Alderson. While Alderson applauds the reliability of the book's judgements and perceptions, its frequent going "astray in matters of detail" (p. xiii) has prevented his use of an adapted photographic reprint of the original. Alderson has therefore corrected inaccurate details, substantially rewritten several passages, added editor's notes and footnotes where helpful as well as over sixty new illustrations, and updated booklists. Among several appendices to the edition, Alderson has included "Some Additional Notes on Victorian and Edwardian Times," with discussion of the new publishing style of the early nineteenth century (e.g., Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge) with the advent of machine printing and mechanized transport; the awarding of books as prizes; and the emergence in mid-century of children's literature as a "subject" of investigation. Alderson's various sorts of revisions have made more accurate and up-to-date an important reference work for those interested in children's literature.

Murray J. Evans has written articles on Malory's Morte D'Arthur *and reviews on children's literature. He teaches medieval literature, Shakespeare, composition, and children's literature at the University of Winnipeg.*

Canadian Labour History for Children

WENDY R. KATZ

One Proud Summer, Marsha Hewitt and Claire Mackay. The Women's Press, 1981. 159 pp. $6.95 paper. ISBN 0-99961-048-7.

Goodbye Sarah, Geoffrey Bilson. Illus. by Ron Berg. Kids Can Press, 1981. 64 pp. $3.95 paper. ISBN 0-919964-38-9.

Children's books with independent and assertive female protagonists no longer sound a surprising note. They have been around for several years now, most probably because of the relatively high proportion of women writers of children's literature and an increasingly popular feminist consciousness. This is not to say that men have not created their share of strong girl characters, but simply to acknowledge the clear female constant in children's literature, its literary criticism, and its teaching. Fictional variations on the theme of growing up female have become a staple of book publishers' lists. But radical feminist literature — literature that focuses not only on women but on labour unions, and on reforms in church and state — now that is a different thing

altogether. This is what makes Marsha Hewitt and Claire Mackay's *One Proud Summer* the unique publication it is. Add not a small afterthought — the book is extremely well written — and you have an unusual, welcome and important extension to the range of Canadian (as well as American and British) adolescent fiction.

One Proud Summer traces the fortunes of Lucie Laplante, a thirteen year old mill worker in Valleyfield, Quebec, during the three-month strike at Montreal Cottons in 1946. This particular strike, chiefly over the right to unionize, seems especially suitable to a fictional rendering for children. Many of Montreal Cotton's employees were children, and the leading role given to the young workers in the story is true to the spirit of the historical event. A five-page "Historical Note," written by Marsha Hewitt, who teaches Canadian labour history at Vanier CEGEP in Montreal, serves to familiarize readers with the background and essential details of the strike. Further supplementary material comes in the form of a series of photographs courtesy of the Public Archives of Canada and Madeleine Parent (both Kent Rowley and Madeleine Parent figure in the book) and a checklist of relevant non-fiction, fiction, drama, songs, journals, newspapers, films, and slides. One can imagine the book being the animating centre of a classroom study on Canadian labour history.

As the oldest child in the Laplante family, Lucie is forced to leave school and enter the local mill when her father dies, leaving his working wife as sole supporter of the three children and their grandmother. Lucie, still grieving over the death of her father, is confused by her sudden loss of childhood and abrupt plunge into the factory world. She longs for the satisfying pleasures of school, where she excelled, and envies even the fractious squabbling of her younger sister and brother. The conditions of her employment are dreadful: the hours are long, the pay is low, the weaving room is hot, damp, dusty, and noisy, and she is plagued by an oppressive and humiliating foreman, Angus MacGregor, who calls her "dummy," idiot," and "Frenchie" so often that she begins to question her own worth. Then the United Textile Workers of America comes to Montreal Cottons and Lucie's pride is gradually regained by means of her involvement in the textile workers' strike. And throughout it all, there is no material for the keen-nosed sleuth on the lookout for heavy-handed writing.

Valleyfield, Quebec, was a one-industry town in 1946, so Dominion Textile Company, which controlled Montreal Cottons, controlled virtually all of the local families. As the conflict in the novel deepens, and Lucie's mother and grandmother gradually become involved, the strike slowly enters into and occupies their lives. The ordinary girl making fudge at home and the courageous girl enduring tear gas attacks in the street are the same person, and the battle of the latter is better understood because of the domestic background.

When the strike ends in victory for the union, Lucie feels "different

inside," although she knows she is visibly the same girl as before. The book ends, significantly, back in the weaving room; we are not allowed to forget that this girl is a worker. The noise, the heat, and the machines are all the same. Nothing seems to have changed; but here Lucie knows this is not so: "It might look the same, she thought, but it doesn't feel the same." It is her consciousness that has changed; and other changes are certain to come.

Marsha Hewitt, the author, with Bill Freeman, of *Their Town: The Mafia, The Media and The Party Machine,* and Claire Mackay, the author of three books of fiction for children, *Exit Barney McGee, Mini-Bike Hero,* and *Mini-Bike Racer,* have written an intelligent, compassionate, and inspiring book. My guess is that many adults will be lining up behind their children to read it.

The same enthusiasm cannot be mustered for *Goodbye Sarah,* by Geoffrey Bilson, the story of two friends who are parted by events surrounding the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919. This book, aimed at children between 8 and 11 — a much younger audience than that for *One Proud Summer* — suffers from comparison with the Hewitt-Mackay book because it is of necessity much less complex. But it must be said that there is also something missing in the writing itself. Although the book is readable and historically interesting, it is simply not moving. It ought to be: a striking family suffers and goes hungry (the son collapses from malnutrition); the landlord turns them out when they can't pay the rent; they must eventually move to another province altogether to find work. But the characters, sadly, do not live, and the plot is monotonous.

Mary, the first-person narrator of *Goodbye Sarah,* is involved in the strike only in a passive way. As a member of one of the strikers' families, she receives (and relates to the reader) news about the strike, but she is not in a position to act directly. The major conflict in the story, between Mary and Sarah, the daughter of an anti-striking neighbour, is convincing but not compelling. The horror of "troops patrolling the streets", "machine guns at key intersections", and "daily battles between workers and police" that York University history professor Irving Abella writes of in his Afterword is simply not felt.

Yet both books, notwithstanding my reservations about the literary merits of *Goodbye Sarah,* are worth reading. They question the social order in a provocative way and will certainly make children think more critically about workers' struggles and strikes. They may also send readers on to history books. With luck, *One Proud Summer* may set a standard that other writers will aim to follow.

Wendy R. Katz teaches children's literature at Saint Mary's University, has written in the areas of children's literature, nineteenth-century fiction, and women's studies, and is one of the editors of Introduction to Literature: British, American and Canadian *(Holt, Rinehart).*