

will eagerly develop and refine our understanding of life in and around the fields and farmhouses of the settlement period.

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Back the Attack! Canadian Women During the Second World War — At Home and Abroad. JEAN BRUCE. Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1985. 182 p. illus. ISBN 007715-9682-0 \$29.95.

War today carries such connotations of terrible destruction and appalling lingering aftermath that it is salutary to be reminded that this was not always so. In *Back the Attack!*, Jean Bruce reviews Canadian women's experience during the Second World War and the chief themes to emerge are the welcome and unexpected opportunities for work after the Depression, the widening of social boundaries caused by wartime mobility, and the triumphant discovery of previously unsuspected personal resources in women who responded enthusiastically to the challenges of the war. By means of photographs, oral interviews, and contemporary documents, the author conveys the flavour of the period. The anecdotes her subjects relate cover women's lives on the home front, in the factories, in the service industries, in nursing, in the first para-military organizations, and of course in the Services themselves. They remind the reader of how much women had to cope with and how far they were moving from the traditional concept of their role: "Areas which had been completely male, like the furnace room, like the hot water tank, like the garage, all became my domain, my responsibility." (Winnipeg p. 17)

In the factory: "I was paid less than the men. In fact I was supervising young men who earned more than I did. I wrote the Board (of a munitions plant) to complain and when the reply came back, it said this was a woman's burden!" (Toronto p. 59) In the Services: "I belonged to the Alberta Women's Service Corps for nearly a year, drilling and training. There were many smiles and snide laughter." (Calgary p. 28) These verbatim extracts from interviews serve in a way as a corrective to the photographs, many of which because of their original propaganda purposes emphasize the jollity rather than the struggle of the war effort. This is not to denigrate the excellent selection culled from a wide range of archives which illuminates women's activities in general, but as Jean Bruce herself explains, there are important caveats to bear in mind. Many of the photographs clearly demonstrate their propaganda content in, for example, the carefully posed smiles of the potential recruit and her interviewers in the Canadian Women's Army Corps recruiting booth (p. 36) or the intensity of concentration assumed by two aerial photographers studying a map before a training flight at Rockcliffe Air Station, Ottawa (p. 83), or the sheer glamour of the frilly costumes of the "W Debs," entertainers of the Royal Canadian Air Force, Women's Division. (p. 91)

Overall however, the photographs evoke a mass of historical detail in a succinct form and it is this which makes them such a valuable and attractive record. It would have been worthwhile perhaps to explore something of the organization behind the taking of photographs in wartime and to know whether photographers were professionals carrying on for the duration with official blessing or, as was the case in Britain, a mixture of official and non-official photographers. In Britain's record of the home front, the former produced consistently better work and, as there are qualitative differences apparent in Jean Bruce's selection, it would be interesting to know if similar organization prevailed.

Back the Attack! is a pioneering study and it brings together a splendid anthology of memories on a surprisingly neglected subject. Its faults are those of an originator. There is so much excellent source material in both text and photographs that its presentation and layout has become rather fragmentary with many differing sizes of photographs and document excerpts running throughout the book with little linking text. In particular, the bold black headings given to the extracts tend to overwhelm the tonality of the black and white photographs. In addition, the amount of material included means the historical overview can point to, but cannot analyze at length, the fascinating implications of the sum of its parts. For a non-Canadian reader especially, it would have been useful to have had an introduction outlining the roles and expectations of women in Canada in the thirties and a conclusion which, as well as recording the immediate post-war acceptance of the "return to normal" (i.e. the roles of wife, mother, and voluntary worker), looked forward to the influence those mothers of the late forties had on the generation growing up in the fifties and sixties. Did their memories of opportunity and independence influence their daughters? It seems unlikely that they did not.

Another aspect which deserves mention is how unique Canada's contribution, and by implication, the contribution of its women was to the war effort. Canada supported Britain unstintingly and when Britain ran out of reserves of Canadian dollars, extended unique credit arrangements to prevent bankruptcy and allow continuation of Canada's contribution. Britain produced 69.5 per cent of its munitions throughout the war but Canada's munitions industry consistently outstripped all the other countries of the Empire in its production, averaging 7.9 per cent throughout in comparison with 1.6 per cent for the rest of the Empire put together. The remaining 21 per cent was bought or obtained through lend-lease arrangements with the United States. The scale of Canadian women's involvement was therefore more wide-ranging than the rest of the Empire put together. Geography meant that her service women were more likely to be involved in the European theatre of operations and the financial links meant that Canadian women were more likely to be directly involved in war production. Although the Empire is not currently fashionable, it was and remains a remarkable example of international goodwill. Despite these criticisms, Jean Bruce has written a book which, like a good dictionary of quotations, is hard to put down as one vignette of wartime life leads to another and the succession of photographs reveals its idiosyncracies of dress and lifestyle. *Back the Attack!* provides invaluable reference and entertainment for anyone interested in the history of women and the history of a nation.

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The Alaska Highway: Papers of the 40th Anniversary Symposium. KENNETH COATES, ed. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1985. 208 p. illus. ISBN 0-7748-0229-4 \$22.95.

For those readers who know little if anything about the Alaska Highway and want to correct this deficiency, the collected papers of the 40th Anniversary Symposium on the Alaska Highway should provide the perfect remedy. Within the covers of this slim volume, fifteen articles provide a wealth of information about the rationale for the highway's construction, the international and federal-provincial negotiations that preceded