

Giant Among Giants

Ron Pegg

Word Alive Press

Reviewed by Larry Heather

I was delighted to read another book on Ernest Manning, following the landmark 2008 publication of Brian Brennan's biography, *The Good Steward*. (Fifth House Ltd, Calgary).

Giant Among Giants is an evangelical perspective from longtime Ontario history teacher Ron Pegg. "On Sunday afternoon, Mom's radio was tuned to the Barrie ra-

dio station. It was the late 1940's. At 3:00pm, a program was on the air from Edmonton, AB. There was a violin player.* Ernest Manning was the preacher. He always made the audience aware that it was his wife (Muriel) who was in charge of the music. As a ten year old...I came to understand that this man was the Premier of Alberta," Ron Pegg summarized, "After sixty years of having studied

this man and following his career, I firmly believe that the man who was elected in seven consecutive elections as Premier of Alberta...a man who can still be heard on repeat broadcasts of Canada's National Bible Broadcast is one of Canada's greatest people." (first Sunday of each month - 8:30am on AM1140 radio).

The book has interesting anecdotes on the Manning family's life at Rosetown, SK. But the manuscript suffers a wandering focus in many chapters. Its subtitle could be "The life and times of Ernest Manning amidst the history of the Prairie Provinces."

The socialist CCF/NDP under J.S. Woodsworth and Tommy Douglas is contrasted in detail. Unfortunately a common error about William Aberhart is repeated, that he was raised in Ontario as a Baptist (Fact: He was Presbyterian till his fifth year in Calgary). Descriptions of Aberhart's character as 'not a listener like Manning,' taken from AB's bitter critics are better rendered in *Aberhart of Alberta*, co-written by his younger daughter, Ola McNutt, 1971).

Pegg says that the United Farmers of Alberta had no interest in Social Credit

(true of the ruling elite) but Major Douglas followers from the UFA groups defected to the first Social Credit League study groups. Also, sole credit is given to Ernest Manning for the early legislative firsts in resources, debt management, health and social legislation, which were achieved by 1944.

But Aberhart, passing away in Vancouver in May of '43 had crafted most of the statutes himself and mentored

their implementation through Ernest. (Granddaughter, Patricia Hilton recounts hearing Aberhart from his sick bed giving systematic telephone briefings to Ernest on legislative goals, never mentioning the gravity of his illness.) Despite these differences, the book is a wealth of information to those who appreciate the influence, past and current, of this *Giant Among Giants*, Ernest Charles Manning.

*The renowned Calgarian violinist and teacher was Mary Lessingham Shortt, who passed away in 2009. Some of her solos can be heard at www.aberhartfoundation.ca.

