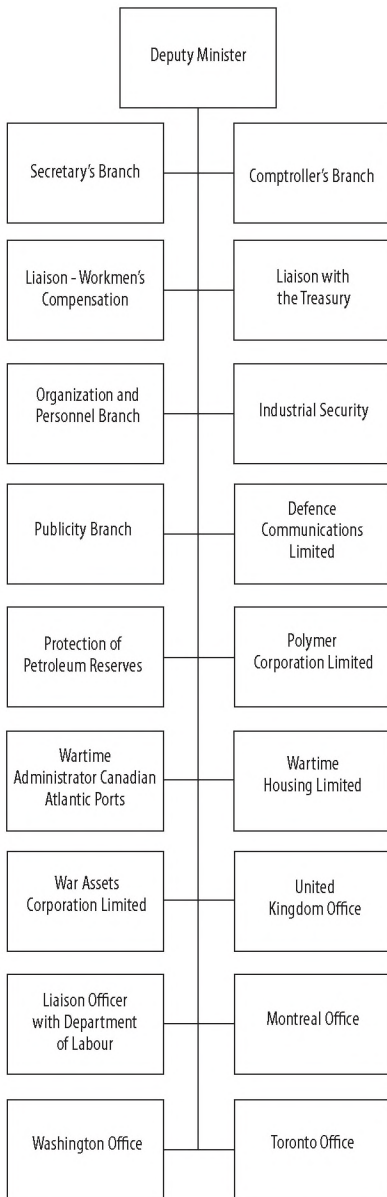
The finance branches were home to the Financial Advisor; the Comptroller's Branch oversaw accounting issues for all units; and the Economics and Statistics Branch dealt with records, facts, and statistics.¹⁵ The services branches included the General Counsel's Office and Legal Branch, the Industrial Security Branch, the Labour

¹² Bothwell and Kilbourn, *Howe*, 136.

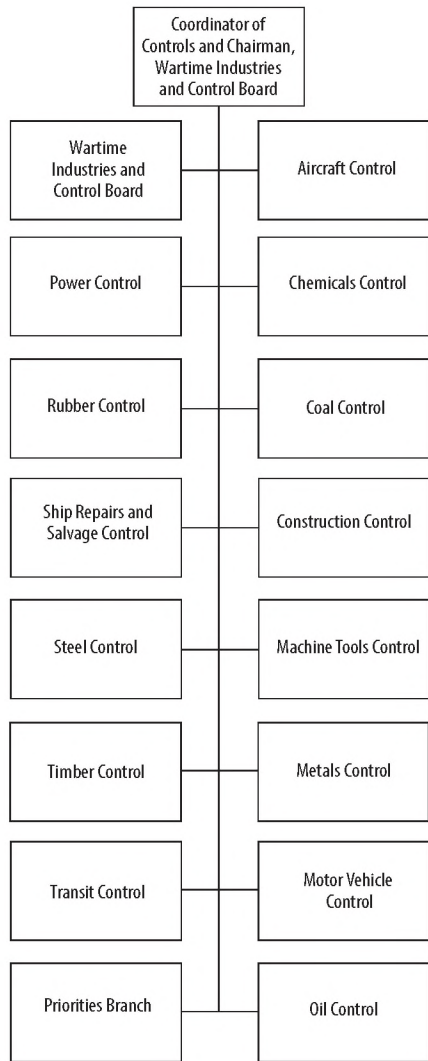
¹³ Kennedy, *History*, II, 2.

¹⁴ Robert Bothwell, “Department of Munitions and Supply,” Canadian Encyclopedia online <10 April 2014>.

¹⁵ Kennedy, *History*, II, 296.



Units Reporting to Deputy Minister. [Kennedy, *History*, I, back insert, dated 3 June 1944].



Units Reporting to Coordinator of Controls. [Kennedy, *History*, I, back insert, dated 3 June 1944].

Liaison Office, the Organization and Personnel Branch, the Publicity Branch, and the Secretary's Branch.

