

for Vernadsky, but on page 147, we are told that it got in the way of his work. We are given little sense of what he was doing in St. Petersburg after the Bolsheviks took power, and no explanation at all of his decision to go to Paris in 1922. Most alarming of all is a nine-page section on relations between the Academy of Sciences and the Bolsheviks in which Vernadsky is lost entirely. It is here, especially, that one recalls the trying circumstances under which the manuscript was completed. Nevertheless the overall approach is sound: like other recent writers on this period, Bailes stresses the extent to which pragmatism rather than ideology guided the Bolsheviks in their early dealings with scientists and technologists.

In 1925, convinced that communism was no longer a dangerous ideology, Vernadsky returned to the USSR. As under the Tsars, he criticized the regime for its failings; he spoke out against the purges, and criticized the state of Soviet science under Stalin. Yet he was not imprisoned, and both he and his school survived. Bailes attributes his survival to several factors: he had returned from abroad voluntarily; he was a strong Russian nationalist who emphasized the importance of applied science for defence and the economy; he was a scientist of international renown; and perhaps most important in Stalin's eyes, he was not a plotter. Later, Vernadsky deplored the slowness with which the USSR began to pursue research in atomic energy, and called for co-operation with American scientists.

The book ends not with a conclusion but with a final chapter on Vernadsky's legacy. Unfortunately but perhaps understandably, there are some structural problems here. It may well be that the war and the revolution were responsible for a major shift in his work and thinking, from an exclusive concern with non-living matter before 1914 to a concern with the relationship between living matter and the rest of nature from the mid-twenties onwards; it must be said, however, that no adequate basis for this claim was laid in the appropriate chapter. Also there are hints here that Vernadsky's decision to return to the USSR may have had a good deal to do with his inability to secure support either in France or America for the establishment of a laboratory to study the chemical relations between living and inert matter. Here again, one wishes that this information had been supplied at the proper moment. Had Bailes been able to work for a few months longer, the book would surely have had a more satisfying conclusion. None of this should take away any of the credit due to his research assistant for helping to bring the project to completion despite what must have been an enormous emotional strain.

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Terry Crowley. *Agnes Macphail and the Politics of Equality*. Toronto: James Lorimer and Company,

Ltd., 1990. \$35.00 cloth, \$16.95 paper.

I know I do not look a day over forty-five, but in 1931, I think, when I was nine or thereabouts, I saw Agnes Macphail. Mother pointed her out to me when she boarded the Owen Sound car at Medonte. She spent most of the trip chatting with the brakeman. The important thing was the recognition factor. Mother would not have known any other M.P. in those circumstances, not R.B. Bennett, not Mackenzie King, still less what's-his-name, her own federal member.

Agnes Macphail was our first and often our only female M.P., but her importance in Canadian history went far beyond that and it is fitting that there is a new biography, asking contemporary questions from a contemporary viewpoint and contemporary values, to supplement the breezy, discursive, highly partisan, and still readable *Ask No Quarter*, the Margaret Stewart and Doris French biography of 1959.

Agnes Macphail grew up on a Grey County farm where she learned to hate housework and had the usual, in those years, difficulty in persuading her parents to incur the useless expense of sending a girl, who would inevitably get married anyway, to high school. She won, and went to Owen Sound Collegiate. Then it was Stratford Normal and ten years of teaching in rural schools during which she became more and more involved in the farmers' movement. These were the years of post-war radicalism in Canada

when the United Farmers of Ontario went into politics and formed the one-term Farmer/Labour government under E.C. Drury. Agnes Macphail moved into executive positions with the United Farm Women and began a column in the *Farmers' Sun*. Like all farmers and most Liberals she knew all the arguments against tariffs and became a compelling platform speaker in the 1919 provincial election and in federal by-elections. She earned the nomination in the winnable federal riding of South Grey though her success then and in the subsequent election in 1921 shocked many of her constituents and some of her family.

In the House she encountered problems from hostile columnists and patronizing fellow M.P.'s, and early on showed her propensity to shoot from the hip, making gaffes on the platform and in debate which could embarrass her though she was apparently reluctant to either apologize or explain. During her first term she found the concerns which were to preoccupy her politically, peace and penal reform. She circulated peace material to the schools, which got her into difficulties, and inveighed against cadet training, which got her into more difficulties. She travelled to women's peace conferences and was a Canadian delegate to the League of Nations Disarmament Conference. It was with great sorrow that she brought herself to the conclusion that the Fascists might have to be opposed by force, and she shared the trauma of her CCF colleagues at having to separate from J.S. Woodsworth on the declaration of war. By then Agnes Macphail had travelled widely in Canada and Europe, was in

