

“Marriages in Laos were invariably uxori-local” (p. 110, as quoted from Levy, 1963). It seems unlikely that some variation across ethnic or tribal diversity of Laos did not exist. Even if the norm were uniformly uxori-local, it is unlikely that some discrepancy in practice did not exist.

Furthermore, the contextual significance of particular customs is obscured by the topical organization of the volume. In considering the choice of marriage partners among the Limbu of Nepal, for example, the authors indicate that “There are often love marriages, based on acquaintance at the institutionalized courtship dances” (p. 70, as quoted from Jones and Jones, 1976). However, love marriages often constitute second attempts at marriage and the survival of marriages is influenced by a range of factors (e.g., the successful completion of bridewealth payments, the birth of children, particularly a son, and the bride’s relationship with her mother-in-law (Jones and Jones, 1976). The latter information has been omitted by Whyte and Whyte, presumably as it does not “fit” under the topic of responsibility and criteria for choice of marriage partners. However, its omission makes Limbu selection of *life-long* marriage partners something other than what it is. Whyte and Whyte cannot and should not duplicate the details readily available in the original sources. However, the reader must exercise caution in the use of at least some of their material in the absence of a contextual discussion.

Nonetheless, the book is an excellent source of bibliography and implicit questions on women’s status in rural Asia and elsewhere. The wealth of descriptive information can be used by those of different conceptual orientations. In that sense, the Whyte and Whyte volume may have more long term value than the other three books, though its theoretical framework and style of presentation will not be as immediately popular.

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The Eaton Drive. The Campaign to Organize Canada’s Largest Department Store 1948 to 1952. Eileen Sufrin. *Toronto: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1982, Pp. 240.*

As union membership mushroomed in the period following World War II, the Canadian Congress of Labour (CCL) turned its sights to the unorganized retail and wholesale sector, and in 1946 decided to pierce the white-collar field with a campaign to unionize the Toronto Eaton’s store. A team of organizers was put together headed by Eileen Sufrin, a member of the B.C. Steelworkers’ staff.

The Eaton Drive is Sufrin’s personal account of the five year struggle to bring the union to Eatons and why it failed. It is a day by day detailed look at one of this country’s notable union drives which pitted the CCL against what was at the time Canada’s third largest employer, the T. Eaton Company. It is also a union organizing manual which draws out the lessons of the campaign in terms of general strategies and techniques for union building.

Sufrin begins with a brief history of the post-war labour movement and explains the reasons behind the decision to organize Eaton’s. There are two very interesting chapters on department stores as employers and more specifically on Eaton’s and the Eaton family. Except for a short epilogue, the rest of the book’s nineteen chapters describe the campaign from its inception to its demise, with background information on labour laws and the general situation in the labour movement in Canada, as well as the U.S.

As a study of one of the more significant union drives in our history, *The Eaton Drive*, is an informative, intimate work, which should be of interest to union activists and organizers. It clearly enumerates the difficulties faced by workers when they attempt to organize. The T. Eaton Co. was in the vanguard in developing some of the union-busting tactics still employed today, and the reading of this book could help workers better understand their opponent's methods.

Another interesting aspect is the creativity and humour shown in the organizing methods invented by the team, as recorded by Sufrin. Shop stewards and other activists trying to recruit new numbers were given 10,000 small bags of peanuts with the slogan "Don't work for Peanuts" as conversation starters. When members of other unions came out to support the drive they wore badges stating "Union Pay Is Good Pay - I Get It!" and handed out shopping bags imprinted "Join local 1000" to customers as they entered the store. As well, union activities included many social events, from the bowling team to the float in the labour day parade.

Union organizing can and should be fun for the people involved, a principle contemporary unionists would do well to note.

In contrast, I feel that this book has not got as much to say as pertains to organizing women, or the relation of women to the union movement. Although it is written by a woman who was certainly a pioneer in the labour movement and is ostensibly about women, for they formed the majority of Eaton's employees, there is little feminist hindsight in Sufrin's analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of her campaign.

In retrospect she feels that one of the main weaknesses was women's lack of acceptance of unions. Perhaps another or rather a complementary problem she could have examined is the unions' "lack of acceptance" of women. Surely Sufrin had heard the growing complaints voiced

by women of the sexism and discrimination that exist within the labour movement and of the serious difficulties in trying to conciliate union activism, family responsibilities and personal life. Without mechanically applying criticism of today's labour movement to unions in the forties and fifties, Sufrin's analysis would be more complete if she had looked at how these issues affected her and the women she was organizing.

What was it like being a woman organizer in such a solidly male bastion as the CCL? Did she have to work in the same way as and better than the men? Sufrin does not really address these questions, although there are certain hints such as when following the union's defeat, lawyer David Lewis tells her "he was proud that (I) had not shed any tears." How did her example as a totally committed full-time activist working "irregular and often excessive" hours inspire or deter other women from getting involved?

Recent studies¹ indicate that most women are turned off by the image of the activist who eats, breathes and dreams union, something which they feel they cannot and do not want to attain.

Finally, how does Sufrin now look at such examples of sexism within the union as the local's Beauty Contest, the executive with its male president and vice-presidents and female secretaries, the mail order drivers' union stag party, the leaflet with the "picture of a photogenic Macy saleslady" or the hiring of three male university students as full-time organizers for the summer at the same time two female Eaton's employees were hired on a part-time basis?

Sufrin remains mum on all these questions so we can only speculate as to the impact of some of these factors in discouraging women from joining the union. Sufrin's analysis of other reasons why women did not join: fear of losing their jobs, working part-time, and being subjected to gross paternalism on the part of Eaton's and its

managerial staff, is certainly valid, but it tends to let the CCL completely off the hook. This exemplifies another weakness I find with this book and that is Suftrin's unconditional pro-CCL stance.

