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REVIEW

VILHJALMUR STEFANSSON

[Review by Gavin White* of Richard J. Diubaldo's *Stefansson and the Canadian Arctic*. Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1978, 274 p. £13.25.]

Vilhjalmur Stefansson first went to the Arctic as an anthropologist working in the Mackenzie Delta during the years 1906–07, returned to the same general area with the zoologist R. M. Anderson from 1908 until 1912, and then headed the Canadian Arctic Expedition from 1913 until 1918. During this last period he discovered new islands far to the north of the Canadian landmass, and was duly honoured on his return. Yet when he tried to initiate new ventures they failed, and he was so unwelcome to the Canadian government that he moved to the United States. Professor Diubaldo sets out to tell us why.

He begins with chapters on Stefansson's early life in the American midwest, where he was indoctrinated with that Darwinian pushiness which it is suggested governed his later years. This is possible, but millions of Americans came from the same mould and yet outgrew it, and it would seem almost as likely that any tendency to seek the main chance came from an early introduction to academic one-upmanship. But the main theme is that of Stefansson's involvement with Canadian politicians and civil servants, and here Professor Diubaldo is pioneering. It is also here that unanswered questions remain. We may accept the argument that the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Borden, took over Stefansson's expedition lest it should find new lands for the United States. But that does not tell us why Borden confided the expedition to the inexperienced Department of Naval Service, which allowed it to go north without adequate preparation, and with an unsuitable ship

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that was crushed by the ice with a loss of 11 lives. The probable reason is that Borden's Conservative government had come to power over the issue of a naval contribution by Canada for which Churchill was pressing, and the expedition was given to Naval Service only a month before Borden's naval bill was defeated in the Senate. Britain had found that polar exploration helped the image of the Royal Navy, and Borden may have hoped to improve that of his infant navy by adding to Canadian territory. But if there is nothing of this in Professor Diubaldo's book, one can only conclude that such a diligent researcher found nothing in the archives. Nevertheless, the impression is given that if Stefansson was trying to use the Canadian government they were trying to use him, and were ultimately more successful.

The disarray of the Canadian Arctic Expedition left Stefansson with almost all his colleagues hostile to him, but this had nothing to do with his subsequent troubles. He initiated two Arctic ventures on which he was ill-informed. His attempt to annex Wrangel Island, where the survivors of the expedition ship *Karluuk* had taken refuge in 1914, led to four more deaths and was a diplomatic embarrassment to Canada. His attempt to introduce reindeer to Baffin Island was a fiasco; but by now Stefansson was considered a nuisance and his writings were infuriating his former colleagues, so the establishment in Ottawa froze him out.

Professor Diubaldo has researched his subject as none has done before or is ever likely to do again. But since neither Stefansson nor his opponents appear in a sympathetic light, the ultimate effect is rather clinical, and this may account for a degree of failure to hold the reader's interest, as Stefansson's character is explored again and again. Yet the book does leave the reader with a sense of tragedy. Whatever his limitations, Stefansson did have abilities, and after being denied a prominent part in Arctic development he might have moved on to a new career, perhaps as an anthropologist in another continent. Instead he spent the second half of his life re-living the events of the first half as a popular writer and lecturer.

ASSESSING ANTARCTICA'S FUTURE

[Review by David Drewry* of *Last of lands . . . Antarctica*, by J. F. Lovering and J. R. V. Prescott, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1979, 212 p, illus. A\$9.80.]

The Antarctic Treaty, despite several shortcomings especially in dealing with territorial claims, has been presented as a model for other spheres of international activity. The cynic would claim, however, that the success of the Treaty, in terms of unparalleled scientific co-operation, stemmed from the inhospitable and commercially insignificant nature of the Antarctic continent. In the late 1950s nations could afford to take a benign attitude in accepting the generally wide-ranging terms of the Treaty—after all little was apparently at stake. But by the mid to late 1970s the scene had changed dramatically. Antarctica has now taken on a new importance in the world which cannot be ignored. The practicability of utilizing its hydrocarbon, mineral and biological resources has rapidly and irreversibly changed the international political prospects for Antarctica.

Last of lands . . . Antarctica is a welcome first attempt at addressing the changing political and economic circumstances of Antarctica. It is principally a critical assessment of the mineral and living resources of the region, and the various national claims to a share in their exploitation. The book is divided into four approximately equal chapters which, together with a summary on future prospects, review the general physical and biological environment, the current state of resources, the history of Antarctic discovery and Antarctic political geography.

Chapters II and IV are the core of the work. The former deals dispassionately with the present state of knowledge of earth and biological resources and their relative importance. It covers topics such as krill, squid and fish, ferrous and non-ferrous minerals, energy resources, tourism, iceberg utilization, and has a special section on off-shore oil and gas. The chapter, although a little uneven, does provide a very good all-round summary. The numerous recent and often sensational reports on resource potential are dealt with realistically. The authors are at pains to underscore the very

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