

It may be added that here is the basis of Dewey's appreciation of, and favorable disposition toward, Henry George's philosophy. George has fused his keen analysis of social forces with a constructive concern for social ends and values. He tells us not only what is wrong, but what to do about it for our own good.

R. C.

THE BATTLE AGAINST HEREDITARY PRIVILEGE

"The Ending of Hereditary American Fortunes" by Gustavus Myers. Julian Messner, Inc., New York. 1939. 395 pp. \$3.50.

In this book, Gustavus Myers adds a valuable research contribution to his previous work. The value and importance of Myers' work rests mainly in the mass of documentary proof which he lists in support of his statements. Only a person accustomed to research can fully appreciate the tremendous labor involved in the study of original sources of information evidenced in the preparation of this book.

The theme is the history of the struggle in America, from era to era, against inequalities, particularly against inequality of power and position conferred in law by accident of birth.

Two laws of feudal origin, primogeniture and entail, brought to this country from Europe in connection with early Colonial land grants furnished the battlefield prior to the American Revolution for those fighting for liberty and equality. Primogeniture vested ownership of great landed properties in the eldest son to the exclusion of daughters and younger sons. Entail kept the estate intact from generation to generation and from century to century. The arguments of Thomas Jefferson and others to abolish these two bulwarks of landed aristocracy and the character of the opposition are well portrayed in the book. Pennsylvania (1776), North Carolina (1784), Georgia (1789), Massachusetts (1784), New Jersey (1780, 1784), New York (1786), South Carolina (1791) in turn abolished perpetuities in land holding. States later admitted to the Union were free from the perpetual grip of the dead hand. By about the year 1830 most of the great estates in America had vanished. With the abolition of hereditary title went also the hereditary prerogative of holding office, which, while not fixed in the statute law, had all the force of unbroken custom. Rotation in office under the pressure of democratic forces became the rule.

Common school education for the masses destroyed another age-old birth privilege which limited education to the well born.

The author points out that while this battle against hereditary privilege was being won as to land tenure, another form of perpetuity was coming in, that is, corporation charters for banks, land schemes and other enterprises.

The right to vote, formerly limited to men owning real estate of a prescribed value, became more universal after a long fight against the resistance of propertied opponents.

Assaults on the hereditary transmission of wealth came into the open in 1829 by a resolution adopted by the Workingmen's Party in New York City "that the first appropriation of the soil of the State to private and exclusive possession was eminently and barbarously unjust. That it was substantially feudal in character, inasmuch as those who received enormous and unequal possessions were *lords* and those who received little or nothing were *vassals*." Having made this timely and pertinent approach, understood then by everybody, the resolutions went on to press the main point: "That hereditary transmission of wealth, on the one hand, and poverty on the other, has brought down to the present generation all of the evils of the feudal system, and that, in our opinion, is the prime source of all our calamities."

The slavery question, another issue arising from accident of birth, occupied the mind of America during the generation preceding the Civil War. The movement for an income tax from 1861 to the present,

the growth of the power of the railroads, the economic dictatorship of the "Trusts", Populism, Labor Unions, each find their place in the swing of events up to the opening of the present century. Pen pictures of the contrasts between the extravagant follies of descendants who acquired control of great fortunes by "accident of birth" and the destitution of the children of the poor from whose labor those fortunes are extracted, appear throughout the volume.

The transition of the United States Senate from a "Millionaires' Club" to that of a popularly elected democratic body is dramatically told. The movement for inheritance taxes and gift taxes as a means of revenue and breaking up of great estates is traced with interesting results.

In conclusion the author points to the abolition of inheritances above moderate amounts as a remedy. As to great hereditary wealth he asks: "Why not definitely abolish it as a statutory right? And at the same time completely recast laws so as to prohibit trusts for heirs and all other devices allowing transmission of large fortunes?"

It is quite apparent that the author sees that the foundation of hereditary fortunes rests upon manipulation and control of the nation's natural resources and in monopolies and special privileges granted by law. The book also makes it plain that in spite of the passage of statute law tending to break up hereditary fortunes—primogeniture, entail, slavery, corporation trusts—the fact remains that great fortunes have increased and the lot of the average man has become more precarious as our Republic has advanced.

Students of Henry George will recognize that the remedy lies in preventing the wrongful appropriation of wealth in the processes of production and distribution rather than to wait as it were until the death of the robber and then attempt to recover some part of the proceeds of theft that he may perchance have left behind.

WALTER FAIRCHILD.

PAMPHLETS RECEIVED

"My Story—Englishman by Birth, American by Adoption", by Edward Barker. 1940. 25 pp.

The author relates his early admiration for American democracy while he was still in England, and his migration to America, the land of promise. Thrilled at first, then greatly disillusioned and saddened by the spectacle of unemployment and depressions, he emerges with his faith in democracy unshaken. He sees the solution to America's problems in an extension of democracy, in the adoption of the philosophy of Henry George.

"Business is Business", by Louis B. Ward. 1939. 18 pp.

This is an attack on the dogma of self-sufficiency and a plea for free trade. After a keen statistical analysis of our export trade, the author says:

"America is not self-sufficing. Three courses are open to her. First, she must become self-sufficing, which means a new imperialism if she is to continue to use such things as tin, rubber and silk. Second, she must find substitutes for these things. Third, she must learn to trade with the nations of the world."

"The Non-Producing Class", by William O'Neill. 14 pp. 1940.

The author seems to combine Veblenism with Georgeism, and there is also a touch of Marxian dialectic, although Henry George is the only authority quoted in the pamphlet. It is a brief survey of the rise of social consciousness, and the reactionism of non-producers. The author sees a new era approaching in which the common good will prevail over the unsocial lust for power still prevalent. He closes with an affirmation of faith in the power of education.