

Linda Kealey and Joan Sangster, eds. — *Beyond the Vote: Canadian Women and Politics*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989. Pp. 347.

During the 1960s, American empiricism approached marxian traditions when Harold Lasswell argued that politics is the study of “who gets what, when and how”. Applying such a definition to this recent collection of essays in Canadian political history leads to the conclusion that women have struggled long to achieve nothing but opposition to prevailing ideas. Editors Linda Kealey and Joan Sangster are little troubled by empiricist concerns or even the larger questions that political history raises. As contemporary left-wing feminism provides their inspiration, they prefer to alter the world rather than to understand it. Following political feminist scientist Jill Vicker’s call for a redefinition of politics, they attempt to pin down their subject by seeing political history as “all organized attempts by women to change the structure of society” (11). Conservative women thereby warrant no attention and the Liberal Party garners 16 percent of the space, half of it in a reprint of an article on Cairine Wilson now dated by the publication of a biography of the country’s first woman Senator. The other charts the sorry course of the National Federation of Liberal Women of Canada until its demise in 1973. In these two contributions, a “respectable feminist” becomes the extension of “maternal feminism” and joins a “noble effort” that had achieved none of the goals established at its founding in 1928.

In line with contemporary trends through which the women’s movement has attempted to shed its middle-class character, some of the most interesting work sheds light on the political activities of small numbers of religious and ethnic minorities, although its conclusions are equally depressing. Varpu Lindstrom-Best argues that the extraordinary political activity of Finnish immigrants derived not only from their European background, but also from the family limitation practices they employed — thereby falling into the hands of the Edward Shorter so much reviled by feminists. As might be expected of recent immigrants, their priorities were determined by their culture, but like most of the women discussed in this collection, they rebelled against patriarchal views of male socialists. Ultimately, their agitation produced little effect for history as their influence outside their language group was negligible and all succumbed to obscurity when World War Two arrived. Ruth Frager poses a more interesting question about the relationship between feminism and equality in her study of several dozen Toronto Jewish communist housewives, but is forced to conclude that Jewish identity (which she characterizes as ethnic rather than religious) combined with a hope for class gains to frustrate a fully feminist perspective. Studying the Ukrainian Women’s Organization of Canada, which was formed in 1934, Frances Swyripa shows the dictates of the nation were paramount over the individual in the manner of all nationalist groups or those deriving their political philosophy not from inalienable human rights, but from Western social thought originating in Rousseau’s general will as translated by Siéyès, Robespierre and ultimately Marx.

A conscious attempt to transcend an earlier historiographical approach to “women worthies” produces idiosyncratic results that, by concentrating on the left, make women the victims of a double ghetto. Susan Trofimenkoff’s fine essay on Thérèse Casgrain’s ill-fated leadership of the C.C.F. in Quebec is reprinted, but the search for foremothers is so apparent that even this skilful historian slips into stating that as “a feminist, Thérèse Casgrain distinguished herself from the first generation of feminists” (142). The study of Amelia Turner is less focussed because it attempts to analyze the activities of socialist and labour women in Calgary during the 1920s and 30s with the same disturbing conclusion that they fell short of the feminist ideal by

confusing electoral success with gender equity and access to power within their own movement. Even if the criterion for historical significance is effect rather than success, it is difficult to see Turner's importance. Although the first C.C.F. woman candidate in the country, she was never elected and Social Credit submerged all in that province after 1935. Left-wingers, earlier in the century, according to Janice Newton, were no more successful in gaining acceptance for their view that prostitution was sexual as well as economic exploitation. The approach of this writer posits a dichotomous female/male perspective that is overly simplistic in its treatment of a complex and longstanding social phenomenon which sometimes erupts as a societal problem. In examining "the Canadian socialist movement" (whatever that is) between 1904 and 1914, Linda Kealey claims that she is discussing "two major parties", but the Social Democratic Party had less than five thousand members after World War One and more than three thousand were Finns outside the mainstream of Canadian political life. Neither here nor in the equally small Socialist Party of Canada did a recognized women's movement develop.

