

Book Reviews

The Modern Sioux: Social Systems and Reservation Culture, edited by Ethel Nurge. Bison Books paperback edition. Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 1975. \$3.95.

This collection of eleven anthropological studies calls to mind one of Vine Deloria's sardonic comments in *Custer Died for Your Sins*. "Indians," he wrote, "are certain that all societies of the [ancient] Near East had anthropologists . . . because all those societies are now defunct." While the studies in this volume may not contribute directly to the demise of Sioux culture, neither will they provide startling insights for the non-specialist reader who has an interest in the shape and content of contemporary Indian life.

The anthropologists themselves, when they are not recounting statistical data, betray some doubt as to their own ability to develop a genuine understanding of a matter as complex as the situation of the Indian people in American society. The first article in this collection, "Rosebud Reservation Economy," by Ruth Hill Useem and Carl K. Eicher, begins with the confession that even though the Teton Dakotas are "one of the most documented ethnic groups in the history of social sciences, . . . one can only conclude that the mountains of scholarship have produced a molehill of improvement" in the lives of the Dakotas themselves. Yet Indians and their lives hold an apparently irresistible fascination for the anthropological investigators, who seem to view the Indians as a "lab" ready to hand where hypotheses can be tested, new findings brought forth—and, of course, more articles added to those mountains of scholarship.

Along with the paradox just noted, one encounters another in reading these articles—namely, why is it that anthropology, "the study of man," fails to qualify as one of the humanities? The most obvious answer to this apparent contradiction is that these studies share with the governmental and social bureau-

cracies that have overseen the lives of Indian people a tendency to speak of human concerns in abstractions. To bureaucrat and social scientist alike, the people who live with those concerns are, as often as not, lost from sight. To cite only one example, Gordon Macgregor tells us, in his essay, "Changing Society: The Teton Dakotas," that "Rejection, dependency, apathy, and profound personal disorganization mark . . ." the period during which the Plains tribes were forced to adapt to reservation life. Generalizations of this sort seem hopelessly innocent after we have witnessed the occupation of Wounded Knee as an act by Indians in calling attention to their predicament in our society.

At a number of points in these studies we are reminded of the role that professional anthropologists have played in the formulation of governmental policy in Indian affairs, especially since the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. A great many problems in society can be traced to difficulties in communication, but apparently the anthropologists and the bureaucrats understand each other perfectly. But what becomes of the Indian, the third member of this curious triangle? His bewilderment and his rage are nowhere to be seen when we are told (with neither irony nor criticism) that the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Employment Security Service of South Dakota discontinued a job-placement service on the Rosebud reservation in 1958 because "workload justification formulas" showed that there was "insufficient activity" to warrant a full-time worker in that position. Somewhere behind that grand bureaucratic phrasing stands a tired and frustrated Indian, no longer able to find the help that had been promised him, staring at the closed door of an office on a dusty reservation street.

Any vivid sense of the realities of Indian life is present only fitfully in these articles, in the occasional case-histories that these writers outline or in passages that they cite from early observers such as Francis Parkman and George Catlin. Ironically, the contemporary anthropologists usually dismiss those forerunners as "romantic" and then go on to build new "pic-

tures " of Indian life out of statistics and solemnified jargon. The reader who hopes to find a strong sense of Indian life in today's America is better advised to look for it in such writers as Hal Borland, Frank Waters, N. Scott Momaday, and even Ken Kesey than in a collection like *The Modern Sioux*. Research, no matter how earnest, is no substitute for insight, no matter how "romantic."

—Norman Hane
Drake University

#

The Norwegian-Americans, by Arlow W. Andersen. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1975. pp. 274. \$8.95.

Early in July, 1825, the tiny sloop *Restauration* sailed from Stavanger with a small group of Norwegian emigrants bound for America. In the century following the arrival of these "sloopers," nearly a million more Norwegians journeyed across the Atlantic to take up residence in the United States. The publication of this volume of the Immigrant Heritage of America series coincides with the sesquicentennial of the *Restauration's* voyage, an event commemorated in both Norway and the United States. That Norwegian immigrants and their descendants occupy an important place in Iowa history was illustrated in October, 1975, when His Majesty, Olav V, King of Norway, made the Hawkeye state one of his stops during his sesquicentennial observance tour of the United States.

In the preface to this well-documented study, Arlow W. Andersen acknowledges his indebtedness to his co-workers in the field of immigration history; and throughout he draws heavily upon the works of Theodore C. Blegen, Kenneth O. Bjork, Carlton C. Qualey, Einar Haugen, and other Norwegian-American scholars. Andersen's own contributions to the topic have been considerable. Author of books on the Norwegian-Danish Methodist Church in America and the role of the

Copyright of Annals of Iowa is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.