

*Two Sisters for Social Justice: A Biography of Grace and Edith Abbott.* By Lela B. Costin. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983. Pp. xv, 315. Illustrations, bibliographical essay, notes, published works of Edith and Grace Abbott, index. \$18.50.)

Lela B. Costin's informative biography of Grace and Edith Abbott details the public careers of two sisters who were in the vanguard of social justice reform efforts in the first four decades of the twentieth century. Grace directed the Chicago Immigrants' Protective League from 1907 to 1917 and worked with the United States Children's Bureau, first as director of the Child Labor Division from 1917 to 1919 and then as head of the bureau from 1921 to 1934. Edith, who had a Ph.D. in economics, edited the *Social Service Review* and was instrumental in the formation and development of the School of Social Service Administration at the University of Chicago. Through her insistence that social work education be based on social science research, not narrow practical training in fieldwork, she influenced social work programs throughout the country. Writing a dual biography complicated Costin's task, but it was the right decision because the efforts and vast accomplishments of Edith and Grace Abbott were inextricably linked.

Costin skillfully traces the evolution and maturation of their extraordinary professional relationship. During their ten years at Hull House, beginning in 1908, the sisters shaped and perfected their partnership. Edith, the scholar, was an inexhaustible researcher who gathered the facts and provided an "exact base of knowledge for their common endeavors" (p. 98). Grace, the activist, used this knowledge as an administrator and advocate for the rights of immigrants, workers, children, and mothers. Both demonstrated an ability to place problems in their broadest social context. When Grace moved to Washington, D.C., in 1917, Edith continued to provide data on a range of topics related to Grace's often frustrating work in the federal government. As the partnership matured and the sisters' influence grew in the 1920s, they became increasingly effective in using the "resources of government and higher education to get the most out of each" (p. 162).

Their efforts during the 1920s provide evidence of the importance of women in continuing the crusade for social justice reforms, but Costin indicates that it was in the last years of the Herbert Hoover administration and the early years of the New Deal that their combined expertise proved most valuable. Persistent and influential critics of Hoover's voluntarism, they doc-

umented "the extent and nature of the suffering, and used every opportunity to speak and write about the need for federal aid and public policy which would make possible a modern system of social security" (p. 204). Although lifelong Republicans, they welcomed the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt. As realists, the Abbotts believed that New Deal legislation, however imperfect, represented a significant departure from the past. Grace's activities were circumscribed by serious illness. She resigned from the Children's Bureau in 1934, but her thoughts on several issues had an important impact on Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins. With the expansion of the public welfare system, Edith's work with the School of Social Service Administration received national recognition. Welfare administrators sought her recommendations for filling their staff needs, and she was thus able to "advance her concept of social work in the public sector by educating and sending out staff all over the country" (p. 229).

*Two Sisters for Social Justice* succeeds as a study of the public lives of Grace and Edith Abbott; it is less illuminating on their personal lives. Despite several comments on their character traits, neither emerges as complete personalities. For example, there are many references to Edith's research, but there is very little on the actual content of her investigations or the nature of the personal satisfaction she derived from this work. Costin relates the sisters' lives to recent scholarship on the history of women only in the preface. She notes that the Abbotts, unlike Jane Addams, were professional experts who challenged conventional images of women, but she does not develop this question of divergent female identities in the remainder of the biography. Costin also remarks in the preface that both sisters supported the need for protective legislation for women workers. Since this was the critical divisive issue among women in the 1920s, it is curious that it never reappears in the biography. Finally, neither married and both had close female friendships, but Costin fails to explore the nature of the female support network that sustained both sisters. Costin has written a good biography; more attention to other works on women's history and to the private lives of the Abbott sisters would have made this an even stronger book.

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*Down From Equality: Black Chicagoans and the Public Schools, 1920-41.* By Michael W. Homel. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984. Pp. xiii, 219. Notes, maps, tables, illustrations, bibliographical essay, index. \$19.95.)

Michael Homel, in this book about black Chicagoans and the public schools, shows a facility for understanding the role of schools