

[Page 37 - Books of Interest - The Education of Everett Richardson: The Nova Scotia Fisherman's Strike, 1970-1971 / Echoes from Labour's War: Industrial Cape Breton in the 1920's](#)

ISSUE : [Issue 20](#)

Published by Ronald Caplan on 1978/8/1

The Education of Everett Richardson; the Nova Scotia Fishermen's Strike. 1970-71 by Silver Donald Cameron. Silver Donald Cameron: "During the summers of 1970 and 1971 a handful of fishermen in the tiny ports of Canso, Mulgrave, and Petit de Grat • fewer than 300 men in all • fought a battle for the rights of working people which unsettled the opinions and plucked the consciences of Nova Scotians, a battle which very nearly brought the province's economy to an abrupt halt. This book tells their story through the experiences of one fisherman, Everett Richardson, and his wife Jean, a genial mother of six who until the strike never interfered in • the men's business,* but who found herself marching on the picket lines and defying the police. This is a story, too, about some of their children • Bertha and Kenny, who worked in the fish plant but would not cross the picket line, and Linda, who went to British Columbia with her husband, Russell Gurney, when the strike ended, to fish where their union was strong, "This is not just the story of the Richardsons; each of the 235 union fishermen has a similar story. But to understand the meaning of the strike one has to move close to the fishermen, and the Richardsons' story can stand for the others. In the end this is not a story of the fishermen alone, or even of the labour movement. It is a story about privilege and poverty and injustice in this country, and about the social and political arrangements which cheat and oppress most Canadians, which stunt our humanity and distort our environment. It is a story about learning. In the end, I hope, it is a story about democracy, and the way Canadians might hope to achieve it." This book takes a good hard look at a piece of Nova Scotia • and it's time that more of this was done. We do need some loving hard looks, and Silver Donald Cameron offers one here. It's too easy to be romantic and soft and let the really tough materials pass unnoticed through our lives. Donald Cameron has wrestled here with a piece of recent history • wrestled virtually with the lives of his neighbours and his own life • and at another level wrestled with traditional emotions and realities surrounding the idea of unions and strikes and what, exactly, is a fisherman today. He didn't wait for the events to draw back into history, and thus his book suffers in part from the fact that it is so near,, that he was so close, that a good deal of the events have not had the time for careful digestion a longer view will give them. On the other hand, we have much of the immediacy, tenderness and pain that, only the risk of not waiting can provide for us. "A trawlerman working steadily, as Eric Fitzpatrick did the year before the strike. might make twenty-seven trips a year. That works out to 577000 hours a year, or roughly triple the hours of the average industrial worker. Six out of seven of his days are spent away from his family. For all of this the draggerman was paid between \$3,000 and \$5,000 a year • a dollar an hour, at best." We should read this book. It will be a great one for discussion in the schools. I don't know where you're going to turn for a more intimate view of the life of some Cape Breton and Strait area fishermen. And here we have that life exposed large in



the arena of an important struggle carried out while the most of us were doing some? thing else, frankly, and might just have missed it. The book is \$4.95 in paperback. It's a good buy and highly recommended. Echoes From Labor's War: Industrial Cape Breton in the 1920s by Dawn Fraser. Dawn Fraser was a poet of the serious is? sues of his day. Bom in Oxford, Cumber? land County, Nova Scotia, in 1888, he came with his family to Cape Breton in 1901, another among the many brought here by the promise of industrial expansion. He trav? elled widely, first as a young drifter and eventually as a soldier in the First World War • and in 1919 he returned to Glace Bay. Wherever he was, he wrote • and he wrote a- bout what was going on around him. In Glace Bay he read his poems at union meet? ings and parties, some he put up on a bul? letin board at the main intersection in Glace Bay. These were poems for his neigh? bours, the people most intimately involved in the local events of labour in the 1920s. And these poems provide for us, 50 years later, something authentic of the depriva? tion and determination of that time. It.is not objective history by any means. It is not meant to be. But if you want to hear a friend of the worker and an enemy of the bosses talking straight-forwardly to his neighbours circa 1920, it will be of in? terest for you to take a look at this book. He is not a great poet. He wanted, to rally his neighbours, give them a laugh or cour? age or some insight into their own condi? tion • and he managed that quite well. Our thanks to David Frank and Donald Macgil- livray for preparing this edition and of? fering a useful introduction. For \$2.00 it's a good buy, and happily a very nicely made small book as well. A Gaelic Workbook for the Beginner Ciamar a tha thu?' available in local stores or write: Box 56, Mabou, N.S. Price \$2.50