

**Michel S. Beaulieu, David K. Ratz, and Ronald N. Harpelle, eds.,  
Hard Work Conquers All: Building the Finnish Community in  
Canada**

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the context of the postwar compromise that bequeathed the Keynesian welfare state but are somewhat vague regarding the class, gender, and ethnic composition of the Toronto new left. They provide a lovely kaleidoscope but perhaps lack the kind of data that would allow them to hazard educated guesses about the gendered, raced, and classed balances among who became active in the city's new left and who did not.

In the end, this work provides a major contribution to our understanding of how the new left was made and unmade in Toronto from 1958 to 1985. McKay, as the originator of the oft-challenged idea that much of Canada's history is best understood in terms of the ability of a liberal order to co-opt all sorts of people and movements, joins with Graham to praise the new left in Toronto for creating democratic counterinstitutions that might be seen as first steps towards transcending the liberal order. From food coops to health centres, neighbourhoods protected from developers to subsidized housing projects, the new left created challenges to bourgeois individualism that have not disappeared and should not be dismissed as simply minor stones in the road to long-term capitalist hegemony.

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**Michel S. Beaulieu, David K. Ratz, and Ronald N. Harpelle, eds., *Hard Work Conquers All: Building the Finnish Community in Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press 2018)**

SCHOLARS OF Finnish North Americans have generated a prodigious number of studies over the past century, with impressive works on history, sociology, ethnology, and other disciplines. Given the relatively small population of Finns who

settled in North America, it is perhaps unsurprising that much of this output has been published by presses in Finland, Finnish cultural heritage societies, or self-published by scholars. The result, unfortunately, has been that the influence of Finnish Studies on the wider world of North American scholarship has been – with some exceptions – relatively minor.

But in the 21st century, the academic reach of Finnish Studies in North America has increased considerably. This is due in no small part to the work put in by the editors of *The Journal of Finnish Studies*, a fine scholarly journal exploring Finnish and Finnish migration topics. Credit is also owed to the staffs of two outstanding university presses, Michigan State University Press and University of British Columbia Press, which have published books on Finnish North American History.

The latest work in this rapidly lengthening line is *Hard Work Conquers All: Building the Finnish Community in Canada*, edited by Michel S. Beaulieu, David K. Ratz, and Ronald N. Harpelle. *Hard Work Conquers All* brings together ten scholars from North America and Europe to bring new scholarship on Canadian Finns to a wide academic audience.

For generations, scholars of Finns in North America have been writing local, regional, and institutional histories. Many of these have focused on exceptional aspects of the Finnish immigrant experience, including the impressive contributions by Finns to the North American socialist, communist, and Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) movements. Finnish immigrants were frequently the largest group within labour and left-wing movements, especially in radical hot spots such as the mining regions of Michigan and Minnesota, the Pacific Northwest, and in Ontario. For example, in the late 1920s, Finns

comprised approximately 60 per cent of the Communist Party of Canada. Most of these histories and biographies have looked principally at Finnish men and their involvement in the labour movement and radical politics.

Contributors to *Hard Work Conquers All* take a different tact in its examinations of Finnish North America. The articles situate the story of Finnish Canadians into the wider social history of Canada and North American immigration. The choice of topics explored in the book reflect this goal, focusing on under-researched areas that cover a wide range of Finnish Canadians' experiences. Chapters explore topics ranging from wrestling among working-class Finnish Canadians to Finnish Canadian soldiers' experiences in World War I. The experiences of Finnish Canadian women, children, and families are also central to the book. Ethnologist Hanna Snellman begins her chapter by examining some of the difficulties facing scholars as they try to research immigrant women, writing: "This chapter examines the experiences of Finnish women in North America in the early twentieth century through an analysis of early Finnish American cook-books." (185)

The range of topics is mirrored in the diverse research methodologies employed by the book's contributors. Ranging from Canadian military records to photographs, and from letters to cook-books, *Hard Work Conquers All* scours the depths of available materials to reveal a fuller picture of Finnish-Canadian life, one that can be difficult to study given the small number of North Americans able to read or understand spoken Finnish. As the book's introduction states: "the Finnish experience in Canada can be explored from a variety of angles, exposing the richness of material that has yet to be incorporated into a definitive history of Finns in Canada." (6) Thus, while the

book was published mostly to appeal to scholars of North American immigration, it strikes me that it would be a useful text for history research methods courses as well.

