

them. The calibre of the introduction provides reassurance as to the editor's ability to select documents; nevertheless, it is unfortunate that there is no explicit statement of the principles of selection and editing which governed the production of the work.

Such a statement might have explained the use of the Adam Shortt Papers in preparing this volume. Approximately ten of the documents reproduced have been taken from volumes 2, 3, 4, and 10 of the Adam Shortt Papers in the National Archives of Canada. The volumes consist of typescripts of documents relating to Canadian economic history. In some instances the original documents are no longer available but in many cases they are; for example document C59, C. Poulett Thomson to Lord John Russell, Montreal, 27 May 1840, is now in C0 42, Volume 10, folios 224-9, Reel B-276. Although the Shortt transcripts are accurate, to the best of this reviewer's knowledge, it would have been better to have gone back to the original. In the example cited, Shortt's version is doubly a transcript because it was taken from the old "Q" series of transcripts prepared for the National Archives before the advent of microfilming.

This is, however, a quibble. In general the editing has been well done and there are few instances where one would question the appropriateness of a document being included or the manner in which it has been edited. The introduction provides an excellent short history of the Bank of Upper Canada and throws considerable light on government finances in the four decades before Confederation. It will be a standard for years to come.

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The Secret Plague: Venereal Disease in Canada 1839-1930. JAY CASSEL. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987. viii, 340 p. ISBN 0-8020-2593-5 (cl.) ISBN 0-8020-6617-8 (pa.) \$35.00 cl. \$17.95 pa.

The Bedroom and the State: The Changing Practices and Politics of Contraception and Abortion in Canada, 1880-1980. ANGUS McLAREN and ARLENE TIGAR McLAREN. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1986. 186 p. ISBN 0-7710-5532-3 \$14.95.

Is it intuition, foresight, or mere luck that leads some historians to write books of incredible relevance to current issues? Whatever the reason, Jay Cassel, and Angus McLaren and Arlene Tigar McLaren, have produced works on venereal disease and birth control in Canada that could not have been more timely, considering the current furore over the spread of Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) and the emotional debate over abortion. Both books are well researched and readable, and will no doubt quickly become popular with those interested in Canadian social and medical history.

Jay Cassel could only have written *The Secret Plague* with the current AIDS epidemic in mind. While the author does not refer to AIDS explicitly, it is never far from the reader's mind as Cassel recounts one hundred years of the cruel treatments, fear, and shame that were the result of a long misunderstood and untreatable set of diseases. He follows a medical history model in this book, allowing the major

discoveries (usually ineffective) in the treatment of the various venereal diseases to direct the course of his narrative. Cassel, who has historical, not medical training, explains complex medical concepts well, although he sometimes slips into "medicalese." He also examines the controversies that arose from the use of public health measures to stop the spread of disease, controversies that we are all familiar with in connection with the AIDS epidemic: the need to protect the health of the general public versus the right of the individual to privacy and self-expression; the morality of experimental treatments on victims desperate for a cure; and the ways in which a society treats its diseased.

Unfortunately, Cassel is not as successful in his analysis of the social reaction to venereal disease in Canada. He never succeeds in explaining why VD was an issue of great concern to social reformers from the late 1890s through the 1920s. Individual reformers, various reform organizations, women's groups, municipal and provincial governments, and even the federal government were active in the fight against VD, but Cassel never manages to explain why so many people and resources were devoted to the cause of "social purity." He is especially superficial in his discussion of the attitudes of women's groups to venereal disease control, dismissing as prudery the legitimate feminist concerns about the consequences of the double standard of sexual behaviour for men and women on the health of women and children.

The subtitle of *The Bedroom and the State*, "The Changing Practices and Politics of Contraception and Abortion in Canada, 1880-1980," is at once revealing and misleading. The McLarens have indeed concentrated on the politics of birth control (the term includes both contraception and abortion) in Canada. However, they discuss the practices of contraception and abortion in almost cursory fashion, apparently (and incorrectly) relying on American and British histories for discussion of the methods available to Canadian women. Their study is concerned mainly with the birth control movement in the interwar years. The remainder of the one hundred years they claim to cover serves only as background and epilogue to the campaigns of the socialists and eugenicists for increased access to contraception between the two world wars.

The stated purpose of the book is to place the current debate over fertility control in an historical context. The authors have not succeeded in their objective, because in concentrating on the activities of the two extremes in the birth control debate during a very brief period, they have failed to consider some of the major issues in contraception and abortion: the role of the male-dominated medical profession in preventing women from gaining easy access to safe methods of birth control; the historical attitudes of women to abortion; and the relationship between access to birth control and the status of women. If the authors had produced a more detailed study of the interwar birth control movement, the book would have been a very interesting exploration of a little-known issue in Canadian history. As a history of a complex set of issues and events over the course of a century, however, the book is disappointing.

The main problems of both *The Secret Plague* and *The Bedroom and the State* are the result of the unavailability of suitable archival material on the sexual practices and attitudes of Canadians. There are no people in *The Secret Plague*; in fact,

both books are devoid of crucial personal testimony on the impact of sexually-transmitted disease on an individual, or on the effects on women of the availability or lack of availability of birth control devices and procedures. Cassel has been forced to rely on medical texts, Canadian medical journals, newspaper advertisements for VD cures, records of social reform groups, and records of various government departments. McLaren and McLaren have used the literature of the birth control movements, newspaper accounts, medical journals, the Marie Stopes Papers in the British Museum, and the American Birth Control League Papers in Harvard University's Houghton Library. The books, therefore, are largely medical, bureaucratic, and organizational histories when they should ideally be explorations of personal experiences. This is not the fault of the authors, but the inevitable result of our unwillingness as a society to make public through archives our feelings on matters of our sexuality.

Archivists must make it their business to be aware of the paucity of archival material documenting human sexuality in our repositories. We must be aware of the power of our acquisition and accession policies over the sort of material accessible on sexuality to the researching public. It may be that the subject of human sexuality is one that archivists should help document through the use of documentation strategy. Such projects are already underway. Archivists should participate in the collection and even the creation of documentation on sensitive but crucial areas of current experience, such as the AIDS epidemic. Whatever route is taken, we as a profession must continually reexamine our own prejudices and the ways in which they reflect how we go about acquiring and giving access to archival materials of all media. It is to be hoped that in the future the efforts of archivists, starting now, will help writers such as Cassel and the McLarens turn good, readable histories into excellent and compelling ones.

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Nucleus: The History of Atomic Energy of Canada Limited. ROBERT BOTHWELL. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988. xx, 524 p. ISBN 0-8020-2670-2 \$34.95.

With the publication of *Nucleus: A History of Atomic Energy of Canada Limited*, Robert Bothwell has shifted his attention from uranium production, described in his previous work *Eldorado: Canada's National Uranium Company* (1985), to the scientific and commercial applications of this powerful energy source. Although Eldorado Nuclear Limited occupies an important role as sole Canadian supplier of the vital ingredient required for the production of nuclear energy, AECL remains the central agency for research and development of nuclear power stations and their commercial by-products. *Nucleus* traces the origins of AECL and assesses the relative success of the Crown corporation in achieving its mandate to develop economic nuclear power for use in Canada. This authorized corporate history of AECL has many similarities to the Eldorado book; the publisher, the structure, even the look and the weight of the two volumes are remarkably alike. One important difference is the inclusion in *Nucleus* of more recent historical events. Furthermore, there is no attempt to hide or disguise the corporate "warts;" the accidents, miscalculated reactor