

By far the best section of *The Canadian Prairies* is that which deals with the years of rapid growth and massive depression between 1840 and 1940. This is an excellent chronicle of the racial, religious, class and regional issues which shaped prairie politics, social structure and economic life during this period. Finally, Friesen concludes his survey with a section on the "new west," which is perhaps the least satisfactory portion of this book, even though it provides an adequate synopsis of recent developments.

There are two aspects of this final section which are somewhat troublesome. First, it is far too brief to do justice to the more than forty years that it covers. To some extent, this simply reflects the lack of scholarly work done on the modern period—a factor which the author of any survey can do little to overcome. The second problem arises from what some may perceive to be Friesen's overly optimistic assessment of contemporary prairie society. He draws a picture of a community which is becoming more tolerant of ethnic differences, which has retained its sense of identity despite the intrusions of a monolithic and pervasive mass culture, and which has a firm grip on its economic and political future. While Friesen stops far short of portraying the prairies as the best of all possible worlds, one gets a certain intimation that it just might be.

There is, of course, evidence which challenges many of these conclusions and Friesen is well aware of many counterarguments; indeed, he cites several. This knowledge has not, however, deterred him from retaining his optimism. Perhaps he is justified in this, for after completing so masterful a survey, no author can be blamed for offering a hopeful assessment of the society which he has spent so much time studying.

The Canadian Prairies is an invaluable contribution to Canadian historiography. Its real genius lies in its successful joining of important, but often neglected, studies on various aspects of western life. It will be the standard reference on prairie history for many years to come and is a "must read" for any student of Canadian history.

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The Myth of the Savage: And the Beginnings of French Colonialism in the Americas by Olive Patricia Dickason. Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 1984. Pp. 380.

First People, First Voices by Penny Petrone, editor. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983. Pp. 224.

These books deal with quite diverse aspects of Indian and contact history in Canada. Both have an appealing format and style which

should make them accessible to a wide readership, but they share little in subject matter and approach. Olive Patricia Dickason's *The Myth of the Savage: And the Beginnings of French Colonialism in the Americas*, is an important contribution to our understanding of the complex origins of French attitudes and policies toward the people of the new world. Perceptions of and approaches toward native people were conditioned by literary, theological and folklore traditions, by published accounts and illustrations widely circulated in Europe, and by the realities of contact. Dickason's work upholds the view that, compared to the other colonizing powers, France had a superior record of relations with native people, but her central argument is that this gift for accommodation and co-operation, evident in New France, was the product of a century of cumulative experience and experiment in the new world.

The first part, "American Discoveries and European Images," describes the development of European beliefs about and attitudes toward the people of the new world. While close attention is paid to French perceptions, Dickason displays an impressive command of manuscript and primary printed sources in English, Spanish and Latin. Beginning with the 1493 publication of Columbus's letter announcing his discovery, Dickason traces how Europeans began to accumulate a welter of haphazard first-hand accounts and hearsay evidence on the inhabitants of the new world. The new technology of the printing press allowed this information to be disseminated rapidly and widely. The illustrations which accompanied these publications, of which there are lavish examples in the book, were invariably the work of artists who had not seen what they were trying to depict, but were nonetheless important moulders of images and patterns of thought. A decided tendency was to present the Indians as cannibals. The European scholars and theologians who collected and synthesized this evidence produced their own great volume of writing, which was concerned primarily with the question of how the new world inhabitants fit into the Christian cosmos. Evidence of the Indians' appearance, customs, and habits raised fundamental questions and problems concerning biblical accounts. The general consensus that emerged from this medley of pondering and speculation was that the new world inhabitant was "l'homme sauvage," a concept which had long been part of European literature and folklore. Renaissance Europe believed that the people of the new world were at an early, immature stage of civilization, but that there was every hope that they could be "humanized" and Christianized, and cured of their largely deplorable habits and customs. The belief in the myth of the savage, Dickason argues, provided Europeans with a moral sanction to colonize, and made it possible to ignore the complexity and integrity of new world societies.

