

great reputations for wisdom. Broken no end of idols, replaced security with alarm, filled kitchens with crusts and made simpletons of statesmen all over the world, and that is just as it should be and will be until we do some straight thinking on the subject of political economy.—HENRY H. HARDINGE.

AT a time when the "Three Estates" were the recognized groups of the French nation, Rochambeau wrote that in reality there were but two, "the privileged people and the unprivileged."

BOOK REVIEWS

CHAINING THE WAR GOD*

Victor Alexander Rule has written a good book. He could have written a great book. A good book is characterized by a presentation that is interesting and entertaining. To be a great book it must be that and something more; it must carry such conviction that its theme acquires inevitability in the mind of the reader. In a book advocating change in the political or social order—propagandist in purpose—the measure of its greatness is the extent to which it convinces the reader as to the efficacy and justice of the reform proposed, and therefore stimulates a desire to see it put into practice.

It is because the subject of war as a denial of natural economic law has never, to my knowledge, been adequately presented; it is because I know that Col. Rule is capable of such a presentation that I choose to measure his book by the more difficult yardstick of greatness, rather than the moderate measure of goodness. And it is my sincere hope that he will follow this first volume, which should gain favor with all lovers of peace, with one in which the attack upon the fundamental cause of all wars—exploitation—is developed in such a way as to leave no doubt even in the minds of militarists that this, and this only, is the cause of war.

To every Georgeist the logic of this book is convincing. To one who is not familiar with Georgeist philosophy I am afraid the development of Col. Rule's thesis will not be so apparent. The syllogism does not seem to be carried out to a finality that resists refutation, and I believe this is due first, to the form of presentation, and secondly, the failure to prove the theory of "surplus wealth," its cause and its effects.

The form followed by the author is to analyze the proximate causes of war—the machinations of diplomats, the avarice of munition makers, the irritation of large armies and navies—and to show how none of these of themselves bring about armed conflicts. He discounts very ably the theory of population pressure as a cause of war. He sketches the various attempts to achieve universal peace and shows how and why they failed in their purpose and in fact often were the irritants that hastened the advent of wars. Thus, clearing away the obvious causes for war and the inadequacy of the popularly accepted devices for eliminating war (in ten chapters), he proceeds in two chapters to tell how the War God can be chained. The first of these chapters is entitled "With What Do Nations Fight?" and the answer is "credit." He advocates a tax on land value not only as a means for reducing national debt, but also as a deterrent to the patriot-landlords who clamor for, and profit from, war, but are not willing to pay for it. The next chapter, "For What Do Nations Fight?" reveals what he considers the fundamental cause of war—"surplus wealth" seeking profitable investment in the exploitation of subject peoples. (In this chapter Col. Rule indulges, for no good

reason at all, the obsession he shares with several Chicago Single Taxers, namely, that rent is expressed in price!) Then he devotes a chapter to showing that this "surplus wealth" is derived from land rent, and that the way to destroy this urge toward imperialistic enterprise is to socialize the rent of land. A short chapter on "What If War Should Come" serves only to bring out that the socialization of land rent would enrich our national coffers immensely for fighting purposes, and by removing the cause of poverty would develop a greater fighting morale in the citizens; but it naturally occurs that if the cure for war has been proven, why speculate on the possibility of war after the cure has been applied, unless, indeed, the author is not quite sure of himself?

Such, in brief, is the form of argument used in the book. It is through a process of elimination of other causes and cures that Col. Rule attempts to lead the reader to his (Rule's) conclusion. It is plausible inference, but not wholly convincing. There seems to be a hiatus in the reasoning. Might not another author, believing that wars arise from some innate desire of man to fight, a sort of sadistic propensity of the human being, continue the process of elimination and just as plausibly eliminate the "surplus wealth" theory as well? Might not another author, accepting this theory, advocate the abolition by law of foreign investments as a means of stopping war? Indeed, Col. Rule does not explain why there were wars before there were foreign investments. What foreign investments did the Romans have in Gaul when Caesar led his legions over the Alps? And how does the "surplus wealth" theory explain our own Indian wars? "Chaining the War God" does not prove its case.