The book's greatest successes come in painting a complex history of Finnish-Canadian life, one that highlights the diversity of Finnish immigrants' experiences. One especially useful and illustrative example of the contributions to the field is Samira Saramo's piece, entitled, "Tervesiä: A Century of Finnish Immigrant Letters from Canada." Saramo's chapter uses dozens of letters written from North American Finns back to Finland to examine the transnational experiences of Canadian Finns as they navigated life in their adoptive homeland. The scope of Saramo's article stretches from the late 19th to the mid-20th century, and is thus able to chart social and economic changes among Finnish Canadians. Having become wedded into the wider society by the mid-20th century, Finnish Canadians became more prosperous and economically secure, leaving behind the dangerous logging and mining work so common to Finnish migrants.

Perhaps surprisingly, given their busy social lives, Finnish North Americans rarely wrote about temperance, church, or socialist political activities. This absence stands in contrast to the attention paid by letter writers to their work lives, including their perceptions of North American work culture, wages, hours, and conditions. Indeed, as Saramo wrote, work "stands out as the most common theme among the letters studied." (167)

As with the letters analyzed in Saramo's chapter, the topic of work is central to Varpu Lindstrom's piece "I Won't Be A Slave!': Finnish Domesticity in Canada, 1911–1930," a lightly revised version of her well-known article originally published in the 1980s. In the early

20th century, domestic service was easily the most common form of paid labour performed by Finnish Canadian women. Lindstrom digs deep into the world of Finnish maids, exploring, for example, the wide range of views maids had about their jobs, and the steps taken by maids to improve their situation. The chapter, too, looks at the North American Finnish socialist press discussions of the hardships faced by domestic servants. Some Finnish Canadian maids supported socialism and the efforts by leftist groups both to build unions among domestic servants and to nurture a radical working-class consciousness among domestic servants.

Readers of *Labour/Le Travail* might be disappointed, as I was, that so little of the text concerns overt expressions of working-class consciousness. Although Finns of many political stripes lived – and continue to live – in Canada, the fact that *Hard Work Conquers All* both begins and concludes with discussions of the Finnish Labour Temple in Thunder Bay, Ontario, a structure built and run by the Finnish labour movement, suggests that there would be more of a discussion of working-class activism and overt forms of class conflict. Indeed, beyond Lindstrom's chapter, there is little discussion of the relationships between work and labour politics, a surprising omission given Finnish North Americans' deserved reputations for their workplace, political, and community activism.

*Hard Work Conquers All* will make a strong addition to reading lists in Finnish Studies and Canadian immigration history.

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**Taylor Hollander, *Power, Politics, and Principle: Mackenzie King and Labour, 1935–1948* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 2018)**

WE'VE ALWAYS NEEDED this book. While much has been written on William Lyon Mackenzie King, and while scholars like Paul Craven have examined the earlier days of King's philosophy regarding unions and labour relations, Taylor Hollander's monograph is a timely examination of King's relationship with labour during his final run as prime minister, and when organized labour was coming to a prominence theretofore unseen.

Hollander seeks to, without wholesale abandoning the tenets of social history, recognize that no one person in this critical period did more to shape the evolution of Canadian labour relations than King. He also seeks to reinterpret King, arguing that he was neither a "weirdo PM" (15) nor a man without conviction, but rather a figure operating under a strict system of principles and vision. Rather than being the man of nebulous triangulation many see him as, King for Hollander is perceived as a man of consistent values, which were a concern for the poor, a drive to keep Canada unified, and a belief in moderate liberalism as the best ideological path forward. This did not imply political rigidity, but rather a mooring that kept King centred as he moved around in tumultuous political times, which empowered him to "demonstrate commitment and courage in the face of adversity." (17)

But this is less a history of King's relationship with labour in a general sense – although these elements are found in the book. Rather, as Hollander notes in both his introduction and conclusion, his original goal was never to write a history about King directly: his real aim was to produce a history of PC 1003: the wartime order that forever shaped the very