As evidence of this complexity and integrity, the second part,

"Early Contacts of Amerindians and Frenchmen," begins with brief ethnographic sketches of the societies that inhabited the northern Atlantic coast, the St. Lawrence and its hinterlands at the time of first contact with Europeans. Dickason then describes the legal and political rationales Europeans devised to justify their presence in the new world. The French approach, Dickason believes, was more in keeping with native philosophy which called for the sharing of the land and its resources. The French did not effect nominal purchases of the land, as the Dutch and English did, but devised the doctrine that they received the use of the land in return for teaching Christianity. According to Dickason, this was "perfectly acceptable" to the Indians, "as they regarded such agreements very much as they did alliances, as arrangements to be cyclically renewed, with appropriate gifts," and the French were careful to honour these conventions. (Pp. 132-33) Dickason then focusses on three failed attempts to establish French colonies in the new world in the sixteenth century, developing the argument that it was only through painful experience that the French acquired skill in accommodating and co-operating with Indians. A chapter is devoted to the Cartier-Roberval colonization effort. The next attempt to establish a French presence in the new world was in Brazil between 1555 and 1560. There the French took great care to nurture relations with their suppliers of brazilwood. They began the practice of sending young men to live with the inhabitants to learn the language and way of life. Men groomed as interpreters and "go-betweens" were known later in Canada as "coureurs de bois." The experience gained through this, and another failed attempt at colonization, in Florida, convinced the French that active co-operation with the inhabitants, or *la douceur*, was the key to future success. It was learned that friendship with the Indians was essential to the establishment of a power base in the new world, that effective alliances had to be negotiated and sealed according to native conventions, and it was realized that alliances could be used to advantage in attacking European rivals. The policy of *douceur* allowed New France to be finally and firmly established in the new world in the seventeenth century.

The third part, "Iron Men and True Men in New France," traces how the policy of *douceur* was realized by traders and missionaries in the St. Lawrence valley. Accommodation and co-operation was more successful in the trade and military realm than in the religious. Although a massive transformation to "civilization" and Christianity was not achieved, the French gained the loyalty and friendship of many Indians. The French skillfully engaged Indian self-interest, and manipulated their love of honour and prestige, creating lasting alliances. The strength of these alliances was proved in the support given to the French in the colonial wars. The ultimate goal of a spiritual and cultural metamorphosis for the Indians ultimately failed, according to

Dickason, because the French were incapable of transcending their traditional view of native people as deficient counterparts.

A criticism that might be made of Dickason's approach is that in her effort to point out that assumptions and judgements were heavily prejudiced by social and cultural baggage, and that past successes and failures influenced action and behaviour, the role of the environment, and the importance of the staple product in determining the nature of race relations is underestimated. The French had little choice but to establish harmonious, conciliatory relations with the native people of Canada because of the economic resources the territory offered. The boreal forest environment was too harsh to invite extensive agricultural settlement. Canada offered none of the mineral wealth that the Spanish found, which required a concentrated labour force and led to coercive instruments such as *encomienda*, which were designed to assure such a supply. In Canada there were furs, and a system of lakes and rivers that allowed these to be transported with relative ease from the hinterland to the coastal markets. In this environment Europeans were technologically inferior to the Indian trappers, middlemen and transporters. To maintain a successful fur trade, the French had to rely on the Indians and they had to enter into and observe already existing inter-tribal trade and alliance systems. As they were dependent on the fur trade, the French could not afford to act in an abrasive, offensive manner. They could not destroy the Indians or their habitat because the economy of the fur trade required that these be preserved. When the English arrived on the Bay to trade in furs they too found they had to pursue a policy much like *douceur*, despite their rather different corpus of accumulated experience.

First People, First Voices is a collection of Canadian Indian writing and speeches, from the time of contact with Europeans to the present, with an emphasis on earlier as opposed to contemporary works. The editor, Penny Petrone, presents the theme that Indians, writing in Canada today, draw on a long literary tradition in English, as native people have spoken English for over three centuries, and have been writing in English since the early nineteenth century. Throughout this time their words have often been translated into and recorded in English. Although Petrone notes that "the real roots of Indian literature" are to be found in the oral tradition in native languages, the book provides only a small sampling of these as she notes that many collections of myths and legends already exist. (P. vii) This book includes a wide diversity of modes of expression, including orations, letters, petitions, reports, journals, songs, poetry and prose. Petrone believes that these illustrate the evolution of an Indian literary tradition in English, and that they also reveal a great deal about the Indian view of Canadian history.

