

Labour

Journal of Canadian Labour Studies

Le Travail

Revue d'Études Ouvrières Canadiennes



Veronica Strong-Boag, The Last Suffragist Standing: The Life and Times of Laura Marshall Jamieson

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Volume 84, automne 2019

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1066553ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.1353/llt.2019.0048>

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Éditeur(s)

Canadian Committee on Labour History

ISSN

0700-3862 (imprimé)

1911-4842 (numérique)

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Citer ce compte rendu

Kvill, K. (2019). Compte rendu de [Veronica Strong-Boag, The Last Suffragist Standing: The Life and Times of Laura Marshall Jamieson]. *Labour / Le Travail*, 84, 352–354. <https://doi.org/10.1353/llt.2019.0048>

expansions of Employment Standards Act as a substitute for large-scale collective bargaining. This is different from the Progressive Conservative approach under Mike Harris and now Doug Ford, who would prefer employers “educate themselves” on workplace standards and provincial labour law. While these policy differences may not have reversed the larger trajectory towards greater labour market flexibility for employers, they nonetheless have important consequences for labour. The Wynne Liberal’s Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act (2017), for instance, did contain an important raise in the minimum wage as well as various protections for the more precarious segments of the workforce.

Focusing solely on these differences, however, as much mainstream political economy literature inside and outside of Canada does, comes at the expense of limiting the scope to only those issues and policy areas that are openly contested in the electoral arena, leaving aside important areas of elite consensus that structure neoliberal governance. These areas of consensus include not only fiscal austerity, as highlighted above, but also the need for an inflation-targeting monetary policy, the commodification and privatization of public goods and infrastructure and, in general, the expansion of competitive market relations into more and more spheres of social life. *Divided Province* enables the reader to grasp these fundamental continuities in the province’s political trajectory and, in this sense, is a great resource for students and researchers trying to understand contemporary developments in provincial politics and policy within the broader context of neoliberal capitalism.

BRENT TOYE
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Veronica Strong-Boag, *The Last Suffragist Standing: The Life and Times of Laura Marshall Jamieson* (Vancouver: UBC Press 2018)

VERONICA STRONG-BOAG’S *The Last Suffragist Standing* is a prime example of how to write a biography of a woman who deserves one, but leaves few sources behind. Strong-Boag’s work highlights the challenges of writing women’s biographies and how we might overcome the lack of sources produced by and about women of earlier decades to examine their lives and impact. Using the sources that were available to her, Strong-Boag takes an approach that places Laura Marshall Jamieson within the context of the world she inhabited. Strong-Boag’s biography of Jamieson is particularly relevant in today’s age of feminist politics where few women leaders experience consecutive terms in office and male provincial leaders suggest that women are not experienced in tactical politics. It is striking how many of the challenges Jamieson faced continue to plague women’s participation in organized politics.

Strong-Boag sets out to tell four broad stories, each of which is expertly woven throughout the book in order to explain how a radical woman picked her politics. The first focus centres on the evolution of Jamieson’s political consciousness and seeks to establish the changing natures of political allegiances. Strong-Boag follows Jamieson’s journey from an orphaned farm child raised by older siblings and relatives to her work as a school teacher in mining towns and her involvement with university women’s groups. We see Jamieson’s feminism broaden beyond educated middle-class white women as she moves with her husband, lawyer and juvenile court judge Jack Jamieson, to Burnaby and forms networks with other local feminist radicals. The personal experiences of Jamieson’s married

life, like the death of an infant child, her contraction of tuberculosis and stint in a sanatorium, and early widowhood, are peppered through Strong-Boag's narrative, although connections between these personal experiences and Jamieson's political evolution are hinted at, Strong-Boag seems to downplay the impact of these pivotal life events.

Strong-Boag's second goal situates Jamieson within the first women's movement and the continuation of the movement after the gaining the vote. She notes that Jamieson was critical of Nellie McClung for her narrowmindedness, and Emily Murphy for her senatorial ambitions. Jamieson found kindred spirits in other left-leaning feminists like Agnes Mcphail and the Woodsworth family. As one of the few suffragists in Canada who stood for elections after enfranchisement, Laura was in good company with several other British Columbia suffragists like Mary Ellen Smith and Helena Gutteridge who drew on their lasting networks to form strong political and social ties. Strong-Boag notes that Jamieson herself downplayed her own participation as a prominent women's suffrage promoter and challenges that by highlighting Jamieson's frequent public talks during her early years as a wife and mother. Jamieson's commitment to female equality did not end with suffrage; her commitment to the rights of women and children deepened as she participated in PTAs, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and a number of women's political and educational organizations. Besides promoting equal pay and mothers' pensions, Jamieson advocated for access to birth control and sex education in schools. Strong-Boag clearly highlights Jamieson's continued commitment to women's equality and children's wellbeing throughout her life and her continued advocacy as an MLA and city councillor.