That this collection fully reflects contemporary feminist concerns is indicated by the meandering lead essay where Vickers assumes an equivocal stance while ruminating about women's political involvement during the past three decades. The inclusion of a section on women's peace activism from before World War One until the founding of the Voice of Women in 1960 and another on the activist tradition among Ontario farm women in the twentieth century further suggests what the cover — showing a protest march of the Housewife's Consumer League — implies: women in Canada have succeeded in being no more than an unsuccessful lobby in social movements, political parties, or in their influence on state activities. Such pessimism may be functional to the disarray in contemporary feminism in general or even within academe, but it is a distortion of history with little relevance to most Canadian women. In attempting to surpass previous paradigms and assert the importance of frequently obscure women through documentation rather than interpretation, this collection relegates women to a position as a double minority in which there is no connection between the past and the present for the majority of people it purports to address. Historiography that presents its subjects ever striving but never attaining an ideal that remains elusive, or judges them as failures while serving the critical perspective of a later period, cannot last long.

The only escape from this antithesis lies in developing new questions, not only about women acting alone or in concert with other women, but through their interaction with men in support of the positive ideals they espoused. While attempts to transcend the party system in Canada have gone nowhere, the effects of democratizing party activities and finances need to be explored. We also remain ignorant about the growing involvement of women in government, despite some excellent work about the recent past by political scientists. In Canada, World War Two appears to have facilitated a flow of skilled women into important Civil Service positions in a manner similar to the New Deal era in the United States, but there is no certainty in the Canadian experience at this point. The development of the interventionist state, late in the nineteenth century, suggests further lines of inquiry. As the traditional divorce between the public and the private collapsed in the wake of new programs designed to assist larger numbers of people, the lives of many women improved in contradictory ways. While the struggles of women in all political parties for full participation have not yet been fully documented, the relationship between women and the positive state is more likely to produce findings that are not so black in their implications. If the history of public policy,

administrative law and enactment or legal matters is avoided, especially at a time when poverty is becoming feminized, feminist historians risk fossilization in the manner of Henri Bourassa, when his views came increasingly to appeal only to that small Quebec minority accepting his middle-class nationalist and anti-feminist assumptions. If history as legitimation is not channelled into new approaches, the only dialogue remaining will recall the experience of Canadian missions in China — the dialogue of the deaf and the dumb.

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Egon F. Kunz — *Displaced Persons: Calwell's New Australians*. Sydney and Toronto: Pergamon Press for Australian National University Press, 1988. Pp. xxi, 285.

Between 1947 and 1954, some 180,000 persons displaced by war in eastern and central Europe settled in Australia. Almost all of these immigrants migrated under a scheme with special selection criteria and relocation controls. This scheme, launched by Arthur Calwell, the country's first minister of Immigration (1945-1949), is the subject of this book. The author, who came to Australia under the scheme, has published extensively on the fate of Australia's displaced persons.

He uses samples, surveys and statistics generated by other researchers and government agencies. He also created a sample of his own: some 5,800 adult males who arrived aboard 12 non-randomly selected transport ships. Some 1,800 of these were sent questionnaires in a 20-year follow-up. Data analysis, though extensive, is descriptive. The most compelling reading is the comments by refugees culled from numerous sources.

The context in which the migrants began their odyssey identifies the peoples affected by war and persecution. The Australia in which they ended up is also portrayed. Thirteen ethnic groups from which almost all came are also described. For example, the ruptures which displaced millions of Poles and the factors which drove 60,000 of them to Australia are examined. Brief reference to displaced migrations to Canada and elsewhere is also made.

The author stresses that not only did Australia's intake feature numerous ethnic groups, but that the migrants from these groups were not typical cross-sections. Each, to use the author's category, was made up of a number of discreet "vintages" with distinctive attributes in terms of gender ratios, age, class and occupation. Some were not even properly identified, with Russians mixed in with those listed as Ukrainians and Hungarians, sometimes referred to as "Balts", a term more properly attached to arrivals from the Baltic, namely Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

In Australia, the host group, which had practiced exclusivist immigration policies and which, despite its overwhelmingly British origins, could even hurl xenophobic epithets at English immigrants, was not disposed to welcome the European influx. Calwell was convinced that underpopulated, labour-short white Australia could only survive and prosper in the post-war world through a rapid infusion from Europe. But