great demand on the U.S. lecture circuits, and had expanded her political range. Peace, and still less penal reform, were not preoccupations of her farmer constituents. She had lost none of her love for her people but she had grown out of touch. In 1940 she was defeated. The twilight of her political career was spent representing urban East York in the Ontario legislature during the short CCF upsurge in the forties. Here she had some opportunity to continue her work for penal reform. In Parliament her agitation had been fundamental in getting the Archambault commission established, though its fruitful recommendations were a long time being implemented. In the Legislature she continued to try to visit institutions and keep the subject alive. After her death her concern was continued by Donald C. MacDonald who persisted doggedly and single-handedly till he finally badgered the government into bringing Ontario into the twentieth century.

Professor Crowley adds little to our understanding of Canadian politics in the period. His concern is with Agnes Macphail's political development and especially with her role in Canadian feminism. She began in politics pugnaciously devoted to the progressivism of J.J. Morrison and Henry Wise Wood, the thesis that parties were inherently corrupt and that the way of the future was with representatives of occupational groups, kept under constituency control by referendum and recall. She had learned about industrial problems fairly early during a trip to Cape Breton at one of its most desperate times, and had shared the task of failing to persuade labour of the

value of free trade and farmers of the virtue of the eight-hour day. But her background made the move to party politics difficult. However, the UFO was withering and most Progressives were relapsing into Liberals, a fate which did not attract her. She attended the CCF convention in 1933, but the party in Ontario was in such a chaotic state that she was probably relieved to be able to run in her fifth and last successful federal election as an independent, sitting in the CCF caucus only as an associate.

An example to Canadian feminism she certainly was, but not quite the complete feminist herself, maybe not quite as much of a feminist as Professor Crowley would wish. She occasionally wondered out loud whether she had been wise to choose a career instead of home and children. She fell in love easily and men fell in love with her very easily. Her warmest and most enduring friendships were with women, but she liked men, sometimes men whose politics she despised, like R.B. Bennett, Leslie Frost, and even the Kingfish, Governor Huey Long of Louisiana. She urged women to be more aggressive in politics, but recognized the structural and economic difficulties that stood in their way. Home making would have to be a lot less arduous and husbands a lot more accommodating before two careers could get equal domestic billing. Her last and most absorbing love, for Robert Gardiner, had to be abandoned because his constituency was in Alberta, hers in Ontario. In the Legislature she worked hard for pay equity, but for most of her career her heart was more

with the unpaid homemaker and child-rearer than the low-paid industrial or retail worker. She raged when she was patronized as a woman, and one may suspect that patronizing is what she would have called the current policy of the Ontario Ministry of trying to persuade school boards to appoint more women principals.

There are some areas of her life that it might have been interesting to see further developed. She was brought up a Presbyterian, was early influenced by the Latter Day Saints, which gave her some trouble in politics, and taught United Church Sunday School. Professor Crowley begins each chapter with a marked passage from her bible, but gives us little more. She revered J.S. Woodsworth but there is no indication that her socialism derived from the social gospel. But Canada was a long way from secular in the twenties or even the thirties; religion was important to most people and could be a political minefield. Another was "temperance." Owen Sound, in a neighbouring constituency, was the last place in the province to abandon "local option." Another matter that might have been discussed was her health. Many of her ailments were quite specific, but modern medicine might throw more light on her collapses from overwork.

To succeed in a man's political world a woman had to be twice as good; a left politician in conservative Canada had to be twice as good; so a left-leaning female politician had to be four times as good! Despite her occasional tantrums and depressions, despite her verbal indiscretions and

her frequent debilitating bouts of ill health, Agnes Macphail made that level with capacity to spare. She will deserve another biography in thirty-five years, when there are new values and different questions. I hope Professor Crowley writes it and I hope he gets a better production job. Some of the misprints are quite fun, but, call me old-fashioned if you will, I would like to see "coop" revert back to being "co-op."

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Richard J. Altenbaugh. *Education for Struggle: The American Labor Colleges of the 1920s and 1930s.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990. Pp. 339. \$39.95 U.S.

Although not without successes (e.g., the Pittston strike), it is clear that the American labour movement has felt beleaguered for the past decade or so. Ten years ago, for instance, unions represented almost one-fourth of the workers; today, they represent barely one-sixth. At least in part this has been a result of the rhetoric and policies of the Reagan Administration, which, while extolling the virtues of "the American worker," accelerated the erosion of organized labour's strength and influence. Indeed, what is particularly noticeable in Michael Moore's recent film, *Roger and Me*, is