

DR JOHN RAE. By R.L. RICHARDS. Whitby: Caedmon of Whitby (9 John Street, Whitby, England YO21 3ET), 1985. 231 p. + 6 maps, 31 illus., bib., index. £16.50.

John Rae was one of the most successful arctic explorers. His four major expeditions mapped, by his reckoning, 1765 miles of previously unknown arctic coastline. He proved that Boothia was a peninsula and that King William Land was an island. He was the first to obtain definitive evidence regarding the fate of the third Franklin expedition.

Rae was prepared for his later achievements by his childhood in the Orkneys and by ten years with the Hudson's Bay Company at Moose Factory. Of his Orkney activities Rae later said:

By the time I was fifteen, I had become so seasoned as to care little about cold or wet, had acquired a fair knowledge of boating, was a moderately good climber among rocks and not a bad walker for my age, sometimes carrying a pretty heavy load of game or fish on my back. All of these acquirements, often thought useless, were of great service to me in after life.

Upon completion of his medical training, Rae signed on as surgeon on the Hudson's Bay Company supply ship *Prince of Wales*. On its return voyage, this ship was detained by early ice conditions and forced to winter in James Bay. Towards spring Rae gathered cranberries from beneath the snow to cure the scurvy prevalent among the crew. He then stayed on as surgeon at Moose Factory. Here he learned the Indian methods of hunting, fishing, sledge hauling and camping; he made snowshoe walking his personal forte. Once after a house call to Fort Albany, he made the return trip of about 100 miles on snowshoes in less than 48 hours. In 1845 he studied surveying under J.H. Lefroy in Toronto.

Rae's first arctic expedition in 1846-47 mapped 625 miles of coastline from the northwest corner of Melville Peninsula to Ross Peninsula overlooking Lord Mayor's Bay. On his second expedition in 1848-49 he accompanied Dr. John Richardson in search of the missing third Franklin expedition; no new miles were mapped.

After a year as chief trader at Fort Simpson, Rae set out to map the south coast of Wollaston Peninsula by sledge and then the southern shore of Victoria Island to its eastern extremity by boat. Here he had no way of knowing that he was only about 50 miles from the abandoned *Erebus* and *Terror* near the west shore of King William Land, which he was unable to reach.

On his fourth expedition, in 1853-54, Rae obtained third-hand information from Inuit concerning the fate of the third Franklin expedition, purchasing plates, forks, and spoons with the initials of officers from the *Erebus* and *Terror*. He also explored 200 miles of the Quoiiche River and about 200 miles of Arctic coastline. He discovered that King William Land was an island, separated from Boothia by a strait now called Rae Strait.

On all his explorations, Rae travelled light, building his own igloos and shooting game. He could average 20 miles a day while dragging a sledge along the ice. He was innovative and resourceful, showing incredible stamina and superb marksmanship.

Dr. Robert L. Richards, a consultant physician at the Western Infirmary, Glasgow, completed this well-organized and interesting biography shortly before his death in 1983. It is a pity that Richards did not live to see publication of his scholarly work.

Richards has uncovered valuable new information, including letters and unpublished manuscripts in various repositories in London, Cambridge, Edinburgh, Taunton, and elsewhere. He provides the most complete bibliography yet available of Rae's own writings, consisting of 26 published papers, 8 presentations to the British Association for the Advancement of Science, and 42 letters to *Nature*.

Richards has been objective in presenting both sides of the controversies in which Rae was embroiled. Richards explains why Rae did not go himself to the scene of the Franklin tragedy and discusses the controversy over the best methods of sledging. Clearly Rae's reputation should not have suffered as it did, simply for relaying evidence that Franklin's men were involved in cannibalism.

The six maps are helpful, but they omit a few of the important place names mentioned in the text. An additional overall map of the Franklin search expeditions would have been helpful. Richards made an important geographical error on page 44: The one-mile-wide isthmus seen by Rae joined the Ross Peninsula, not the Boothia Peninsula as stated. I would have liked more detailed references in the already numerous footnotes, indexing of important names that appear only in footnotes, and a list of the maps and illustrations. Richards fails to mention that modern Canadian maps and the official *Gazetteer* give inadequate credit to Rae, sometimes giving his names to the wrong localities and misspelling Locker for Lockyer and Wilbank for Welbank. One of Rae's presentations to the British Association has been omitted. In a few places it would have been helpful to have given modern names of birds and mammals (Rae's "deer" are of course caribou).

This excellent, long-overdue biography of an important man is fun to read and a valuable reference work. It is highly recommended to everyone interested in the geography or history of northern Canada, a country in which Rae lived for 22 years.

C. Stuart Houston
863 University Drive
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada
S7N 0J8

HOME AND NATIVE LAND: ABORIGINAL RIGHTS AND THE CANADIAN CONSTITUTION. By MICHAEL ASCH. Toronto: Methuen Publications, 1984. ISBN 458-973807. 109 p. + appendices, suggested readings, bib. Cdn\$9.95.

The closer you are, the farther it gets.

Section 35 of the Canada Act, the definition of aboriginal rights, and the claims of Canadian native people to self-government are among the most complex issues facing the country's recently elected Conservative government. Their importance to the new government remains to be seen. We have, to date, mixed messages — a proposed amendment to section 35, much watered-down through provincial pressure and leaked reports that suggest fundamental changes in the relationship between the federal government and Indian nations. Canadians still need to become familiar with these issues — and perhaps to consider or reconsider their attitudes and opinions. A good book on the subject would certainly help.

The issues of treaty and aboriginal rights and self-government are of concern to Treaty Indians, those who have never signed treaties and who have outstanding claims, the Metis, the Inuit of the Northwest Territories and Quebec, and northern, southern, rural, and urban native people. It is, therefore, no surprise that there are different strategies and positions on native self-government. These are reflected in the positions of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), several Metis organizations, and the Prairie Treaty Nations Alliance, which tried unsuccessfully to get a seat at the last First Ministers Conference and which is still not affiliated with the AFN. Yet there is considerable agreement among native people in Canada on the ultimate objective: the recognition of distinct cultures, histories, and traditions and rights in the governing of their own affairs.

Asch has established a reputation as a major scholar writing about the South Slavey Indians and has worked with the Dene Nation for the past decade. However, as he acknowledges, in the process of writing *Home and Native Land* his horizons expanded and he included proposals and positions put forth by other groups. Despite his attempts to deal with aboriginal rights in general, the Dene come across as the main focus of Asch's attention. Knowing Asch's background in anthropology and experience with the Dene, I am left wishing that he had restricted himself accordingly and given us an in-depth assessment of aboriginal rights and self-government as advocated by the Dene nation. The book is stronger in the sections dealing with the Dene claims and less satisfying in its discussion of other groups. The