

NORTHERN REVIEWS

GRÖNLAND 1945.

By OLE VINDINGS 148 pp; Gyldendal, Copenhagen, 1946. Kr. 6.85.

Books on Greenland which do not indulge in one or another fairy story of the idyllic life of the Greenlanders are rare, especially when they are written, as this book was, on a short acquaintance with the country. There are no fairy stories in Vinding's book. "*Grönland 1945*" is also remarkable for its display of knowledge of the country gained in only two summer seasons. The author expresses his indebtedness to the many Greenlanders and Danes from whom, by expert cross-questioning, much of the information was obtained. There is ample evidence, moreover, of considerable historical research.

Successful Wartime Administration

The general tone is critical of the administration and of the record of the development of Greenland. In this, the author is giving voice to a growing feeling of criticism among both Danes and Greenlanders, which grew to considerable pressure during the last war. The "invisible government" in Copenhagen, the government from a distance, the "policy of delay", the "fanatical conservatism" of the administration, and an out-dated constitution, are all aired, with a rare frankness, in the well-documented first chapter. The wartime administration, which was centred in Godthaab, and was thus the first administration to operate from within the country, is described as "a new wind over Greenland" and comes in for some well deserved praise. It is pointed out that had the wartime administration failed, the results might have been disastrous for Danish sovereignty.

The second chapter describes a conversation with two Greenland cousins who bear the same name—Nicolaj Rosing—one an outpost manager and member of the Greenland Assembly ("Parliament" or "Landsraad"), the other a schoolmaster. Both these men are looking for better education and technical training for the Greenlanders, so that they may in fact be the equals of the Danes in Greenland. A magazine article written by one of the cousins is reprinted *in extenso*, the article favouring modification of the closed-shore and trade-monopoly policies to the extent of allowing the entry into Greenland, for trading and fishing purposes, of Danish nationals. The chapter ends by interpreting the anti-thesis between conservatism and progress in Greenland as a battle to free the Greenlander from his own inferiority complex, a complex which, according to the author, is a product of administrative policies in the early period (18th century).

Character of Greenlanders

Some sixteen pages are devoted to a discussion of the Greenlanders' feeling of inferiority, and its causes. The trouble is referred to as far back as the days of modern Greenland's first missionary, Hans Egede, when the Greenlanders' traditional social structure was broken down and inadequately replaced by Christian dogma. This, followed later by a paternal and protective administration which shielded the Greenlanders from their own faults, produced a population with no sense of responsibility, little native initiative, and an abiding conviction of its own helplessness. The argument is convincingly put, and implied in it is the interesting and important point that, within certain limits, the farther the

individual is advanced towards the European economy and method of thought, the greater the feeling of inferiority. The final threshold to a feeling of real equality, which requires the greatest effort, has seldom been crossed.

The problem of Greenlandic women is rightly given a section to itself. It has been emphasized many times during the history of Greenland, and especially in recent years, that the women are the key to the development and progress of the country. If they were properly educated, they could support and maintain by domestic influence progressive administrative policies. As they are, uninformed, conservative, and the complete mistress of the home, they can and do destroy most of the good done in the schools and hospitals.

Everyday Greenland

The fourth chapter "Everyday Greenland" covers various phases of Greenland life, including housing, health, the church, schools, industries and law. This chapter takes up over one third of the book, and contains much of the contemporary criticism to be heard in Greenland. The tuberculosis problem is treated superficially, but perhaps as fully as can be done in a work designed for the popular market. The section on the schools and the church (properly treated together) is excellent and manages to get to the heart of the problem in remarkably few pages. The recommendation of the 1945 meeting of the National Assembly, for more schools and the use of Danish as the language of instruction, is given proper emphasis, and the inadequacies of the ecclesiastical education, not only for general purposes but even for those going into the church, are brought out. The destructive influence of the home is not forgotten, but perhaps the author underestimates the difficulties of teaching the Eskimo mind along European lines.

The sheep farming developments in the Julianehaab, Frederikshaab and Godthaab districts are little more than alluded to. Considering the great promise which sheep farming has for the future, this is unfortunate. The fishery, although described in a ten-page section, is not treated as fully as one would wish, for it is Greenland's most important native industry. As Vinding himself puts it "the sea is Greenland's destiny". The key to the whole development, the recent hydrographic change in west Greenland, is nowhere mentioned, nor is the status of the seal population of Greenland given more than passing attention. The weaknesses of the present organization of the cod-fishery (shortage of salting-stations, sometimes shortage of salt, and so on) are well defined, but no allowance is made for what must lie behind the caution with which the fishery has been developed, namely the fear that the presence of cod in such numbers may well be only temporary. There is a good point, however, in the statement that the fishery can never be adequately organized by a government in Copenhagen—it must have an administration within Greenland.

This long fourth chapter concludes with a sympathetic account of the special problems of the administration of the law among Greenlanders, and a section on the training, which is considered inadequate, given to the Danish apprentices in the trade and administration, the young men who will later become colony managers.

The Future

There is much good stuff at the end of the book: an "introduction to the future", a description of the Greenlandic magazines and cultural life, and an account of the functioning of the "world's smallest parliament". There is a brief estimate of the mental development of the Greenlanders during the war, when Greenland had its own administration within its own coasts; the political awakening resulting in some most constructive proposals in the Landsraad Assembly on the future of the country; and the significance of recent articles in the Greenland press. There was an anxiety at the end of the war, a fear that the progress accomplished during the war would be nullified by unsympathetic action from Copenhagen. The Greenlander had had a peep out into the world and did not wish the window closed again, and he had come to realize the value of responsible government of the country *in* the country. Vinding concludes that changes in the constitution of Greenland are demanded by present developments, the most important being the establishment of the administration in Greenland instead of in Denmark.

He does not, however, favour opening the country up to private traders, fishermen or sheep-farmers, on the grounds that there is little enough in Greenland for the Greenlanders themselves. Finally, he puts the responsibility for the proper development of Greenland squarely upon the shoulders of the Danish voter and citizen, pointing out that the decision rests with him, and not with a "many-headed civil service". His closing sentence is: "in a free and democratic land there must be no doubt as to who is the master, who the servant".

Development of Greenland Remarkable

"Grönland 1945" criticizes or praises (rarely) the Danish administration of Greenland for the benefit of the Danish people. From the outsider's point of view it should be remembered that whatever criticism is levelled, the development of Greenland is still a remarkable story, perhaps unique in the history of colonial administration. Ole Vinding has written a book of great value at this point in Greenland's history, and one which demands translation into English. The translation, however, would have to be very skilled to match the quality of the Danish original. The author is a writer by profession, and the son of a writer; the tradition of letters is apparent in the work under review.

M.J.D.

RECONNAISSANCE GEOLOGY OF PORTIONS OF VICTORIA ISLAND AND ADJACENT REGIONS OF ARCTIC CANADA.

By A. L. WASHBURN, xi and 133 pp: 32 plates, maps, index. Geological Society of America, 1947.

On October 20, 1947, the Geological Society of America issued a memoir, number 22, entitled "*Reconnaissance Geology of Portions of Victoria Island and Adjacent Regions Arctic Canada*" by A. L. Washburn of the Arctic Institute of North America, Montreal and New York. The memoir is the result of investigations carried out during July and August 1938 and 1939 and from April 1940 to February 1941 by the author and in addition summarizes what information was available from other field studies such as those of Bernier, Douglas, and O'Neill.