

in spite of these unfortunate deficiencies, the picture provided of the every-day lives of a fairly representative sample of frontier-living Yukoners appears to be an accurate reflection of reality, made all the more so by what seem to be verbatim accounts of interviews.

In certain chapters of the book reasons are sought for the endurance of the image of the Yukon as a lawless land, somehow frozen into a turn-of-century time capsule, populated by such stock characters as claim-jumpers, bearded sourdoughs, red-coated Mounties, and big-hearted dance-hall girls. In attempting to show why this image bears little resemblance to present-day reality the authors look closely at the solitary lives of some remarkable individualists, such as miners who still "moil for gold" in the Klondike, trappers whose essential lifestyles have not changed radically over the past several decades, mystic bush dwellers and hard-nosed engineers, big-game hunters, and an ardent and very articulate conservationist. While it is true that most of the people encountered in this book are not typical of the bulk of the population who live year-round in towns, their lives nevertheless illustrate the fact that the realities of the Yukon remain the physical ones of space and isolation, the sheer magnitude of its mountains, rivers and forests, and the abundance of its wildlife. As the authors have discovered, these realities give rise to attitudes of fear and respect on the one hand and desires to challenge and conquer the environment on the other. The Yukon being so different from the more settled parts of North America, reports of interviews with representative townfolk and native people, had they taken place, would have added a dimension of interest to the book.

The book does not appear to answer one of the fundamental, and perhaps most important, questions that it raises: what is it that really attracts people to this unique frontier area and what causes them either to remain or to depart? Money and power are straightforward motivating factors, but one senses from the personal histories given in this book that the underlying reasons are rather an instinctive attraction to the land and the opportunity of leading a more independent life than is possible in the South. The truth of the matter would be very difficult to establish. Author and photographer clearly however look upon the Yukon as a special area in which human and environmental considerations should as far as possible balance those of economic gain, be they expressed in volume of gas or weight of ore extracted. I expect many readers of the book will take a similar view.

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**MUSKEG AND THE NORTHERN ENVIRONMENT IN CANADA.** EDITED BY N. W. RADFORTH AND C. O. BRAWNER. *Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1977. 399 pages, illus., maps. \$35.00.*

In 1732, Linnaeus stated when describing muskeg in Lapland: "Never can the priest so describe hell, because it is no worse." Those who have had direct experience of the nature of muskeg, especially during the summer months, would probably agree.

The book here reviewed is an excellent compendium of papers prepared by Canadian investigators and presented at the Fifteenth Muskeg Conference in 1973. The papers mainly concern Canada where muskeg is concentrated in the spruce-tamarack zone extending from James Bay northwestward to Great Bear Lake and comprises an ecosystem of almost half a million square kilometres. Although some details remain to be worked out, the general characteristics and Canadian distribution of muskeg are now at hand with the issue of the present volume.

Part I concerns the general features of muskeg. The contributors describe the physical processes of muskeg formation, and how, through derangement of drainage patterns throughout Pleistocene history, the landscape acquired its present features. Excellent summaries are provided of the classification, distribution and hydrology of muskeg as well as the effects of permafrost and climate on its formation.

Part II concerns the utilization of muskeg resources. The paper on the interrelations of Canadian forests, soil varieties and muskeg distribution is of especial interest. Agricultural possibilities of muskeg are outlined and the various possibilities of using peat moss industrially are discussed. It is pointed out, however, that certain uses of the peaty material are economically dubious and discretion is therefore advised with regard to long-range plans. Research has shown that peat is potentially very useful for the treatment of polluted waters, as a source of activated carbon and as material for construction.

Part III, entitled "Environmental consideration", is an informative group of papers on road, pipeline and related construction problems in organic terrain. Also included in this part are reports on water resources and waste disposal. The concluding paper concerns wildlife and conservation.

Fifteen pages of technical terms give added value to the volume. The editors are to be congratulated on this excellent and definitive work.

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