The decision to organize Eaton's did not come from Eaton employees but rather from the CCL which chose it as a strategic target. The CCL then invited an international union (the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union - the RWDSU of the CIO) to organize in Canada so as to "avoid inter-union squabbles" over organizing jurisdictions and because the CCL did not have the financial resources to do the job itself. The drive was organized from the top down and from Suftrin's account it would seem that the rank and file members had little control over the running of the campaign. Ten months into the campaign a progress report to the CCL concluded, "The amount of union talk in the department has led them (the active members) to believe that the union is actually much stronger than it is. No figures have been released, of course, and the information herein is strictly confidential." A year later, after a split in the American RWDSU over how to react to the 1947 Taft-Hartley Act (requiring all union officials to sign an affidavit stating that he or she was not a member of the Communist Party), the CIO "transferred jurisdiction for the organization of department... stores to the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (ACW)." The Eaton union was not informed because "perhaps... (the) RWDSU Canadian director, who must have known how serious the situation was in his union, did not wish to upset our group with the details..." And when the organizers did find out that they were no longer backed by the RWDSU, the information they transmitted to members was simply that the ACW was "contributing substantially to the Eaton Drive."

How did this union paternalism and back-rooming affect the participation of members? Suftrin gives us no insights. In her nineteen chap-

ters on the campaign, she devotes only one nine page chapter to what she calls "the insiders," that is the Eaton employees active in the union. And although reference is made throughout the book to this or that member's contribution, it is hard to get a feel of just what role the rank and file activists were allowed to play in developing campaign strategy and tactics. Despite this, Suftrin gives the impression that there was much grass root support, so it is somewhat surprising to learn that a week before the union representation vote, with 6,000 signed members and almost 10,000 people eligible to vote, a union rally attended by 500 shop stewards and vote stewards was "the largest meeting local 1000 ever had."

Finally, the general meeting following the vote arrived at the consensus that the main reason the union lost the vote was "the members' lack of knowledge of the democratic nature of their own union..." One has to wonder if it is a lack of knowledge or a lack of practice that is to be faulted?

Suftrin's pro-CCL stance is accompanied by a sectarian CCF-NDP position and unsubstantiated anti-communism which grated on my nerves. It is one thing to criticize the work of the Communist Party in the thirties and forties. It is another to toss out unsupported commentary such as "the leadership (of the department store union in the U.S.)... toed the Communist Party line" or "Hillman could be relied upon to deal with the Communist factions which were causing problems for the CIO..." This type of sectarianism leads Suftrin to such absurdities as accusing Eaton's of "this application of Marxist dogma (to each according to his need)" because of its discriminatory wage policy.

Suftrin claims that her CCF-NDP affiliation did not bring her to press her views on members. It is to be noted however that four of the six first organizers were CCF Activists, the union's lawyer was David Lewis, former national secretary

of the CCF and future NDP leader, and at least one after-dinner speaker at union banquets was a CCF-NDP.

Finally, *The Eaton Drive* is a celebration of the CCL, and to a lesser extent the CCF, in their efforts to represent the working people of our country.

But whether one agrees or not with Sufrin's political views, it is her uncritical attitude of the CCL's role in the campaign to unionize Eaton's and the poverty of her analysis concerning women's place in this campaign and in the labour movement which weaken what might have been an incisive insider's view of this important moment in labour history.

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Notes

1. See Nancy Guberman "Working, Mothering and militancy: Women in the CNTU" in *Union Sisters*, Women's Press, 1983; Debbie Field "The Dilemma Facing Women's Committees" in *ibid.*

Family Time and Industrial Time. The Relationship between the Family and Work in a New England Industrial Community. Tamara K. Hareven. *Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982. Pp. 474.*

Tamara Hareven's investigation into the work patterns and family lives of the predominantly French Canadian workers at the Amoskeag Mills in Manchester, New Hampshire, is fascinating to read, generally well written and represents a major advance in our knowledge of how families interacted and functioned within the institutions of industrial capitalism. Not only does one learn the very detailed specifics of family kinship networks within the Amoskeag Mills, but Hareven is not shy about delineating the generalities of change in family functioning and individual

life courses between the early twentieth century and the present. This is a major work and an important contribution to both family history and labour history and to building a bridge between the two. It has already raised much discussion and been widely and divergently reviewed. In this review I shall focus on two major issues of interest to Canadians and women - the portrayal of Quebec society and the french canadian family; and the work of married women, French Canadians in particular. Two problems are evident in her treatment of these topics. They extend, I think, to other aspects of the book as well.

Hareven tends to present broad generalizations on a topic, then subsequently either nuance, condition or contradict them, often using different data. Thus, Quebec society is portrayed initially as a traditional, largely rural society, peopled by "traditional rural families," by implication typified by the "stem family" structure found by Horace Miner in his study of St. Denis done in 1939. Migration to Manchester, Hareven argues, "shifted the economic base of the family from landholding to industrial work" and disrupted "therefore, the basic territorial continuity and the interlocking of generations within the family life style." This stem family structure was not found among the french canadian families of Manchester.(p. 117) Had Hareven read a little more widely consulting perhaps the work of Leon Gérin, undertaken in just the period she is studying, or more recent analyses by historians Normand Séguin or Gérard Bouchard these oversimplifications might have been avoided. Both Quebec society and the Quebecois family were clearly more complex than suggested. Neither territorial continuity nor the stem family were important features of nineteenth and early twentieth century rural families. There is little doubt about the poverty and depleted farms characteristic of rural life in Quebec in this period. All rural families were not, however, landholders. Furthermore, many of those who were, were accustomed to supplementing agricultural in-