Jew but the Traitor could be re-educated, ultimately transformed into something great, a superman, even a God, living in a utopian paradise. Inspired by the Fascist aesthetic, Laurendeau dreamt of a day when "Doctors, dentists and gymnasts will help build a strong, chaste race of handsome young men and beautiful young girls."

Delisle ultimately concludes that the writers, intellectuals and nationalists associated with Lionel Groulx, *Le Devoir, l'Action nationale* and *Jeune Canada,* all expressed "the same wish, at heart: via dictatorship, by the re-education of the Traitor and the expulsion of the Jew, the chaos and decay which surround us will end."

If *The Traitor and the Jew* remains an important contribution to Canadian intellectual history it is also a timely investigation into white hegemony. In her introduction Delisle discusses the notion of government-defined cultural communities, that is, government efforts "to assimilate new immigrants into the francophone majority without destroying their presence as defined minorities whose very existence testifies to and confirms the presence of the majority." Delisle is led to ask, "But when does one cease to belong to to a 'cultural community' and actually become '*Québécois*'? Just how many generations have to be counted, and what characteristics must be acquired, before the club takes in some new members?"

English Canada would do very well to ask itself the same question.

[1]For a good overview of *l'affaire Delisle* see Charles Foran, "That Book of Esther's," *Saturday Night,* 108, 8 (October 1993).

FIRING THE HEATHER: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF NELLIE MCCLUNG

Mary Hallett and Marilyn Davis. Saskatoon: Fifth House Publishers, 1993.

by Clara Thomas

No one at all interested in the history of women's rights in Canada could fail to know the name of Nellie McClung, but few of us have an appreciation of the range and importance of her manifold activities. We have heard a good deal about her, but in sporadic bits and pieces; this book is the first gathering together and presentation of the whole complicated and colourful tapestry of Nellie's "life and times." There is something today in the very sound of "Nellie," a name that has gone completely out of fashion, that has too often encouraged a hint of amused and condescending over-familiarity in her treatment, perhaps because one of her most engaging qualities was a readiness to laugh at herself. This book should go a long way toward persuading readers of her paramount importance in Canada's feminist history.

For many years many of us have been devoted readers and teachers of *Clearing in the West* and *The Stream Runs Fast,* the two volumes of McClung's autobiography; for us it is particularly interesting to have this fleshed-out account of the development of McClung, the passionately-engaged activist, from the eager, clever, energetic and often frustrated child of Irish-Scottish Manitoba emigrants from Ontario. First, as soon as she had achieved independence as a teacher, she jumped the hurdle of her mother's disapproval of a show-off daughter to begin giving readings and poetry recitations at all kinds of neighbourhood social events. She was a natural mimic, a "stand-up comic" of her day (always ladylike, mind you) and at a time when public speaking was an intensely popular entertainment and entertainment was home-made, not technologically provided, she quickly became widely in demand far beyond her own district. Gradually she began to give speeches on topics that engaged her loyalties, temperance first and always, with women's suffrage and women's rights in general a close second. The time was right for her: married to Wes McClung, a pharmacist, and living in the little town of Manitou, she speedily became known as a riotously successful speaker throughout Manitoba, then across Canada and finally, from the mid-teen war years on, when the suffrage movement was at its hottest, in the States and Europe.

In these same years she had five children, wrote and sold innumerable short stories, and in 1908 became a continental bestseller with the novel, *Sewing Seeds in Danny.* Wes McClung gave up a prosperous pharmacy business because of a serious and lengthy bout of ill health the nature of which remains mysterious; and in 1911 they moved to Winnipeg where he became an insurance salesman, then after some years to Edmonton, where Nellie became deeply engaged in Alberta politics, a member for the Liberals from 1922 to 1926. At the same time, along with Emily Murphy, her friend and equal in energy, zest, humour and activism, and Irene Parlby, Louise McKinley and Henrietta Muir Edwards, the other three of the "Famous Five," she was relentlessly pushing along a movement that would climax in the 1929 decision of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Court in London, England that women were indeed persons under the B. N. A. Act and could therefore be appointed to the Senate. Just as relentless was her campaign for the ordination of women in the United Church and her continuing battles for legislation against alcohol. "Relentless" and "ruthless" were always the operative words when Nellie McClung and her army of supporters were on the move, and by the mid-twenties, women had been emboldened by the franchise and in most, if not all of their causes, had been joined

by men of good will and liberal convictions.