The third aim of this biography examines the relationship between Canada's left, the labour movement, and feminism. Jamieson is portrayed throughout the book as an ardent feminist and ally to the working classes who was critical of her own middle class. Strong-Boag uses Jamieson's biography to draw attention to the gendered views of political parties, including the CCF who advocated for such things as equal pay in parliament but retained a gendered labour division internally. The exploration of women's roles, and the work of one woman, in party politics highlights not only where space existed for women but where women and the working people that socialist parties supported fell short. Strong-Boag also critiques histories of the left which have also ignored the importance of gender as a category of analysis.

Strong-Boag's fourth and best-woven thread explores misogyny, anti-feminism, and racism present in the institutions Jamieson was involved in and minds of the people she interacted with. This not only draws attention to the continued systematic and societal suppression of women's participations in public life and politics and Jamieson's role in fighting them, but also draws attention to the ways that Laura benefited from her own privilege as a middle-class white woman. Jamieson used her privilege to fight for the rights of other women, children, working-class people, and eventually Asian-Canadians in British Columbia. However, Strong-Boag does not excuse Laura's possible connections through her husband Jack with the eugenics movement. Instead, this is used to highlight Jamieson's changing and broadening world view. As a biography of a white woman written in post-Truth and Reconciliation Commission Canada, Strong-Boag also highlights Jamieson's general lack of interest and interaction with the Indigenous populations who

were dispossessed to the advantage of her family and those whom she supported. While attention to gender, race, and class as categories of analysis are common today, they are not often applied in biographies. Strong-Boag's additional use of privilege as a category of analysis is also noteworthy.

By placing Jamieson in the context of the world around her, the reader gets a strong sense of the social and political events that impacted her life. The one downside to what I would call a "contextual biography" is that much of the book reads more like a history of feminist politics in British Columbia during the early 20th century than a biography of one woman. The book is often not about Jamieson, and the impact of her personal experiences on her strong social democratic views are not highlighted as strongly as they could be. Jamieson occasionally takes a back seat in her own biography to more prominent friends, like Agnes Macphail, and the causes (birth control, equal pay, international peace) and politics (CCF, universal suffrage, education) she supported. However, there is also strength in this contextual approach.

Ultimately, this book pulls double duty as a history of women and politics in BC and a history of women on the left. The Vancouver focus of this book also makes it a particularly local history that occasionally reaches out to the Prairies by highlighting the emotional and political importance of connections and friendships between women. By the end of the biography, the reader gets the sense that this is how the modest and compassionate Laura Marshall Jamieson would have wanted a book about her to be.

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Daniel J. Clark, *Disruption in Detroit: Autoworkers and the Elusive Postwar Boom* (Champaign-Urbana: University of Illinois Press 2018)

THAT UNIONIZED INDUSTRIAL workers, especially autoworkers, enjoyed steady work at good wages after the Second World War has become a truism of North American history, the starting point for innumerable monographs, articles, and studies. What Daniel J. Clark's provocative new book proposes is that – maybe they didn't?

Few groups of workers have been as analyzed, eulogized, and scrutinized as the American autoworker. The recent closure of the iconic Lordstown plant, where in the earlier 1970s young, blue-collar workers protested GM speedups in what some observers hoped was a marriage of counterculture attitudes and shopfloor militancy, brought yet another round of commentaries in the *New York Times* and beyond. But Clark argues that historians have largely failed to tell their story accurately, telling, in his eyes, a story about a blue-collar aristocracy, largely white and male, advancing economically, interested in bowling, hunting, and fishing, and concerned with keeping women and racialized workers in their place. Historians have argued, incorrectly, in Clark's view, that these workers had an appetite for a radical vision but were instead shuffled towards consumerism and away from militancy by the Reutherite leadership of the UAW. Whether this is an accurate summary of the historiographical depiction of postwar autoworkers and the extent to which autoworkers were interested in radical action and shopfloor control are open, important questions. However, Clark's assertion that "no research focuses in any sustained way on autoworkers themselves," is misleading and inaccurate. It ignores important work, some of which Meyer cites,