Crucial to our purposes, the Secretary's Branch oversaw correspondence, and the Registry Office (or central registry) kept the files; together, they managed records under¹⁶ Deputy Minister Kingsley Shiels. The Registry Office received, recorded, and distributed incoming correspondence and dispatched outgoing mail; this function started with one clerk and by 1943 employed 200 people.¹⁷ It also kept records, creating, recording, and storing files.¹⁸

In November 1942, at the prime minister's urging, the Privy Council instructed departments to prepare records for the writing of war narratives.¹⁹ Cabinet Secretary Arnold Heeney asked them about the state of the art just as²⁰ Munitions and Supply had begun absorbing the files of branches and crown corporations into its central registry. In the first four months of 1943, the Registry Office took over the files and filing staffs of Construction Control, Metals Control, Munitions Contracts, Rubber Control, Shipbuilding, Signals Production, Steel Control, and the WICB Secretariat.²¹ Registry personnel found a diversity of records and increasing mismanagement and, while not wanting to "interfere with the work of the Branches and Controls," had to adapt the materials before incorporating them.²² They attempted to encourage and facilitate better record keeping throughout the department, with some success.

There were other problems. In the rush of war, "new employees without any knowledge of government routine were pouring into the department, setting up their own filing systems and generally disregarding established Government procedures."²³ Space too was becoming an issue. Some organizations had "no official files ... Old files have been accumulating in vaults and other store rooms."²⁴

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., 397.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ LAC, RG 19, vol. 526, file 129-43, A.D.P. Heeney to J.L. Ilesley, 4 November 1942.

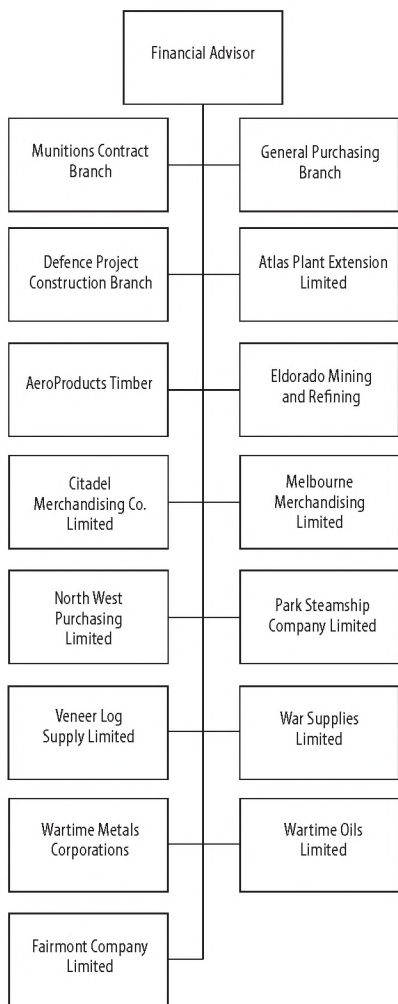
²⁰ LAC, RG 19, vol. 526, file 129-43, W.O. Clark to Donald Gordon, 16 November 1942, refers to Heeney's message (note 19) and quotes it at great length.

²¹ LAC, RG 28-A, vol. 5, Quarterly Report – Central Registry: Quarter Ending June 1943, 11 June 1943.

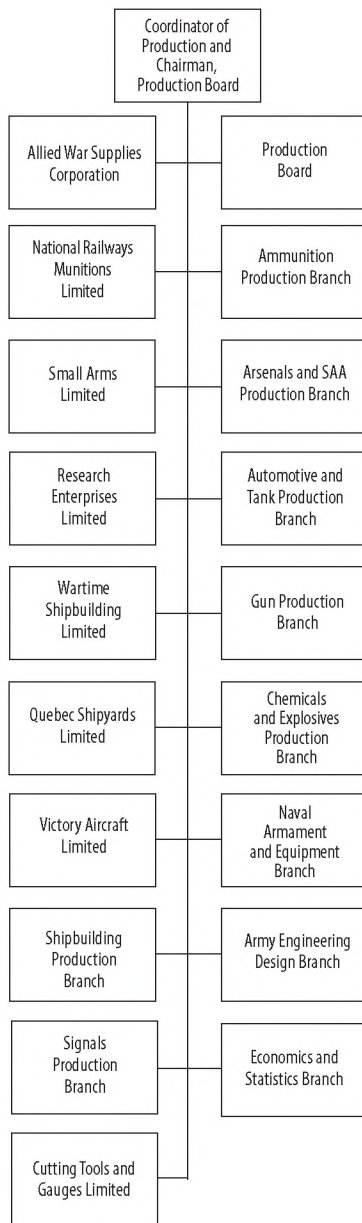
²² Ibid.

