

understandably, a "solitude." The other "solitude," however, is isolated and fragmented. In contrast, American writers have been so bold or so cognizant of national identity as to write sweepingly of the "American" woman. In Canada, even the occasional "general" attempt has been in its own way fragmented, usually into biographical sketches. Can we not think nationally? Is scholarship still so embryonic that only regional or provincial history is feasible? Or is there, in fact, a commonality in women's historical experience that requires a wider perspective?

Ann Leger Anderson
Associate Professor
Department of History
University of Regina

Plants and the Blackfoot by Alex Johnston. Lethbridge: Lethbridge Historical Society Occasional Paper no. 15, 1987. Pp. 68.

There is a tendency to think of the movements of a nomadic people as random. In practice, seasonal movements tended to be highly purposeful, based on an expert knowledge of the climate of the region, weather conditions, animal behaviour and plant growth.

In *Plants and the Blackfoot*, Alex Johnston shows a segment in the life of the nomadic Blackfoot not often considered. The booklet is more than a catalogue of plants, and the real or alleged uses to which they were put. It is chiefly a literature review, tempered, as the author tells us, by thirty-nine years as a range researcher in the area and by his membership in the Kainai Chieftainship of the Blood Indian tribe.

Plants were utilized in every aspect of Blackfoot life. Although the buffalo was of paramount importance as a food source, the Blackfoot, like other non-agricultural plains people, consumed a considerable amount of vegetable food. Plants, whether local or obtained through trade, provided dyes and perfumes, and were used in the manufacture of weapons and tools and as construction materials. Above all, medical practices were impossible without plants or plant products. Much time was spent on personal adornment, not only to increase attractiveness, but also to identify the tribe or to mark ceremonial occasions. Dyes of plant origin were used to decorate personal articles, while seeds of certain plants were sewn on clothing or made into necklaces.

The booklet is liberally illustrated by the drawings of A.C. Budd, K.F. Best and G. Tailfeathers, and the paintings of A. Brown. Though adequate for identification, the illustrations suffer from their reduction in size and in the printing, rendering a heaviness not inherent in the originals. The photographs are of interest from a documentary point of view and illustrate the homely tasks of the Blackfoot, such as the erection of a tepee, a sweat lodge, and the preparation of saskatoon

fruit for drying and the making of chokecherry mash, but they are not very exciting.

Three spelling errors were detected, all in scientific names. These should read *Monarda fistulosa* instead of *Monardo fisiulosa* (p. 51), *Chimaphila umbellata* instead of *Chimphila* (p. 49), and *Helianthus annuus* instead of *Helianthus annus* (p. 58). Also, on page 34, it is stated that *Rumex mexicanus* is introduced, when in fact *Rumex crispus* is the introduced species.

The informative and sometimes amusing anecdotes, and the Old Man legends giving the derivations of the Blackfoot plant and geographic place names lend interest to what might otherwise have been a "ho-hum" compendium. Interest is also furthered by the notes, highlighted by grey boxes, telling of the merits and myths of Prairie Wool, Earth Medicine, poisonous plants, chewing sticks, or how to make pemmican, etc. This potpourri of snatches of information helps to illustrate the lives of not only the Blackfoot, but also of other Plains Indians and the early explorers, traders and settlers.

In summary, the author has not, as so often happens with this type of book, produced a pseudo-herbal or a pharmacopeia. What he has done is to put together a collection of scattered bits of information about an important people and their way of life. The author has helped to preserve what in many instances is becoming ever more rare with the demise of the tribal elders. The large number of references, many of which are annotated, should provide a good base for students of anthropology in the Canadian west.

Plants and the Blackfoot is an easy-reading supplement for all who would understand the western plains and its people.

Murray G. Maw
Agriculture Canada (retired)
Regina, Saskatchewan

Tommy Douglas: The Road to Jerusalem, by Thomas H. McLeod and Ian McLeod. Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1987. Pp. 341.

Canadians are slowly acquiring a collection of biographies and autobiographies concerning men and women who have played an historical role in the development of socialism in Canada. McNaught's biography of J.S. Woodsworth, *A Prophet in Politics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959), A. Mardiros's *William Irvine* (Toronto: J. Lorimer, 1979), W. Beeching and P. Clarke's (eds.) *Yours in Struggle: Reminiscences of Tim Buck* (Toronto: WC Press, 1979), J.F.C. Wright's *The Louise Lucas Story* (Montréal: Harvest House, 1965), and Stephen Endicott's account of his father's life, *James G. Endicott: Rebel Out of China* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980) are important cases in point. To this collection may now be added *Tommy Douglas: The Road to Jerusalem*, a