

River, Lake Winnipeg, Abitibi, and Sept-Îles), and of the main economic and political issues. Chapter II, which takes up about two-thirds of the volume, comprises chiefly descriptions of the past and present commercial enterprises and government activities in the Canadian North. Neither the data nor the analyses are new, but the compilation is done in a more careful and interesting manner. Hundreds of unobtrusive footnotes help to make the study a good guide through a very wide literature on such subjects as Yukon gold at the turn of the century, Brinco, Peace River Power, and the British Columbia Railway. The Canol pipeline, built during the Second World War, from Norman Wells through the Yukon, rates an interesting page, but the current Arctic pipeline proposals are not discussed.

In summarizing Chapter II, Rea notes that the "unorganized, dependent and colonial status" of the North, with its "traditional reliance on monopoly control" make it difficult to apply the traditional political-economic analysis based on an "individualistic conception of the state." As a substitute, he suggests that we think of a "corporative" state, in which the focus of analysis is interest groups rather than individuals. In the bargaining among private and public interest groups, the power of the Canadian electorate and parliament is reduced and that of the government and corporate bureaucracies correspondingly increased.

Chapter III provides a shorter review of activities in the northern regions of other countries. This survey of northern development policies in Alaska, Greenland, Norway, Sweden, Finland and the U.S.S.R., provides a welcome antidote to any impression that Canadian Arctic issues are unique. Nevertheless, Rea does point out some important differences. In the other countries, except Greenland, there has been a larger and more long-standing role for northern agriculture and consequently a greater depopulation of the North as industrialization has proceeded. Northern policy in all the countries but Greenland has provided some incentives for industrial development, reminiscent to those offered by the Department of Regional Economic Expansion in the Canadian Maritimes. Rea notes that nowhere else has northern development been left so open to international commercial and industrial influences.

In the short concluding chapter, Rea establishes one of his major themes: that the North has been largely developed for, and by, southern Canadian and international in-

terests. He all too briefly notes the recent attempts to establish a greater northern involvement, and the divergent interests of the native and white northerners.

In general, the study provides a very careful and interesting compilation of historical and current material on the role of government and industry in the north. My chief disappointment is that the concept of "political economy" used to set the boundaries of the study was rather traditionally limited to government and industry, so that the native groups and their activities were virtually ignored. The more broadly defined political economy of the native societies, as they have operated before and since the white presence, would have added much-needed new perspectives on the issues of northern development. Naturally, one could not expect Rea to include such a major effort in his already substantial volume, but he might have recognized more fully that such an addition could be a valid and important part of a study of the political economy of the North.

As for mundane matters, the price, layout, and typography of the book are all good. The paperback binding is less well done, if one is to judge from the fact that the first sixteen pages of my copy have already found their freedom.

John F. Helliwell

THE TAR SANDS: SYNCRUDE AND THE POLITICS OF OIL. BY LARRY PRATT. *Edmonton, Alberta: Hurtig, 1976. 8 x 5 1/4 inches, 197 pages. \$8.95 cloth, \$3.95 paper.*

For many Canadians today, energy policy constitutes the most baffling and controversial area of public affairs. Since they possess such abundant natural resources, why are they in such trouble? Energy policy seems to involve so many interrelated factors: escalating prices, declining reserves, environmental dangers, conservation needs, native land claims, and even the ownership structure. Yet, as the problems become clearer, the solutions become more elusive. Traditional means and approaches are no longer effective. The whole energy scenario is a series of "trade-offs"; each new source of energy supply, such as nuclear or from the tar sands, is more expensive than any other and carries with it further environmental and/or social problems. In addition, lurking in the background of the whole debate are the mutually conflicting principles of the growth ethic and the conserver society. It is because this field

is so complex and confusing that analytical studies such as Larry Pratt's are so important.

The Tar Sands provides a fascinating window on to the politics of a new technology. The author's factual data are detailed and accurate, while his thesis is clear: "By exploiting their monopoly veto power — their power as exclusive holders of essential information, expertise, and technology to scuttle development of the tar sands — the corporations were able to push up the price of new energy in Canada" and secure "better profits." While the oil companies were clear and determined in pursuing their goals, the provincial and federal authorities vacillated without clear policies and reacted to ultimatums about scarcity by largely accepting the dictates of the multinational corporations. As governments have been unable to protect the public interest properly, Canadians must now consider the option of selective public ownership. It is hardly surprising that Pratt's conclusions have provoked considerable controversy, especially in official circles in Alberta. It is a fundamental attack on the competence of many federal and provincial officials as well as a contribution to the growing political debate in Canada on public ownership in the energy field.

This volume shows with disturbing clarity how the oil companies were able to take advantage of the feuds between Ontario and Alberta, and between Ottawa and the provinces. The lack of expertise in the federal camp made their position difficult when the Atlantic Richfield Company abandoned the tar sands project because of heavy financial commitments in Alaska. The three remaining partners threatened to abandon the project unless the federal and provincial governments agreed to provide \$600 million in equity immediately. A series of dramatic meetings followed during which, Pratt states, public funds were made available without the governments' obtaining a corresponding share in the control of the company.

This is not a book for those who are seeking a detailed discussion of environmental or technological issues. In his subtitle *Syncrude and the Politics of Oil*, Pratt clearly indicates his objective in writing. However, a more thorough discussion of some of the environmental issues would certainly have complemented some of his political analyses. In August 1974, for instance, the Department of the Environment produced a confidential report that was a scathing indictment of the *Syncrude Environmental Impact Assessment*. It discussed clearly a number of the poten-

tial dangers such as sulphur emissions in fog and found that Syncrude had rejected existing technology on its own assessment of cost and benefit. The report also found wildlife baseline data inadequate and the "functional relationship of ecosystem components" not properly quantified. From this report and others, it is evident that there are general problems connected with the preservation of environmental standards in a project like that of Syncrude. Private corporations have a tendency to downplay environmental dangers because they entail increased capital and operating costs. In many instances, environmental factors are considered primarily in the light of how they affect the technical feasibility of the project, rather than how the project influences the surrounding ecosystems. The engineer may often have a perspective reverse to that of the biologist. Normal corporate cost/benefit analysis allows only limited adaptations of project planning for general environmental considerations. Most corporate decision-makers are drawn from the accounting or engineering professions, and the key to success in their corporate careers lies in keeping construction costs close to original estimates (which are usually completed prior to environmental impact research). Some of these financial problems of industry are also closely interlinked with the political factors which Pratt presents so well.

Pratt's book is more than just another case study of private pursuit of profits and government bungling; it shows how weak the whole decision-making structure has been. As a nation, Canadians seem to have been incapable of long-term planning and can only blunder along with *ad hoc* crisis management. In addition, Pratt raises a number of questions about the changing nature of private enterprise in the energy field. Through tax concessions and inflated world prices, the public will be supplying a very large part of the capital requirements for future expansion. In addition, on projects like that of Syncrude, they have provided nearly half of the equity funds as well. As projects have increased in size and cost, the major companies have tended to form consortia to plan and build. Thus, today, one finds them cooperating not only between themselves but financially with governments as well. With their large financial investment, governments cannot easily retain their role as honest brokers in protecting the public interest. The Syncrude project has demonstrated the structural problems which underlie the whole future development of energy policy in Canada.

Robert Page