

encapsulate even the most dramatic crises with a fog of obfuscation. Looking at events through Sir Robert's life does not make history come alive; rather, it makes our past dull and impenetrable. English and Saunders do their best by Borden, but Sir Robert remains a very poor route to Canadian history.

By all means purchase these books and put them in your libraries. Read them and recommend them to those who would know Borden. But, if your objective is to inspire interest in Canada amongst those whose profession is not scholarship, let Sir Robert wait while attention is focussed on dramatic and fascinating personalities like Howe, Mackenzie, Papineau, Woodsworth, Big Bear, McGee, Dumont, Aberhart, Crowfoot and Diefenbaker.

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## Women In Canadian Politics

*RONNIE KENNEDY*

*Women In Canadian Life: Politics*, Jean Cochrane. Fitzhenry & Whiteside Limited, Toronto, 1977. 96 pp. ISBN 0-88902-375-1.

*The Canadians: Emily Murphy*, Donna James. Fitzhenry & Whiteside Limited, Toronto, 1977. 62 pp. ISBN 0-88902-234-8.

*Manitobans In Profile: Edith Rogers*, Gail Konantz. Peguis Publishers Limited, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 1981. 52 pp. ISBN 0-919566-76-7.

Canadian women have achieved some fine results in the political arena in the last seventy-odd years, but their achievements have not been widely recognized. All three of the books reviewed here deal with women in politics and two of them do it so well that reading history becomes an adventure in discovery as well as a worthwhile lesson.

*Politics* is one of four books in a series called *Women in Canadian Life* and is edited by Jean Cochrane and Pat Kincaid. It is a compendium of facts, pictures, comments and quotes that traces the political life of Canadian women from the earliest immigrants through the era of the suffragettes to the present time. *Emily Murphy* by Donna James is a biography. One of eighty-eight volumes in the continuing series, *The Canadians*, it illustrates the life and times as well as the political career of Emily Murphy. One of the many unsung heroes of Canadian history, Emily Murphy joins the ranks of notable men and women whose lives this series depicts. Gail Konantz also chooses biography to illustrate the life and political career of Manitoba's *Edith Rogers*. This is the third biography in a series called *Manitobans In Profile* which is edited by Keith Wilson.

Viewed as a textbook for grades nine through twelve, *Politics* introduces a broad subject in a concise and chronological order. It serves as a showcase for the political contributions of Canadian women alongside their better known male counterparts. Each of the eleven chapters is followed by a section of comment and suggestion. Thoughts and plans are offered "For Consideration" and "For Action" as well as suggested reading material which centres around the events covered in the preceding chapter. The final chapter leaves the Canadian scene to briefly highlight the political activities of women in other nations such as England, India and Israel, to name a few. This is a very valuable feature in a book written for the high school students of the '80's, coming as they do from many diverse ethnic backgrounds. Jean Cochrane expresses the facts clearly and concisely. The numerous illustrations and photographs prevent the book from becoming a dull rendition of "who's who" in Canadian politics.

In short, *Politics* offers an overview of the political careers of dozens of Canadian women in all three levels of government, from Emily Murphy to Charlotte Whitton and Flora McDonald. Although necessarily brief, the treatment is eloquent and provides a jumping-off point for further investigation into the lives of the women it portrays.

Emily Murphy is one woman well worth investigating in more detail and Donna James' biography provides all the background of that fascinating woman's life. The small volume is packaged attractively for students from the age of about twelve or thirteen. In my own case, I enjoyed being introduced to the life of this remarkable Canadian after completing a very well-rounded education which entirely overlooked her. The accomplishments of Emily Murphy were so numerous and far-reaching that it is difficult to understand the mere footnote to which Canadian history books of the past have relegated

her. If Ms. James' small book gets the attention it deserves, then all will change and Emily Murphy will become at least as well known as Susannah Moodie and Laura Secord.

A keen observer of the social conditions of her time, Emily Murphy published articles and reviews as well as popular books under the pen name, "Janey Canuck". *The Black Candle* was based on her own research into drug addiction and trafficking and is widely regarded as the first definitive work on this subject in Canada. In the forefront of the women's suffrage movement from the very beginning, she didn't stop with securing women's right to vote but carried her efforts beyond the Canadian Judicial System to the Privy Council of England where, in 1929, the decision was made that enabled Canadian women to be appointed to the Senate. She was the first woman to become a Police Magistrate in the British Empire.

Despite her years of humanitarian service as a Police Magistrate and Judge of the Juvenile Court, despite all her achievements, neither the government of MacKenzie King nor that of R.B. Bennett saw fit to appoint her to the Senate. Perhaps her inspiring biography in this distinguished series will compensate for that injustice.

Donna James has a storyteller's knack for making biography read as easily and interestingly as an adventure story. As compact as it is absorbing, the flowing text is accompanied by dozens of photographs of Emily Murphy and her family as well as the towns and cities of turn-of-the-century Canada. The pictures are clearly labelled and throughout the text run commentary and questions designed to provoke wide-ranging discussion of the events of that time. Particularly appropriate as a text for Canadian Studies or History, *Emily Murphy* is well suited to the reading level of students from Junior High School through Grade Twelve.

The political achievements of Edith Rogers are certainly as noteworthy if not as numerous as those of her fellow Westerner, Emily Murphy. From a socialite and charity fund raiser, Edith Rogers became one of the earliest Social Workers in Manitoba, in fact long before the term "Social Worker" had been coined. Beginning with the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 up to the end of the Second World War, she gave her time and considerable talent to helping families in need. Women, children and servicemen returning from the war were only part of the cross section of Manitobans who felt comfortable calling on her in her small Main Street office. Working with the Red Cross, the Salvation Army and the Land Resettlement Board of Manitoba, Edith's ability to cut through red tape earned her the gratitude of everyone she helped. In 1920 she became the first

woman to be elected to the Manitoba Legislative Assembly. In 1922 she accomplished her main piece of legislative work in the form of the Child Welfare Act.

Although the text is generously interspersed with pictures and excerpts of Edith's speeches in the Legislature, as well as quotes from the Winnipeg newspapers and newsmakers of the day, yet it does not really illuminate the personality of Edith Rogers. The genealogy on page fifty is very helpful in sorting out Edith's relatives but would be more appropriate at the beginning of the book. The author hints at what might be a very interesting personal and family life but never elaborates on it. One wonders what problems Edith Rogers had to contend with in "her private battle to control her dependance on alcohol"? A closer look at Edith Rogers, the woman, might provide for a more interesting biography of Edith Rogers, the politician. As it stands, this book presents a somewhat tedious account of the career of Edith Rogers, M.L.A. It is written for a high school audience and is suitable as supplemental reading in History or Canadian Studies.

*Emily Murphy* provides the most enjoyable reading of all three books, offering as it does a literate and exciting account of a fascinating woman. If, however, you could choose only one book to introduce high school students to the subject of women's role in Canadian politics, then *Women In Canadian Life: Politics* will do that very well, and on a much wider scope than any biography.

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## Canadian Lives

*PHILOMENA HAUCK*

*Catherine Schubert*, Vicky Metcalf. Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1978. 62 pp. illus. \$3.00 paper (The Canadians Series) ISBN 0-88902-243-7.

*Daughter of the Old Pioneer*, Terry Leeder. Illus. by Deborah Drew-Brook. Dundurn Press, 1979. 63 pp. \$2.95 paper. (Frontiers and Pioneers Series) ISBN 0-919670-42-3.