

the reader a man who was sensitive to the pulse of his time. It is to this same De Cosmos that we owe a debt of gratitude for establishing our first library and archives in 1862. The feud between Douglas and De Cosmos is described fully. Pethick also discusses in some detail the term of the first colonial Governor Richard Blanshard but unfortunately does not provide any new information as to why Blanshard was ever selected for the job.

The Fraser River gold rush of 1858 and the influx of several tens of thousands of wild American miners brought Victoria into the mainstream of the nineteenth century. Again the author recounts the significant events accurately, while keeping the reader entertained with amusing vignettes like the account of Victoria's lively atmosphere with gun duels, "furious riding," and other barbarous misbehaviour (p. 166).

The final chapter is appropriately titled "The End of An Old Order" and deals with the retirement of Governor Douglas and the appointment of Arthur E. Kennedy in his place. It is somehow fitting that the last building of the old Fort, built by Douglas twenty years before, came down the same year that Douglas retired.

It is unfortunate that wider use was not made of the huge photographic collection in the Provincial Archives to supplement the text. Some photographs are presented but they are the standard portraits and familiar street scenes. But for anyone interested in looking at this province's development, *Victoria: The fort* should be added to their reading list. The bibliography is quite useful and, except for some misnumbered footnotes, no major publishing errors appear.

Centennial Museum, Vancouver

JAMES B. STANTON

The Canadian Indian: The illustrated story of the great tribes of Canada, by Fraser Symington. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1969. 272 pp. \$20.

There are few subjects better suited to the expensive, picturebook market than the North American Indians. With a stirring history, richly documented, the story of the Canadian tribes could have been made into a great book. Unhappily we have been served a bad one.

Twenty-one illustrated chapters of text and ten separate picture sections are arranged to provide a wide coverage of such topics as the origin of

the Indians, the major culture areas in Canada, the nature of traditional life, the processes of contact with the white man, and the contemporary scene. Attempting to "tell it as it was" with a text in which ethnography and history are combined or interspersed with narrative sequences and word pictures, Mr. Symington has tried to make his subjects come to life. But the result is an amateurish, badly written attempt to dress up the facts, and it achieves a dullness of the sort which Canadians will find reminiscent of their highschool history texts.

A wealth of ethnographic data on Canadian Indians is available, but Symington has a peculiar talent for relying on the weaker secondary sources. Errors of fact and interpretation are uniformly numerous throughout the work. There are also fundamental inadequacies in the author's understanding of simple anthropological concepts which lead him to make errors of classification and association. For example, he states that the Blackfoot and Micmac spoke the same *dialect* of the Algokian family of languages, while in fact they spoke quite distinct, mutually unintelligible, languages.

British Columbia's tribes suffer as much as any in the author's handling of facts. He has the Coast Salish, for example, as makers of Chilkat blankets (this was primarily a Tlingit craft), living at Cape Flattery (Makah territory), and being expert collectors of dentalia shells (a Nootka specialty). An impossibly bad map of tribal distribution puts the coastal Bella Coola in the centre of British Columbia, roughly in the Shuswap tribe's territory, while they in turn are shifted over to the Peace River district of Alberta.

Such errors of detail might be forgiven were they not so numerous and if they rested upon a solid understanding of the nature of culture and society, but Symington is innocent to the point of incompetence. He reiterates such timeworn and discredited myths as the notion that aged Indians were "... killed unemotionally if they could not keep up with the band ..." (p. 88). With a simple-minded view of cultural evolution he speculates that the West Coast tribes never developed agriculture because their natural food supplies were infallible, ignoring the fact that numerous tribes all over the western part of the continent suffered severe periodic shortages of food yet were never led to adopt agriculture. Bigotry is combined with ignorance to produce such statements as: "All tribes of Canada were encumbered by a variety of taboos" (p. 74). His conjecture that the Indians invented snowshoes by copying the feet of grouse and hares would be funny were it not for the possibility that, as it appears in this book, it may lead uninformed readers to the conclusion that Indians

were simple children of nature who created their culture by elementary imitative acts. In fact such explanations as these belong in the "just-so" category of mythology, not in serious history.

The text wears only a thin guise of scholarship. There are no footnotes or references, and the unfamiliar reader will find it impossible, despite the bibliography, to follow with ease any of the enticing leads to the many worthwhile sources which are available and were ostensibly consulted by Symington. The same reader would have benefited immeasurably by proper maps of language and cultural areas. A few appendices of vital statistics would have boosted the reference value of the work.

