

research. Only Paul Yee's analysis of the Sam Kee Company records, Neil Sutherland's use of oral history interviews, and James Huzel's analysis of police court records provide us with studies based on archival research.

There is a wealth of subjects virtually unexplored by historians of Vancouver. Many important collections of records are available to provide new evidence or to test prevalent theories. These sources must be examined by historians of the city in order to build on the contribution to Vancouver's historiography marked by the publication of this volume in Vancouver's centennial year.

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**Raising a Baby the Government Way: Mothers' Letters to the Children's Bureau, 1915-1932.** MOLLY LADD-TAYLOR. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1986. x, 212 p. ISBN 0-8135-1177-1 \$18.00 (U.S.).

"I am busy all day and all evening but my work is never done — I am tired enough to drop when night comes and in the morning look with dread upon the day ahead of me. I want to play with my babies, I want to have time to love them and laugh with them. I have wanted babies for years and now, when I'm [sic] so tired and with unfinished work every where I turn, I could scream at their constant prattle. I love them until it hurts and know that, when they are out of their babyhood, I can never forgive myself for not making more of these precious years." So wrote Mrs. N.W. of Seattle, Washington, in a letter dated 4 March 1920, one of the fascinating letters to the Children's Bureau of the United States Department of Labour that appear in Molly Ladd-Taylor's *Raising a Baby the Government Way: Mothers' Letters to the Children's Bureau, 1915-1932*. Ladd-Taylor has scoured the central registry files of the Children's Bureau in the National Archives in Washington, D.C., and has come up with a gripping collection of first hand testimony from both rural and urban working class homemakers, a group that historians, including women's historians, have long considered inarticulate.

The Children's Bureau was established by an act of Congress in 1912, at the height of the reform fervour of the Progressive Era, as an agency to investigate all aspects of child welfare in the United States. High infant mortality rates and the poor health and exploitation of American children were considered national disgraces, and the Children's Bureau soon moved beyond its purely investigatory mandate to work for more important changes in child and maternal welfare. Throughout most of its existence the Bureau, staffed almost entirely by women, stressed educational and social solutions to the problems of children and their mothers. Its greatest achievement was the passage of the federal *Sheppard-Towner Maternity and Infancy Protection Act* (1922-1929), which allowed for federal government grants to the states to provide public health facilities and education directed at the improvement of child and maternal health. The Children's Bureau also produced numerous pamphlets and bulletins on all aspects of prenatal health and child care, stressing common sense, prevention, and structured habits. The most popular publications were *Prenatal Care* (1913) and *Infant Care* (1914). These pamphlets reached literally millions of American mothers and played a role in the raising

of millions more children. Luckily for us, these and other Children's Bureau publications also prompted the thousands of letters received by Bureau staff during its existence (up to 125,000 a year, according to Ladd-Taylor), a small sample of which form this book.

And a small sample it is, just over one hundred letters, most of them brief. The total length of the book is 212 pages, forty-six of which are devoted to Ladd-Taylor's well-documented introduction to the history of the Children's Bureau and the historiography of motherhood. The brevity of the book is one of its strengths — all of the letters are significant and interesting to read, there is no unnecessary repetition, and the reader does not get bored. The body of the book, the letters themselves, is divided into three thematic chapters. Chapter one, "Before the Baby Comes," contains letters from pregnant women, those trying to become pregnant, and those trying to avoid pregnancy. These letters are pervaded with almost shocking ignorance, shame, and superstition; many of the women, for example, were terrified that they had "marked" their babies by looking at frightening things. Others, even those who had already borne children, asked rudimentary questions about hygiene and reproduction. Chapter two, "Raising the Baby," is devoted to letters from women asking questions on all aspects of the care of babies. Concerns about diet, breastfeeding, constipation, childhood illness, and infant masturbation dominate this chapter, and the reader is struck by the huge burden of worry, guilt, and anger carried by so many of these women. Letters from women overwhelmed by their domestic workload comprise the third chapter, "Motherhood: All Work and No Money." In these letters, women describe their domestic problems and ask employees of the Children's Bureau for advice on how to manage their homes more efficiently in the face of low incomes, little help from husbands, and chronic ill health, all too often the result of childbearing and poor medical advice. Each chapter is prefaced by a very short introduction and Ladd-Taylor inserts an occasional footnote to clarify allusions in the letters. The initials of the author (to protect privacy) are given at the start of each letter, along with the author's state of residence and the date of the letter. Letters are followed by a summary of the reply from the Children's Bureau, if available. Ladd-Taylor has cleaned up some of the punctuation in the letters and has added words in brackets for the sake of clarity, but has not touched most of the spelling or grammar. The result is enjoyable: readable English with both the warmth and the desperation left in.