²³ LAC, RG 28-A, vol. 17, Secretary's Branch: Record of Development of Secretary's Branch, 15 September 1943.

²⁴ LAC, RG 28-A, vol. 59, Quarterly Report – Central Registry: Quarter Ending June



Units Reporting to Financial Advisor. [Kennedy, *History*, I, back insert, dated 3 June 1944].



Units Reporting to Coordinator of Production. [Kennedy, *History*, I, back insert, dated 3 June 1944].

The chaotic record-keeping at Munitions and Supply and in other federal departments and agencies worried senior members of government. The Canadian Historical Association and senior public servants had been encouraging the prime minister to act. As a result of his close friendship with former Dominion Archivist and passionate collector, Sir Arthur Doughty, King was no fan of Dominion Archivist Dr. Gustave Lanctôt and questioned his ability to preserve and protect Canada's wartime record. King invited several senior civil servants to oversee preparation of wartime department histories. In June 1944, the Privy Council created the Interdepartmental Advisory Committee on Public Records to consider how to preserve this material throughout the government.²⁵ By September 1945, this "temporary" body had become the Public Records Committee (PRC), and Munitions and Supply sent two representatives – R.T. Donald and W.J. Neville.

With a push from the PRC, the department's Registry Office kept merging files. In December 1944, department staff members discussed how to handle and store dormant records, and how to classify records from the former Industry and Sub-Contract Co-ordination Branch and the Plan Records Divisions. Integrating these files added 1,278,573 items to the registry.²⁶ With the still rising demands for war materiel, the filing system continued to expand at a rapid pace. In 1943, the Registry Office created 121,900 new files on various topics.²⁷ So much did demands for materiel increase during 1944 that in the final quarter of that year, the registry created 127,573 new files, more than the total for the year before.²⁸

The PRC did not do away with the central registry's difficulties – incomplete collections, missing files and information, and the continuing problem of "Branches and Divisions withholding correspondence from

1943, 11 June 1943; LAC, RG 35, series 7, vol. 8, Secretary of State, Memorandum to the Cabinet: Committee on Public Records, 10 September, 1945; George Brown, "The Problem of Public and Historical Records in Canada," *Canadian Historical Review* 25, no. 1 (March 1944), 1.

²⁵ LAC, RG 28-A, vol. 59, Central Registry: Quarterly Report as of December 1944.

²⁶ LAC, RG 28-A, vol. 59, Central Registry: Quarterly Report as of December 1944, 31 December 1944.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, Report for the Secretary's Branch Presented to Staff Meeting on January 19th, 1944, 19 January 1944.

²⁸ LAC, RG 28-A, vol. 59, Central Registry: Quarterly Report as of December 1944.

the regular files,”²⁹ resulted in significant gaps. No one oversaw this enormous expansion with a view to writing a history.

In April 1945, Secretary of State Norman McLarty, a member of the PRC, asked C.D. Howe to establish records policies across the department. The minister contacted a number of branches but merely³⁰ requested information, rather than promoting effective policies, thereby reducing the long-term accessibility of records and the value of the eventual history.³¹

AN IMPOSSIBLE ASSIGNMENT

On 31 December 1945, Munitions and Supply merged with Reconstruction as Reconstruction and Supply. Three months later, the PRC approved its request for an official historian.³² Legal Branch chief John (“Jack”) de Navarre Kennedy had a great deal of support from the PRC and Deputy Minister Sheils. He was to outline the “evolution of the department, the difficulties encountered and experience gained, and provide suggestions and recommendations for future procedure.”³³ This direction was certainly in line with the PRC’s mandate.