The illustrations are the only commendable feature of this book. There are nearly three hundred of them, some fifty of which are in colour, and they are technically well reproduced. They include engravings taken from old publications, photographs, and most happily, many reproductions of the wonderful paintings of Paul Kane, Peter Rindisbacher, George Catlin, and others of that adventurous breed of romantic travelling artists who crossed the continent while the western tribes were still to be seen in possession of their traditional life and territories. In these vivid scenes we are given accounts of "life as it was" which are convincing. No doubt the artists were selective in what they saw and chose not to see, but they all painted to some extent with an eye to the changes which were then occurring and with an urge to record accurately what they saw. They were conscious of history — the very kind of men who take movie cameras into the turmoil of present world conflict and revolution. Sad to say, their achievements are not well revealed in this book which merely uses the paintings. Lacking explanation and commentary, the remarkable value of the ethnographic and historical data contained in the paintings is unrealized. The large reproduction of Kane's work, *Indians Playing at Alkol-lock*, which adorns the dust cover, exemplifies the disregard for facts which characterizes Symington's selection of illustrations and writing of captions. This painting gives a vivid and technically accurate view of an interesting aspect of life in the Plateau Culture area, but it is hardly appropriate on the cover of a book about *Canadian* Indians. Whether Symington neglected to read far enough to discover or simply forgot to mention the fact, the work was painted by the artist from sketches made near Fort Colville in the State of Washington. For the most part, little or no attempt has been made to identify the tribal provenience of the illustrations and some are even without the identification of their creators.

One might excuse these deficiencies on the grounds that the author is a professional journalist and not a scholar, but then, we should expect

good journalism. What we find is some of the worst "Hiawatha" prose this reader has met with in recent years. Take for example the introductory paragraphs to chapter four, "The Nomads of the Eastern Forest":

Time moves gently in the land of lakes and forests. The haze of August lies in the valleys and on the low hills as if the cosmic breathing had been suspended in listening: as if it had always been and always would be afternoon.

The limpid pools lie within the enclosing forest in the bosoms of the hills and the lily stems rise, lay their leaves on the water and flower through the long summer, each like the other and each alone. Leaves turn colour with the season and drop to the ground, but the forest changes little as most trees are green at all seasons. The ice reaches slowly out from shore to the centre of the lake where the mists rise until thin ice quenches them. Snow falls in large flakes on branch or ground or glassy lake or stump or rock. Frost gradually locks the land and waters for a season until the sun comes gradually to release them, and the water seeps into the forest floor and goes by its own ways to the spring or river.

Trivial and harmless stuff? At one time it might have been regarded so, but not now, not in the place which this book is attempting to occupy in Canadian homes. While accurate enough in some places, and sympathetic to the Indians in its general approach, its inaccuracies and outmoded stereotypes suggest a hurried attempt to use the current public interest in Indians to corral a corner of the market. As usual the Indians have come out on the short end. They are approached here with the particularly Canadian, sanctimonious type of paternalism that veils an unconscious bigotry. The word *squaw* appears in several picture captions, where it will cut at the heart of every Indian reader with the same pain felt by other men who hear such epithets as *kike*, *bohunk*, or *nigger*. Anyone so ignorant or unperceptive as to use this term today, has no business writing a book about Indians.

A final disquieting fact about *The Canadian Indians* is revealed in the acknowledgments of the author and publisher: the work of writing and producing the book was begun under the aegis of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development which granted substantial financial assistance and access to departmental records. (These facts were verified by correspondence between this reviewer and the department.) Now such a connection is not inherently wrong. I am personally in full support of public assistance for Canadian authors and scholars. Neither has the result, in this instance, been an attempt to whitewash Canada's treatment of the Indians; in fact the final chapter reveals some of the inadequacies of government policy and administration. There is no basis

for suspecting that this book is an attempt to propagandize, for the government, the author, and the publisher have meant to be fair and have intended no harm. But look at the result: the taxpayer has assisted the publisher to bring out an expensive volume which makes a travesty of Canadian scholarship, insults Indians, and indirectly stands in support of views and ideas which have deterred their struggle for a better place in society. We should be getting more than this for our tax dollars and for what we pay over the counter of our bookstores.

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