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Termination's Legacy: The Discarded Indians of Utah

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shakes down to a platform: get out and give us more money."

"Western Paradox," a book-length manuscript left unfinished at DeVoto’s death in 1955 and published here for the first time, follows the Harper’s essays. Six chapters and a fragmentary seventh chapter out of a projected nine chapters are extant. "Western Paradox" is an intensely personal book in which DeVoto, the expatriate Westerner, delves into the character and paradoxes of the modern West: frontier myths versus modern realities; individualism versus conformity; and the limitations topography places on the lives of Westerners. "Western Paradox" contains some of DeVoto's most powerful writing about his native Wasatch Front. Due in large part to overgrazing, communities in Davis County were devastated by mudslides in the 1920s, resulting in loss of life and extensive property damage. His account of this environmental catastrophe is dramatic. And his description of the sudden burst of color during a sunrise over the Great Salt Lake Desert is unforgettable.

The book concludes with a bibliography of DeVoto’s writings and a useful index. Editorial annotations fill in details about people and events that may not be familiar to modern readers, but very little of the content is dated.

Wallace Stegner ranked the importance of DeVoto's conservation work with the likes of Powell, Pinchot, and Roosevelt. This fine volume from Yale University Press preserves DeVoto's important written record, which is as timely today as when it was written. The wise stewardship of public lands is vitally important to the future of the American West. As DeVoto reminded his readers in 1947: "This is your land we are talking about."

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Termination's Legacy: The Discarded Indians of Utah  By R. Warren Metcalf

(Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002. xviii + 305 pp. $55.00.)

STARTING IN 1954 the Federal Government terminated one-hundred plus Indian tribes across the United States. All have subsequently been reinstated, that is, with one exception: the so-called mixed-blood Utes in the Uinta Basin of Northeastern Utah. It is this still disenfranchised group of people that forms the stimulus driving R. Warren Metcalf's book Termination's Legacy: The Discarded Indians of Utah. It is about these people that he writes; it is their cause he champions.
Most outsiders to termination simply wish that it would just go away, or it is accepted as passé, a dead issue already, which certainly seems to be the position taken by the courts. But Metcalf in no uncertain terms lets the reader know that termination is alive and well among Native factions of the Uinta Basin today.

People of Indian descent living in the Uinta Basin often share their version of termination’s saga. Anguished terminated Utes will tell a story similar to that put forth by the author. But other terminated mixed-bloods praise termination, for the freedom it has given them to excel, away from what they see as less than productive influences sometimes found on reservations. Even some full-bloods have expressed the thought that termination would have been best for everyone. Popular legend within the Ute Tribe says that mixed-bloods asked to be released from tribal association, but most of them will deny that today. And yet, one hears stories arising from early termination meetings held on the reservation wherein mixed-bloods did express that very desire. This is such a convoluted issue tied so deeply to economic and identity issues that it is no wonder it will not go away. Deep feelings of betrayal and rejection last for generations, and of such hurt comes the legacy of termination. The author has taken a bull by the horns and wrestled it to the ground.

Metcalf tries to drag Mormonism into the forefront of this issue, but the twin nemeses assimilation and termination are not a “Mormon” Hydra. These formidable notions are long-standing, ongoing national phenomena dating back to Jamestown and Plymouth. Looking back at the 1950s termination era, at all the many people at the federal level, who served in Congress, in the Senate, on committees, and in governmental departments, not to mention all those partisans showing support from a full complement of forty-eight states, to single out a few of one faith and saddle them with the weight of the catastrophe known as termination is not justified, not in Utah, not anywhere. Termination was an assimilationist idea that lived in the hearts of people throughout the United States long before 1954 and among people of all religious persuasions.

That aside, Termination’s Legacy is an absolutely scholarly work backed by many primary documents. In a more or less straight forward time line it tells the Ute termination story. Metcalf is good to introduce players and issues at length, and the intricacy with which he fills in the gaps of a story that has in many ways been as much legend as truth, is both fulfilling and engaging. As is the case in any such study, some will read this book and fault it for
not taking in certain other issues or for not pointing fingers in other directions, but no one will ever cover all facets to this troubled saga and its outcome. However, the most salient of issues are certainly borne out in this book. Metcalf weaves his bounteous research into an almost water-tight fabric that virtually captures the full story of termination’s legacy. His final chapter will be written if and when terminated mixed-blood Utes are ever accepted back into the Northern Ute Tribe.

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Conflict in the Quorum: Orson Pratt, Brigham Young, Joseph Smith

By Gary James Bergera (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002. xi + 312 pp. $24.95.)

THE EARLY LEADERS of the Mormon church were known by various exalted nicknames. Brigham Young was appropriately called “The Lion of the Lord”; Orson Pratt, self-educated but intellectually gifted, “The Gauge of Philosophy.” The nicknames fit well, as Gary Bergera demonstrates in his retelling of the doctrinal disputes that waxed and waned between these two strong-willed apostles over a period of thirty-five years. The book, which expands on a 1980 Dialogue article by Bergera, recounts several episodes of conflict between Lion and Philosopher over such issues as succession in church government, the nature of God, even the composition of matter and the universe. Although these disputes have been dissected before in several articles by Bergera and others, the author airs the controversies more fully through generous excerpts from original documents.

These excerpts are genuinely absorbing and the best thing about the book. Three long excerpts of minutes from meetings held at Winter Quarters, Nebraska, in November and December 1847 tell how church leaders debated reorganizing the First Presidency dissolved at the death of Joseph Smith. Brigham Young wanted to proceed with himself as president, and the others generally agreed—except one. Orson Pratt argued that the Quorum of the Twelve should continue to preside, citing the New Testament and the Doctrine and Covenants for authority. Although Pratt received a thorough hearing, the group voted unanimously to appoint Young president of the church. For Brigham Young, the debate apparently served a useful purpose, allowing an airing of issues surrounding the succession: “We locked horns, Orson & I—but all to bring things out” (82-83).