

Recensions — Book Reviews

Ethnics and Indians: Social Relations in a Northwestern Ontario Town. By David H. STYMEIST. Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, 1975. pp. viii # 98. \$8.95.

Stymeist's monograph is on ethnic relations in Crow Lake, a fictitious name for a town whose real name one may discover after a five-minute scanning of a decent Canadian atlas. His special interest is in the relationship between the Indian people of the area, not many of whom reside permanently in the town itself, and what he calls the 'white ethnics': Chinese, French, Italians, Ukrainians, etc. In effect, 'white ethnics' are those who are not Indians. The monograph is a contribution to the Canadian Experience Series. Contributors to the Series are expected to make explicit their methodology and research techniques and to write in such a way that non-professionals and students in the social sciences find the analyses comprehensible. Stymeist's monograph fulfills these expectations.

Crow Lake began as a rail center during the first decade of the present century, became slightly more diversified during the 1930's with the establishment of a creosote plant and large sawmill, and eventually became what it is today, a bureaucratic administrative and service center for a large hinterland region. Stymeist traces the connections between the ethnic make-up of Crow Lake and its division of labour as the town passed through these economic phases. In the early period ethnic origin coincided closely with placement in the town's occupational and social status systems. However, over the years 'white ethnicity' has declined in importance as a key feature of social organization. People still recognize and have little influence on interaction, intermarriage, job allocation and the like.

While this process goes on among the non-Indian townsmen, the distinction, indeed cleavage, between them and the Indians remains as strong as ever. The exclusion of Indians from certain spheres of town life, in particular the economic, is documented by Stymeist. Anyone who thinks that prejudice and discrimination are un-Canadian, felt and practiced only by a minority of people with twisted personalities, will have their eyes opened by reading this book, for it demonstrates how prejudice and discrimination against native people are normal, are built into the system, to use a cliché. It is a cruel irony that the town is heavily dependent on the Indian presence in the region, for about 25% of its total jobs are directly connected to Indian health and other services.

The scholarly literature on ethnic relations in Canada is criticized by Stymeist for attributing an importance to ethnicity in Canada as a whole which he found did not jibe with the situation in Crow Lake and for failing to explain why natives are at the bottom of the Canadian totem pole. On

the first count, it is not much of a contribution to say, in effect, that what some writers have observed about the significance of ethnic differences in places X and Y does not hold true for Crow Lake. That the relations between, say, the Italians and French in Montreal are fraught with tensions and ambivalences which the French and Italians in Crow Lake do not experience is hardly surprising. On the other count, pertaining to the cast-like native and non-native relationship, Stymeist cites non of the Canadian literature which is perhaps most relevant to his enterprise. Studies of communities in the Arctic document the native and non-native split and attempt to explain the dynamics of it. To name a few recent authors, Nelson Graburn, Derek Smith, and Hugh Brody use one or another variant of the plural society model originally applied to colonial situations. As in the case of Crow Lake, so in these accounts we find that the ethnic differences among the 'white ethnics' pale in significance in the context of the overwhelming cleavage between native and non-native.

Despite these and a few other minor shortcomings, the monograph is very good and deserves a wide readership.

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Thomas R. BERGER. *Le Nord, Terre Lointaine, Terre Ancestrale*, Rapport de l'enquête sur le pipe-line de la vallée du Mackenzie, vol. I. Ministère des Approvisionnements et Services, Canada, 1977.

Le rapport Berger fait un répertoire explicite des arguments justifiant un refus de la construction d'un pipe-line à travers le Yukon du Nord. En même temps il recommande un délai de dix ans quant à la perspective d'examiner en termes plus adéquats l'implantation d'un tel projet dans la vallée du Mackenzie, à partir du delta du fleuve jusqu'à la frontière de l'Alberta. L'ambivalence de cette attitude réside dans la difficulté a-priorique de concilier les facteurs en présence:

- a. promotion d'un projet d'exploitation du Nord;
- b. respect des populations locales;
- c. préservation de la nature sauvage.

Il y a nous semble-t-il dans une perspective anthropologique de ce document, un plan implicite où sont focalisées des lectures complémentaires possibles; ce lieu est celui de la capacité que nous avons d'y voir notre propre pensée. Car, sujet de l'interrogation (le projet doit-il voir le jour?), moyens d'action et surtout décision à prendre, tout cela c'est nous, les Hommes Blancs du Nord Américain en cette fin du XX^e siècle. Nous sommes en ce projet d'expansion vers le Nord, le seul terme réellement actif, opérationnel.

Face au milieu naturel nous nous imposons; notre mythologie d'un équilibre homme-nature n'est que la projection naïve et démocratique d'une mythologie plus ancienne et plus répandue: celle du retour aux origines.