Kennedy was born in London, England, in 1888, son of a barrister who became a police magistrate in London. He completed an MA at Cambridge in 1909 and was called to the bar in British Columbia in 1918 and in Ontario in 1921. He joined Munitions and Supply in 1940 as director general of the Legal Branch.³⁴ He became officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 1945, King’s Counsel (KC) in 1947, and county court judge in Peterborough, Ontario, in 1952. He died in 1979.

²⁹ LAC, RG 28-A, vol. 59, Central Registry: Quarterly Report, March 1945, 30 March 1945.

³⁰ LAC, RG 35, series 7, vol. 8, C.D. Howe to Norman McLarty, 10 April 1945.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² LAC, RG 35, series 7, vol. 5, W.E.D. Halliday, Memorandum to the Public Records Committee, 4 May 1949.

³³ *Ibid.*, W.E.D. Halliday, Memorandum to Mr. Heeney – Reconstruction and Supply: Preparation of Narratives, 19 January 1948. At the request of Secretary of State for External Affairs Lester Pearson in the autumn of 1948, an order in council of 19 January 1949 appointed Heeney his undersecretary (deputy minister).

³⁴ “John De Navarre Kennedy,” in *Canadian Who’s Who?*, IV, 502; “John de Navarre Kennedy,” www.thepeerage.com <10 March 2014>, 254.

Kennedy was certainly familiar with the department's work, but he faced a considerable task. Unlike C.P. Stacey, he was not a trained historian, but a lawyer and a writer of fiction.³⁵ He had not organized and preserved the records he would need as Stacey had done since 1940, or have the kinds of relationships with key individuals that Stacey enjoyed at National Defence. He was, moreover, to write a history of an almost-defunct department. From the start, the PRC was pressing him hard, and he had little opportunity to establish firm working relations with its members. His minimal interaction with the PRC and the department helps explain the development of the history.

Kennedy immediately realized that to understand thoroughly the department's complex organization, he needed to engage all the senior officials, but many of them ignored his inquiries. Some had no interest, held other priorities, or had destroyed relevant files.³⁶ As PRC Secretary Halliday explained to Arnold Heeney in January 1948, "It had been taken that the historical records of the units would be in good order but this had not proved to be the case; some units had no historical records and others only for a limited period, therefore a great deal of additional material had to be collected from various sources."³⁷ Evidence suggests that the minister's lack of interest in records and history may have set the tone.

By December 1947, Kennedy had completed an outline that included a preface by the minister, an introduction of the senior officers, and a foreword. In early 1948, Halliday noted that Kennedy had found that "some units had no historical records at all, and others only went up to the end of 1943 and most of such records were in poor shape."³⁸ On six units, Kennedy had nothing: Aero Meters Limited, the Clothing and Textile Production Branch, the Eldorado Mining and Refining Company Limited, Toronto Shipbuilding Co. Limited, the War Contracts Depreciation Board, and the Wartime Administrator of Canadian Atlantic Ports. Facing such poor records,

³⁵ By 1940, he had published *In the Shadow of Cheka* (Toronto: Macaulay Company, 1935) and *Crime in Reverse* (London: T. Nelson, 1939). He would go on to publish *The Rain of Death* (London: T. Nelson, 1945), and *Aids to Jury Charges* (Toronto: Canada Law Book Company, 1975).

³⁶ Halliday, Memorandum to Heeney, 19 January 1948.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ LAC, RG 35, series 7, vol. 7, Committee of the History of the Department of Munitions and Supply, 15 Dec. 1947; LAC, RG 35, series 7, vol. 5, W.E.D. Halliday, Memorandum to Mr. Gibson – Public Records Committee, 20 January 1948.

