

Quill and Quire (May, 1977)

CANADIAN CASES IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, Kenneth Kernaghan, Methuen, \$4.95 paper ISBN 0458 92230 7, 151 pp.,

In his introduction Professor Kernaghan defends the case-study method as a technique for training future administrators. He then presents 24 administrative or personnel problems ranging from a senior public servant who criticizes government policy to a junior clerk with a drinking problem. All cases are based on actual events although the names and departments have been changed except in a few instances where the personalities and issues are well known to the public.

Most cases are short, two or three pages, and the simple recitation of facts leaves out the many shades of opinion and the nuances which can make real administrative problems so difficult. The author argues that lack of information is not a fair criticism of the cases since government employees are frequently obliged to make decisions under conditions of uncertainty.

Nevertheless, reading these cases reminds one of a series of letters to Ann Landers. Some are genuinely interesting and likely to provoke discussion. Others appeal only to our morbid interest in other persons' problems. Unlike Ann Landers, however, Kernaghan makes no attempt to resolve the questions he raises. He does not even give us the satisfaction of learning the actual outcome, leaving it up to each reader to decide what should have been done in a particular case. *Gary Levy*