Book Reviews

A PIONEER GENTLEWOMAN IN BRITISH COLUMBIA: The Recollections of Susan Allison.

EDITED BY MARGARET A. ORMSBY.

Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1976. Pp. 1i, 210.

GOD'S GALLOPING GIRL: The Peace River Diaries of Monica Storrs.

EDITED BY W.L. MORTON with the assistance of Vera K. Fast.

Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1979. Pp. 370.

The two works under consideration, while different in style, purpose and time period, complement each other. Each attests to the courage and endurance of women under adverse pioneer circumstances and each account is rich in material upon which the student of women's history may feast.

A Pioneer Gentlewoman in British Columbia presents the recollections of Susan Moir Allison, a well-educated British pioneer. Thinking back over an eventful lifetime and focusing on the period from the 1860s to the 1890s which she spent in the southern interior of British Columbia, Allison recalls events of high drama, not least the destruction of her home by fire and later by flood. Included in her narrative are references (often incidental) to the process of giving birth to and raising some of her 14 children. She does, in addition, delineate in lively fashion a number of greater and lesser personages with whom she came into contact. Yet there is more to her book than anecdotes and character sketches. While her records lack the intimacy of a daily journal and while time has clearly obliterated or blurred many of the details of her daily life, still Allison presents us with a broad and fascinating picture of pioneer life and one which was met with both humour and fortitude. In general, she has more to say about the good than the bad in her life. Interesting, however, is her remark on the decision (lamented by her) to leave the Okanagan, that "his . . . (Mr. Allison's) mind was made up and that was that." One suspects that this was the reality for many married women, no matter how actively or "equally" they participated in all areas of pioneer life.

God's Galloping Girl gives, on the other hand, the weekly journal of Monica Storrs, an unmarried Englishwoman engaged in lay missionary work for the Anglican Church. This, the published portion of her journal, deals with her first two years, from 1929-31 in the remote Peace River District of British Columbia. It is certainly not the fullest picture we have of the 1930s, but it is illuminating in its depiction of the settlement experience on both Storrs and the married women of the Peace. She was not, to be sure, a "typical" pioneer. Her life was physically easier than that of most women and, more particularly, she did not suffer from intense loneliness (that perennial complaint of pioneer women). Her life did, however, involve considerable personal adjustment and she shared in a large number of the experiences and difficulties of the settlers. Yet the plight of wives was undoubtedly harder and one of the principal merits of this book is the insight which it provides into the lives of those women who are

often neglected in accounts of frontier development. For most, as Monica grapically shows, there was no escape from abject poverty and loneliness. One is struck, too, by Monica's perception of her own supportive (one hesitates to use the word "subordinate," since she would not have thought of it in such terms) role within the organization of the Anglican Church. Even though begged by bereaved parents to conduct the funeral service of their son, she hesitates, " . . . feeling that it should be taken by a man and that failing a priest, the doctor was the one to do it."

Both of these books are valuable sources for those interested in women's history. The publication of local or regional material requires no justification, since it is recognized that it can provide clearer and broader perspectives on larger themes. There are, however, some obvious limitations to such sources, not least that each was written from the perspective of an upper-middle class British woman, with the values and prejudices implied therein. This is especially true of Storrs, who never questions the validity of importing English social institutions into British Columbia and is, at times, irritatingly condescending, whether toward the beginner Scouts who are " . . . heartbreakingly stupid over mental things like the Law and the Promise," or the fathers who thwarted her plans because they " . . . need or *say* they need, their sons to work for them all the holidays." Perhaps, though, at a time when "ethnic" history is in vogue, it would not be amiss to suggest that the British "ethnic" experience is no less legitimate or valuable than that of any other group. We must recognize, too, that each was written with publication (however modest) in mind. The result is that while each author must have experienced many moments of deep frustration, this is not evident in their accounts. A good editor can, however, supplement and enhance the text and provide the overall perspective which the accounts themeselves lack. Both of these books are well-produced, combining scholarly editing by noted Canadian historians with detailed explanatory notes. Above all, such accounts have the merit of not being "dry" history. As such, they whet the appetite for more.

Jean McLagan
Douglas College, New Westminster

THE DOUBLE STANDARD: A Feminist Critique of Feminist Social Science.

MARGRIT EICHLER.
London: Croom Helm, 1980. Pp. 151.

Margrit Eichler's book is a concise, thought-provoking contribution to critical analysis from a feminist perspective. It ranges from focussed academic argument to what verges on the polemical. Eichler's concern is initially with the understanding of sex role differentiation and the position(s) of women in society. This forms the major part of the book. The introduction to the book provides a clear exposition of the basis for the subsequent analysis and critique. Two chapters are devoted to a re-evaluation of sex role theory in its various aspects. Several different approaches are considered critically and faulted for their continuing commitment, overt or covert, to what Eichler defines as "the double standard." The "double standard,"—"two things which are the same are measured or evaluated by different standards" (p. 15)—forms, as the title suggests, the basis for Eichler's criticial approach. The core of the thinking in the book identifies a variety of dif-