Kennedy obtained summaries of wartime activity from branch heads. He had little control over the content provided.³⁹

Short of staff and time, Kennedy could do little additional research. When Kennedy accepted the project, he was given \$10,000 in March 1946. By the start of 1948, Kennedy had nearly spent this allocation in its entirety. “Unanticipated work collecting material, the discovery that certain historical records were not in good order or unavailable and other factors had entailed substantial and unexpected increase in the time required and consequently the expenditure.”⁴⁰ The PRC passed a submission to the Privy Council to increase the allocation from \$10,000 to \$20,000.⁴¹

By 1948, Reconstruction and Supply was closing down. W.E.D. Halliday wrote to Deputy Minister C.P. Edwards in February 1948, reminding him about the responsibility to maintain records, outlining the rules about departmental records, and recommending action. Halliday and the PRC were already discussing how to dispose of the department’s business and solicitation files and the records of the War Assets Corporation, and the transfer of the remainder to National Defence.⁴²

In early October 1949, Kennedy met with Halliday and Stacey to discuss the history. The reason for Halliday’s involvement was to explain how the Public Records Committee supported the efforts of other departments in writing wartime narratives. “I read to him the various suggestions the Committee had made to departments to assist in this work, pointing out the desirability of having a confidential section which would be as objective as possible, analyze errors for the future guidance of the government.”⁴³ Halliday commented in the file that Kennedy was forthcoming in his conversation regarding the challenges he faced in completing the work. “Mr. Kennedy was very cooperative ... he mentioned that there had been considerable delays and that he had not had adequate clerical staff ... It had proved

³⁹ Halliday, Memorandum to Heeney, 19 January 1948; LAC, RG 35, series 7, vol. 5, C.P. Stacey, Memorandum to DHS, File, 6 October 1949.

⁴⁰ LAC, RG 35, series 7, vol. 5, W.E.D. Halliday, Memorandum to the Public Records Committee: Reconstruction and Supply; narrative of Munitions and Supply; further additional expenditure, 4 May 1949.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² LAC, RG 35, series 7, vol. 5, W.E.D. Halliday to Commander C.P. Edwards, 5 February 1948.

⁴³ LAC, RG 35, series 7 vol. 5, W.E.D. Halliday, Note for File: Munitions and Supply Narrative, 7 October 1949. Halliday explains in the document that he met with Kennedy on October 6th.

extremely difficult to extract required information from the files. Consequently, the narrative is uneven in content and style.”⁴⁴ After what Halliday considered a productive discussion, Kennedy agreed to collaborate with the PRC, and submit anything he prepared to Halliday for advice, “so that the final work would be in line with the wishes of the Public Records Committee.”⁴⁵

C.P. Stacey was far less optimistic after his meeting with Kennedy. When the two met on 5 October 1949, the book was already in page proof, which “of course made any major improvements in it extremely difficult.”⁴⁶ Yet improvements were needed. The manuscript read like a reference text; it conveyed nothing of the department’s dynamic wartime growth. It lacked footnotes to primary source material and references to departmental files and relied solely on officials’ narratives. Stacey worried, “It will not be a good book which can be relied on with confidence as a well-grounded record of events.”⁴⁷ Stacey felt that “this history will be of only limited value,” as it was the “result of no experienced historian having been consulted until the book was already set in type.”⁴⁸ There were large sections that Stacey could not review, as they had already been sent to the University of Toronto Press, in Kennedy’s effort to reach completion as expeditiously as possible. “It was quite possible that it will still be exposed to severe criticism when published,” despite the efforts of the PRC and Heeney.⁴⁹

Kennedy explained to Halliday and the PRC that the departmental files were too voluminous and disorganized to be useful. He did not have research assistants or much time. He welcomed the opportunity to improve the project, accommodating Stacey’s suggestions as much as possible.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, the pressure to finish the project before the department closed resulted with Kennedy submitting the manuscript prematurely, leaving little opportunity for changes.⁵¹ Both volumes of the official history appeared the next year.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ LAC, RG 35, series 7, vol. 5, C.P. Stacey, Memorandum to DHS, File, 6 October 1949.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

THE OFFICIAL HISTORY

C.P. Stacey was right to worry. The two volumes are uneven in their treatment of the department's various controls, branches, and units, as Kennedy relied on the contributions of branch heads. Each chapter outlines a unit's wartime activities, presents various statistics, and describes processes. The volumes do not refer to documentation or to the individuals who conducted the processes. There is little indication of how the units interacted with each other and with the whole.