The collection is arranged in chronological order, and brief intro-

ductions are appended to each item, brief because the editor felt that "the various Indian spokesmen should speak for themselves with a minimum of interpretation." (P. viii) The first chapter consists of seventeenth and eighteenth century speeches and statements that were chosen primarily to illustrate the eloquence and skill of Indian orators, their use of figurative and symbolic language, and of metaphor, wit and irony. The unifying theme of the second chapter, which focusses on the nineteenth century, is native people coming to terms with the settlement of Europeans in their midst. Petrone presents this as a time of misery, poverty and disease and she describes the dominant theme of the texts presented here—Indian petitions, protests, and treaty speeches—as one of loss of dignity, nationhood, and self-sufficiency, although a will to survive was also evident. Chapter three presents a sampling of literature from the first Indians to write in English. In the period of the late nineteenth century to the 1950s, covered in the fourth chapter, the Indians were becoming "increasingly aware of their physical and spiritual roots in North American soil." (P. 125) This section features the work of essayists, speakers and poets who tended to reach back into the Indian past for their themes and subject matter. Some Indian myths, legends and songs are placed in this chapter because it was during this period that these were rescued, collected and published. The final chapter presents a selection of contemporary Indian poetry, fiction, political speeches, biography, history and drama.

First People, First Voices performs an important service by pointing out that Canada's native people have left an accessible record in their own voice, and that it is possible to trace and reconstruct something of their thoughts and perspective on events. Canadian historians have generally failed to incorporate any Indian point of view, and a lack of source material is not an acceptable excuse for this oversight. Historians must approach this material with care. Some cautionary notes might have accompanied the selections to alert the uninitiated. Although readers may be more concerned with matters of form and style than with subject matter, problems also arise with the former. Many passages in the first chapter are from the *Jesuit Relations*, and are English translations of French missionary accounts of Indians speaking in their own languages. The problem of how accurate and authentic these translations are is only briefly raised with the suggestion that they may reflect the interpreters' "tastes, abilities, purposes and beliefs." (P. 3) Something more of the linguistic and cultural difficulties involved in translation should be taken into account.

Some discussion about the nature of missionary sources might also have been included. The *Jesuit Relations* were published accounts, intended for wide circulation in the hope of attaining financial support and attracting recruits to the field. In order to exalt the importance of missionary work, these and other missionary publications tended to

dwell on the cruelties and evils of the tribal life they condemned. The converts who were held up as sterling examples of the transforming power of mission work tended to speak of the wickedness of their former pagan lives. The same tendency toward a selective presentation is evident in sources such as Hudson's Bay Company documents, and Alexander Morris's account of the Treaties. The introductory notes might have said more about the nature of sources, and they might also have provided more historical context. Chapter one, for example, presents an imperfect understanding of the factionalism among the Hurons that resulted from Jesuit missionary work. Simplifications and generalizations are perhaps unavoidable in a book that attempts to represent a time span of over three hundred years. A more topical, less chronological approach might have been more satisfying. Chronology tends to reflect the evolving Euro-Canadian perception of native people, who were first regarded as vital military and trade allies, then as potential converts to Christianity, then as chronic complainers unable to adjust, and then as feathered and painted curios reciting legends at garden parties and on public platforms. A more native-centred approach might, for example, have begun with the ancient myths and legends.

This book suffers from some organizational problems. Simply being Indian does not appear to be an adequate organizing principle, as, like any other group of people, Indians have spoken and written on a wide variety of topics. Modes of expression as diverse as poetry and political speeches cannot be included in the same collection without danger of doing a disservice to both.

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The Collected Writings of Louis Riel/Les Ecrits Complets de Louis Riel general editor George F. G. Stanley. Edited by Raymond Huel, Gilles Martel, Glen Campbell, Thomas Flanagan, and Claude Rocan. 5 vols., Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 1985.

The collecting, editing, annotating and publishing of primary documents has a long scholarly tradition in Canada. Few leading Canadian historical figures will have had their complete writings so carefully and successfully scrutinized as Riel. There are two areas in which this considerable and wise investment on the part of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) and the University of Alberta must be scrutinized: the standards of scholarship in editing primary documents and, second, the contribution to the historiography and understanding of Riel. The five volumes succeed much more in setting new standards for the scholarly editing of docu-