McClung was obviously one of those fortunate individuals who thrive on a schedule that would swiftly kill most individuals. She loved the platform and there her forte was a combination of creative thinking, humour and a wicked and ready tongue for the satirizing of her opponents. If it were not for much contrary evidence, it would be all too easy to see her as a Canadian Boadicea, dragging

her family as well as her opposition along at her chariot wheels. She and Wes certainly had their family problems as every family does: some of them had to do with the drink that she so abhorred and in fact were probably exacerbated by her obsession against alcohol. In private as well as public life, however, the saving combination of deep and responsible love for her dear ones and readiness to laugh at her own excesses was a remarkably successful balance to her hectically busy program. By all accounts from family, friends and former servants, the McClung home was a notably calm and congenial eye of the whirlwind.

Like L. M. Montgomery, her contemporary in writing, McClung had doggedly become a truly professional writer as a young woman, enduring the inevitable drudgery of copying manuscripts, rising above rejections to submit and re-submit her work and writing for any and all available markets — and in her day there were a plethora of outlets for didactic, romantic, sentimental stories considered suitable for a very large and mostly feminine reading public. Though Hallett and Davis spend some forty pages arguing for McClung's fiction as "anti-romantic, " they are not completely successful: in writing as well as in speaking, McClung's greatest asset was her combination of humour and closely observed detail, but her matching weakness, and one that her times and the context of her life did nothing to eradicate, was her combination of blatant didacticism and easy sentimentality. Even *Painted Fires*, here given particularly detailed treatment as her best novel, is badly scarred by a ridiculously sentimental romantic ending and by McClung's weakness for bluntly caricaturing both heroes and villains, but especially villains.

At many points *Firing the Heather* invites argument. It is only fair to remember that the book was written and finally finished in the face of terrible difficulties. Mary Hallett, the historian of the Hallett and Davis partnership, became terminally ill of cancer and died in 1986, when work on the book had already been in progress for about ten years, and when the manuscript had already reached first-draft stage. Since then Marilyn Davis, a literary scholar, has doggedly carried the work along, both a labour of love in itself and a memorial for her friend. But she has been over-eager to satisfy the criticisms and suggestions of the various people she has consulted, with the result that she has found it impossible to develop completely a satisfying, overriding vision of Nellie McClung. There is too much "Saint Nellie" here, too much anxiety to anticipate and refute criticism and not enough, not nearly enough, of the biographer's own necessary conviction, deep and stubborn to the point of ruthlessness as stubborn as Nellie's own.

Quibbles aside, do take this book seriously. We haven't yet even begun to give Nellie McClung her due!

TELL THE DRIVER: A BIOGRAPHY OF ELINOR F. E. BLACK. M. D.

Julie Vandervoort. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1992.

THE STRUGGLE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE IN BRITISH COLUMBIA: HELENA GUTTERIDGE, THE UNKNOWN REFORMER

Irene Howard, Vancouver: University of British Columbia. 1992.

by Myra Rutherdale

Almost ten years ago Susan Mann Trofimenkoff wrote an article in *Atlantis* outlining the complexities of writing feminist biography. One of the potential difficulties with biography for feminist historians, argued Trofimenkoff, was that they ran the risk of enshrining "Great Women" just as male historians had for decades glorified the "Great Men" of history. Trofimenkoff suggested some methods to avoid this pitfall. She observed that "A Great Man doing Great Deeds may merit a story but rarely does he require an explanation. A woman in the same position immediately raises the question "How come?" In answering this question the focus shifts away from the accomplishments of the individual to an explanation of not only the individual's changing circumstances and struggles but also the cultural and economic constraints imposed on all women of her generation.

Barriers to both social justice and mobility within professions are obstacles which Canadian women have faced throughout the twentieth century. Irene Howard and Julie Vandervoort both admirably approach their subjects within this context. While protagonists Elinor F. E. Black and Helena Gutteridge had very little in common, they were both adventuresome women who were, as