The University of Toronto published Kennedy's history as a two-volume set. The introduction to *Volume I: Production Branches and Crown Companies* tries to place each of the department's elements within its wider context of wartime activities, but this is the only place that paints the broader picture. In the remaining chapters, each branch and company is treated in isolation, and the treatments differ widely. There are two sections in volume one, one for the Production Board and the production branches it coordinated, and the other to cover the Crown Companies.⁵² The chapters on the 17 production branches present details on the types of materials they produced or manufactured, their rates of manufacturing, their costs for producing material, and their volume of orders. A few chapters append rates of production. For the branches of the board that had divisions, there is a brief description of activities and contributions. However, the treatment is inconsistent. The 33-page chapter on the Chemical and Explosives Production Branch details the types of chemicals it produced, its research and development activities, its yearly production, and the subsidiaries that supplied raw materials. By comparison, the six-page chapter on the Defence Projects Construction Branch merely describes, briefly, construction of aerodromes, barracks, fortifications, and other defence projects.

The second section of volume one consists of 27 chapters on the crown companies created by the department during the war. These companies were incorporated to solve production problems and "surmount certain supply, purchasing and administration difficulties. They also provided a legal entity familiar to business men and permitted a degree of decentralization."⁵³ Eleven of the companies operated plants, and the rest carried out supervisory, administrative, and purchasing functions. Kennedy states that the goal of the

⁵² Kennedy, *History*, II, 286.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

section was to provide an outline of some of the duties, problems and achievements of these organizations.

In *Volume II: Controls, Services and Finance Branches, and Units Associated with the Department*, there is a chapter on each of these 35 entities that endeavours to provide “an outline of some of the duties, problems and achievements.”⁵⁴ For example, the short chapter on the Aircraft Control includes the reasons for its establishment, the manner of its implementation, its development, its handling of surplus materials, its sale of surplus aircraft, and its conclusion of activities at war’s end, as well as a timeline of orders in council and relevant dates. Even though “the activities of the [Aircraft] control grew far beyond the original purposes for which it had been created,” the chapter does not elaborate.⁵⁵

The chapter on the Chemicals Control suffers from similar shortcomings. In twenty-six pages, it explains how it managed supplies of various important chemicals and outlines demand for and uses of a number of them.⁵⁶ It also includes a section on pharmaceutical chemicals for the war and the control’s efforts in this area, as well as an extensive timeline and a chart of volumes of chemicals.⁵⁷

Kennedy was well aware of the challenges his manuscript presented, but he understood the constraints of its creation. PRC Secretary Halliday appreciated his frustration. He noted in October 1949 that Kennedy “was not entirely satisfied with the nature of the book as being uneven in its style and content.”⁵⁸

The problems that plagued development of the department’s history were substantially the result of inconsistent record keeping in many of its elements during the war. It is difficult to blame officials for overlooking administrative procedures at the start of the war, for the government rushed the department into existence to respond to a crisis. Despite the central registry’s attempt in 1943 to merge files and impose standards, many units could not or did not respond, and the situation remained chaotic. The Department of Munitions and Supply was just too large and dispersed for the Registry Office to start imposing standards late in the war. The Public Records

⁵⁴ Kennedy, *History*, II, 2.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 26–33.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 47–51.

⁵⁸ Memorandum to DHS file, 6 October 1949.

Committee encouraged development of a thorough and consistent historical narrative of the department and its constituent elements by supporting Kennedy and offering him Stacey's assistance. Even with Kennedy and the PRC's understanding of the problems, however, neither could overcome the inherent administrative limitations of the department, but the end result was at the very least a useful chronicle of and guide to a complex, jury-rigged contraption that none the less worked very effectively.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kathryn Rose is the Humanities Research Liaison Librarian for History at Memorial University of Newfoundland. She completed her PHD in history under the guidance of Geoffrey Hayes at the University of Waterloo, and MLIS at Western University. In her role at Memorial, she is involved in reference services, collection development in history and economics, library instruction, liaising with faculty for instructional support and engagement activities. She is especially passionate about discovering new pedagogical tools that assist undergraduate students in history. She is recently the Past President of the Newfoundland and Labrador Library Association, and remains heavily involved in the association's advocacy efforts.