

Isabel Campbell ed., *Cold War Workers: Labour, Family, and Community in a Nuclear State*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2025. 336 pages. ISBN 978-0-2280-2440-8. \$39.95 paperback.

*Cold War Workers: Labour, Family, and Community in a Nuclear State* is a collection of essays edited by Isabel Campbell that gathers 6 different chapters on the experiences and consequences of the Cold War in northern Canada. The volume, among other things, delves into the lives and perspectives of marginalized groups that were affected by the process of Cold War labour in the Canadian North. The first three chapters detail divergent perspectives of Indigenous Native workers as they embraced or, at times, bristled against the emerging security establishment in the north. The latter half of the book explores the experiences of other groups, like women and homosexuals, within the Canadian Cold War security establishment. These later chapters cover psychological research on overcoming the monotony of security tasks, the Toronto Forensic Clinic's scientific inquiries on homosexuality, and the construction of the Canadian Military Career Woman, respectively. Seemingly disparate, all three of the chapters blend perfectly with the first half of the book, focusing on the intersections of the Cold War era gender stereotypes, sexuality, and the limits of an idealized military masculinity. A lot of Cold War historiography focuses on the patterns and causal reverberations of privileged individuals and power. However, *Cold War Workers* instead focuses on the inverse, on the struggles and experiences of the mundane and peripheral. In doing so *Cold War Workers* gives a depth and intimacy to the experience of the Cold War laborer that has previously been overlooked.

Despite the geopolitical overtones, the Cold War was an intensely personal experience for labourers in the northern region who struggled with questions of community activism, masculinity, and changing cultural norms. From the first chapter on a Residential School survivor turned Canadian soldier to the third chapter recounting oral histories from Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line Indigenous workers, *Cold War Workers* showcases the diversity in experience that the Cold War brought to Indigenous lives. The first chapter by Warren Sinclair highlights the story of Elmer Sinclair, a decorated Canadian Army soldier and Residential School survivor. Sinclair's broad experience serving in the Second World War, the Korean Conflict, and in peacetime during the 1960s reads like an incredible tale of perseverance and robust aptitude to changing circumstances. This chapter contrasts vignettes of military service with the abuses of the Residential School system. What emerges is a complex narrative at the heart of Indigenous service at once both aware of the horrible experiences at the hands of colonial experience and yet equally proud to serve in the very same state's military.

Sinclair's story, while unique, offers a thematic entry into the rest of the volume. The book goes on to detail the genesis of a whole new governmental department of Northern Affairs and Natural Resources that was tasked with researching and educating northern Indigenous groups to better their livelihoods under governmental policies. In her chapter "Voices from the Dew Line" (p. 131), Stacey Fritz points out that this included establishing an "Eskimo Research Section" to educate Inuit in adapting to changing economic conditions, planned relocations of Inuit from overpopulated and depleted areas to regions where game or employment was more plentiful. These relocations were also conveniently located along military construction projects with the aim of diversifying the Indigenous economy. According to one source, construction firms across the entire Arctic coast hired virtually any Inuit who asked for work, and without their help they would have never succeeded in building the DEW line without their aid.

The reality was often much more complicated for Indigenous families in the Arctic. Further stories of Indigenous labourers on the DEW Line stations express mixed emotions. On one hand Indigenous workers gained access to increasingly available consumer goods like electronics alongside a steady income. In contrast some of the consumer goods, like alcohol, ravaged Indigenous communities. Fritz quotes on p. 151 one Indigenous labourer who recalled “lots of drinking...yes it was a culture of drinking.” Additionally, changes to the Arctic created new questions for the Canadian state with regards to Indigenous citizenry. Clashes with missionary groups and secularized governmental services tested the loyalty of Indigenous groups alongside emergent concerns from governmental officials. The laissez faire style of governance the Canadian Government had employed for the northern territories could no longer apply to such a strategically critical region in the Cold War context. The result was a rapid patchwork of governmental policies that attempted to maintain the image of a prospering Indigenous population while simultaneously importing white temperate attitudes and goods that supplanted Indigenous lifeways. For example, Fritz notes on p. 142 that construction companies building the DEW Line stations segregated housing between Indigenous and non-Indigenous workers. Additionally, family units were disrupted by long months of wage labour where married women, forced to live in company housing, had to bear the brunt of the household work while being sequestered from their extended familial ties. Nevertheless, the stories of the DEW Line offer a compelling portrayal of the complications between state, private industry, and Indigenous communities.

Indigenous communities were not the only group affected by the Cold War march of science and technology. The Cold War brought scientific experimentation to the forefront of research, including medical and psychological research. Later chapters explore Cold War governmentally sponsored psychological research into sensory deprivation and the Toronto Forensic Clinic and its research on homosexuality and sexual deviation. These chapters by Matthew S. Wiseman and Frances Reilly offer a compelling narrative of the contours of Cold War era medical science that sought to overcome what, at the time, were considered deviations and flaws. In the case of sensory deprivation by Wiseman, the science explored how to prevent military and state personnel from falling to potential propagandic torture in the hope that isolated personnel in the far north could overcome the monotony of remote radar and observation work without worry of mental disruption. What’s most compelling in the case of the Toronto Forensic Clinic by Reilly, is the nuance within the scientific reporting that began to classify homosexuals under more humane terms. While the Clinic also handled cases of pedophilia and exhibitionism, medical researchers in comparison were less concerned about preventing recidivism in homosexuals than simply understanding their logic and character. To some degree the author even suggests that the Cold War research of the Toronto Health Clinic could have contributed to the reclassification of homosexuality as a sexual orientation rather than a psychological illness. These chapters highlight the degree to which Cold War Science and social moralities were increasingly intertwined, in such a way that scientists believed that science had the capacity to rationalize an ideal gendered normativity that was built on heteronormative Cold War era societal expectations for men and women.

The final chapter, "Constructing the Military Career Woman" by Sarah Hogenbirk, details the Canadian Army’s marketing of the ideal of a Cold War military career woman. The chapter does an excellent job of analyzing the tensions between the gendered ideologies of the Cold War, nuclear family politics, and state sponsored portrayals of military identities. For example, advertisements and recruitment literature promoted the armed services as a stable

employer with opportunities for career advancement. In actuality, the recruitment experience for women often differed from their male counterparts and women were limited in their career advancement options, being passed up by men or encouraged to retire once they were married. The armed services often prioritized young unmarried women in their recruitment, reinforcing the Cold War aesthetic of nuclear families with only male breadwinners. Nevertheless, examples of career military women are highlighted such as Annie Coutts, a career airwoman with numerous awards and tours. The testimonials of the chapter offer a glimpse into the wide variety of lived experiences of military career women that very often challenged the state sponsored portrayals of female military service. Hogenbirk quotes on p. 280 a servicewoman saying, “the majority of us did not join up to rope a man, but to wear Her Majesty’s uniform with pride and to find security, adventure, and most important, a career to be proud of.”

*Cold War Workers* weaves the experiences of marginalized voices into a deft portrayal of an aspect that has previously been overlooked within Cold War literature. It is easy to dismiss the circumpolar security concerns of North American allied nations as far removed from the larger contours of Cold War geopolitics, but the impact on Indigenous lives and other minority groups was profoundly felt. From the halls of government to the tundra, militarization and rapid industrial buildup reverberated through the circumpolar north, leaving an imprint on the environment and the people who call it home. *Cold War Workers* is ultimately a study of margins, marginality to racial composition, marginality of gendered experience, and the margins of the geopolitical imaginary. However, as Cold War defense planners and contemporary scholars know, it is the margins that can be the most vital to understanding the full dimensions of any picture.

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