Molly Ladd-Taylor's interest in the Children's Bureau was not the primary reason for her desire to publish these letters; it was her interest in women's work in the past and in the present-day campaign to provide wages for housework and the recognition of motherhood that prompted her to bring these letters to our attention. This collection is a welcome addition to the present body of literature on women's work in the home, most of which concentrates on domestic technology and its impact on women's lives and women's role in the capitalist economy or on expert advice to women. The two most notable products of this trend are *Never Done: A History of American Housework*, by Susan Strasser (1982) and *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave*, by Ruth Schwartz Cowan (1983). Ladd-Taylor is not concerned with technology but with the feelings of everyday women towards what she believes to be of primary importance to mothers, regardless of class or extra-familial occupation: the nurturing of children and all of the emotional turmoil and the drudgery of "women's work" that go along with motherhood. "Women's work" carries no derogatory connotation for Ladd-Taylor. She believes that placing a high value on everything that women do in the course of raising children is not only vital to a peaceful and happy

society, but is necessary to women's feelings of self-worth. This is not to demean women's other contributions to society. It is, rather, to celebrate and recognize the importance of nurturing to the very survival of society.

While a cache of letters like those that make up *Raising a Baby the Government Way* is a rare treasure, a similar collection of Canadian letters could probably be amassed with some effort. It may not be possible to find a single store of letters as Ladd-Taylor has, but a survey of manuscript collections and government records might well reveal rich sources for the history of Canadian women's work and emotional life in the home. For example, the Government Archives Division of the National Archives of Canada holds the records of the Division of Child Welfare of the Department of Pensions and National Health, the predecessor of today's Department of National Health and Welfare. Created in 1920 and headed by Dr. Helen MacMurchy, the Division was similar in many respects to the American Children's Bureau. During the 1920s and 1930s, the Division of Child Welfare published health care pamphlets for mothers, with titles such as *Canadian Mothers' Book* and *Little Blue Books*, and participated in public health campaigns directed at mothers. Not surprisingly, a small number of letters almost identical in wording and emotion to those in Ladd-Taylor's book are found in the files of the Division of Child Welfare. There is also a good chance that even more of these letters may be found in the records of the private Canadian Council on Social Development, which are held by the Manuscript Division of the National Archives. The Division of Child Welfare worked very closely with the Canadian Council of Child Welfare (the forerunner of the CCSD), which actually took over the responsibilities of the government body for four years in the mid-1930s. Requests for Division of Child Welfare publications were channeled through the Canadian Council of Child Welfare. Since many of the letters in Ladd-Taylor's book took the form of requests for Children's Bureau pamphlets, it is possible that similar letters may be found in the correspondence files of the CCSD.

The appearance of *Raising a Baby the Government Way* is an encouraging sign that it is possible to produce a history of ordinary women without relying solely on quantitative evidence and techniques, although quantitative techniques remain a boon to the writing of social history. Archivists of both private and government records should be on the lookout for collections which document the lives of otherwise inarticulate women *and* men, and historians should be aware of the potential for the use of such evidence. Molly Ladd-Taylor states in her note to readers that she did not attempt a quantitative analysis due to logistical problems and because "the real value of the letters lies in their human quality." Let us hope that Canadian archivists and historians interested in social history do not lose sight of the "human quality" of the documents they collect, care for, and use.

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**Women's Paid and Unpaid Work: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives.** PAULA BOURNE, ed. Toronto: New Hogtown Press and The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1985. 123 p. ISBN 0-919940-20-X \$6.00 pa.

The contributors to this compact volume underline that the nature and study of women's past and present work experience is not easily divisible. In doing so they use, for the most