Labour
Journal of Canadian Labour Studies
Le Travail
Revue d'Études Ouvrières Canadiennes

Donica Belisle, Purchasing Power: Women and the Rise of Canadian Consumer Culture (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020)

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Volume 89, printemps 2022

URI : https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1090035ar
DOI : https://doi.org/10.52975/llt.2022v89.0014

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Éditeur(s)

Canadian Committee on Labour History

ISSN

0700-3862 (imprimé)
1911-4842 (numérique)

Découvrir la revue

Citer ce compte rendu

Elvins, S. (2022). Compte rendu de [Donica Belisle, Purchasing Power: Women and the Rise of Canadian Consumer Culture (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020)]. *Labour / Le Travail*, *89*, 289–290. https://doi.org/10.52975/llt.2022v89.0014

updated with those discussed in Wien's forward (though without divisions between primary and secondary sources, etc.). Together, these elements make acquiring this new edition worthwhile, even when already owning the original French one.

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Donica Belisle, *Purchasing Power: Women and the Rise of Canadian Consumer Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020)

In *Purchasing Power*, Donica Belisle makes a significant contribution to the growing literature on the history of consumption in Canada. Drawing on theories of intersectionality, Belisle demonstrates how debates about consumption are also essentially about power. Consuming allowed some groups – in particular, white Anglophone women – to assert their central role in the nation and to sideline those with less direct claims to citizenship. Belisle situates her study within international debates about consumer citizenship and modernity. She explores how participation in organizations like the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), campaigns for conservation during World War I, home economics education, and the co-operative movement helped white Canadian women assert their rights and exert influence over debates about national issues. Belisle argues that these women viewed consumption as a route to personal and collective liberation and celebrated their skills in conservation, thrift, and comparison shopping. They drew upon maternalist rhetoric, as Belisle demonstrates, to push for change within the existing system but not to challenge capitalism itself.

The women who participated in consumer organizations were typically those in positions of privilege, and it is only occasionally that we get a glimpse of women from other class positions or racialized groups. Belisle is careful to note that her study focuses mainly on the experiences of white, middle-class, and English-speaking women. It would be intriguing to know more about how French Canada participated in efforts to build nationhood through consuming habits. The chapter on mobilization and conservation during World War I, in particular, raises questions about whether Anglophone organizations like the Montréal Women's Club, that vowed to cut unnecessary expenditures, were truly representative of sentiments in Québec. Belisle makes an effort to draw on sources from coast to coast, particularly in the chapter studying home economics curricula across the country. Post-secondary domestic science programs provided lessons in shopping, interior decorating, and household budgeting, further solidifying the notion that homemaking involved purchasing household goods and "being knowledgeable about, and possibly receptive towards, the domestic offerings of industrial capitalism." (83) Field trips to agricultural fairs or department stores allowed students to practice their skills. Classrooms outfitted with Canadian-made appliances like a Canuck bread mixer or McClary stove encouraged them to think of labour-saving devices as "natural and desirable components of Canadian homes." (85) A chapter highlighting the experiences of rural women and the Women's Institute movement further helps to broaden the study's examination of consumption beyond the generally well-documented experiences of those in cities like Toronto or Vancouver.

Belisle argues that consumption had many meanings for Canadian women, offering "liberation, morality, solidarity, pleasure, civic influence,

and distinction." (16) What is striking throughout this study is the degree to which the pendulum swung away from pleasure and indulgence and much more towards regulation and guilt. Consuming has always been a site of tension, and female consumers in particular have faced criticism for being easily distracted by shiny baubles and ephemeral fashions. The organizations that formed the bulk of Belisle's examples were, on the whole, preoccupied with controlling and tightly directing women's shopping. The WTCU's emphasis on "sober consumption" did allow for the occasional scoop of ice cream, but most of the money saved from stopping men from drinking was to be put towards respectable pursuits and useful items for the family as a whole. Women's groups during World War I decried excess in both eating and fashion, calling for women to become "[a]n Army of Savers" (65) to complement the platoons of male troops at the front. Well into the 1920s, a decade usually associated with high living and modern style, the women's club press made passing references to the beauty of silk fabrics, but devoted much more energy to emphasizing modesty, simplicity, and austerity in dress. Belisle highlights the participation of rural consumers in the mass market, yet for the most part, Homemakers Clubs and Women's Institutes emphasized frugality and self-control. Participation in patriotic efforts like "Buy at Home" movements did give women permission to buy, but the items featured were generally those viewed as necessities, not frills. Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island's campaigns encouraging local buying highlighted area-produced foods, blankets, and brooms (112–113), hardly items of indulgence. The failure of consumer cooperatives to recognize the popular appeal of convenience goods and their tendency to judge poorer housewives as lacking discipline further reflected a deep-seated uneasiness with the idea of allowing shoppers unfettered access to the market.

This emphasis on restricting consumption is not so much a fault of Belisle's analysis as reflective of a distinct Anglo-Canadian culture. It perhaps seems fitting that while Americans were indulging in the "Land of Desire" described by William Leach and other scholars, Canadians were more likely to associate consumer citizenship with restraint. Canadian nationalism has in some circles been defined by a staunch rejection of the seductive pleasures of American advertising, magazines, movies, and goods. In the popular view, American capitalist aggression and rampant individualism help to draw a line between virtuous Canadians and their materialistic neighbours south of the border. Consuming responsibly could be viewed as another way for English Canadians to define themselves in opposition to Americans. Belisle concludes her study with an exploration of the possibilities and limits of political consumerism. Canadian women drew on traditional notions of maternalism, and even as they pushed for more say in economic matters, they rarely challenged conventional gender roles. Citizen consumers also reinforced notions of racial privilege, defining "proper" taste as something that was exclusively white. This work raises questions for future researchers, who will be able to explore how groups excluded from this vision of consumer citizenship negotiated the market and dominant culture in Canada. Belisle writes very clearly and accessibly, drawing on theory but not descending into jargon. This volume could easily be assigned in the undergraduate classroom and will be of much interest to scholars in the fields of gender studies and Canadian social history.

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https://doi.org/10.52975/llt.2022v89.0014