"Surplus wealth"—an expression that is quite descriptive, but somewhat abhorrent to me because borrowed from socialistic phraseology—is that part of wealth produced by capital and labor which is diverted from their rightful owners to the pockets of landowners. This diversion is possible because of the monopoly of land. Were land free, that is, if its accessibility were open to all on equal terms, this wealth would naturally flow to its rightful owners, labor and capital. The freeing of the land from private ownership is to be attained by socialization of rent. In this way the wealth of which labor and capital is robbed, and which is far in excess of the personal requirements of landowners, would not accumulate in the hands of a few, who find it necessary to invest it in further exploitation. Finding their home markets glutted because of the citizens' inability to consume more goods—due to the very robbing of them by the landlords—foreign markets are sought for the investment of this "surplus wealth." In these foreign markets, however, these investments come in conflict with the loot of landlords from other countries also seeking fields for exploitation. The struggle for markets then becomes an irritant which results in armed conflict. The way to eliminate a troublesome competitor is to secure a monopoly. With a large army and navy you simply prevent him by brute force from entering your field; if he also has an army and navy, a fight ensues.

While Col. Rule does explain this source of "surplus wealth" (and the land-value-tax method of destroying it), he does not, it seems to me, convincingly show that its search for foreign fields of investment is the primary cause of wars. Nor does he give sufficient emphasis to the idea that the abolition of poverty, through the elimination of land speculation, would create a social condition repulsive to the idea of war. The militarist would find the self-satisfied citizen, with lots to live for, quite unresponsive to his appeal to commit murder, and to subject himself to the same possibility.

The absence of any reference to tariff walls as a cause of war is a rather unexpected omission in this book. Germany, a manufacturing nation in the main, found itself unable to market its products in other countries because of "protective tariffs, and therefore sought outlets in Africa, Asia and South America. Then it came into conflict with the agents of "surplus wealth" from England and France. Its "place in the sun" denied it, Germany went to war. It is true that tariffs are another expression or creation of "surplus wealth,"

*Chaining the War God by Col. Victor A. Rule. Cloth, 12 mo., 306 pp. Price \$2.25. James A. Bell, Elkhart, Ind., Publisher.

but as a proximate irritant of war this stoppage of the free exchange of wealth is too manifest to be entirely ignored in a book on this subject. As a matter of record, the Civil War between the American states was caused primarily by the economic antagonism of the "free trade" South and the "protected" North.

Col. Rule's book, valuable as it is, leaves something undone. The world needs to be shown, beyond the peradventure of a doubt, that poverty is the real cause of war, and that the abolition of poverty is the only cure, that the urge to escape from conditions of poverty is the force which directs peoples' eyes, and those of their rulers, to other peoples' lands.

Proceeding from the economic axiom that man seeks to satisfy his desires with the least amount of effort, and that war is the exertion of utmost effort, the subject of war could be treated in such a way as to show why this contradiction manifests itself. The reason can be found in the attempt to frustrate the operation of natural economic law. Having arrived at this first premise, the scientific approach would be to apply this premise to the test by analyzing the causes of, and conditions precedent to, a number of major wars throughout history. Thus our premise of the economic cause of war would be proven by logic and by example.

Such an approach to the subject of war, by one endowed with research ability and the power of logical expression, would be a valuable contribution to the Georgist philosophy, as well as to the literature of the peace movement. It is needed.

Col. Rule's "Chaining the War God" is a good book. Every student of Henry George should read it. A familiarity with this book will help us to demonstrate to the constantly increasing number of peace advocates that in our philosophy alone can they find the real answer to their prayers. It is as good propaganda for Single Tax as it is for peace, and it is very interestingly written, in the oratorical style of which the author is a master.—FRANK CHODOROV.

OUR ENEMY, THE STATE*

Now and then a thinker breaks through the yearly billions of printed words with real thoughts ably expressed and logically presented. Such a book is "Our Enemy, The State," by Albert Jay Nock. To read it is to feel like a traveller lost on a dark road and a bright flash of lightning shows him where he is—where he is going.

Nock distinguishes government from The State, as he does religion from the organized church. He treats the historical developments of the power of the State and its present increasing power. The book traces in detail government and The State in America from the earliest colonial days through the American Revolution with its ideals of a free people—a true democracy—and shows that with the increasing power of the State man even in the United States seems made for the State instead of the State for man. How true that was in the World War when men were conscripted, but not property!

The State, Nock shows, obtaining too much power becomes a parasitic growth, feeding on civilization and destroying the social consciousness and the self reliance of the people. He condemns the State "lock, stock and barrel."

Nock wants the citizen to look very closely into the institution of the State. He wants him to ask how the State originated and why, and what is the State's primary function, and then to decide whether by the testimony of history the State is to be regarded in essence as a social or anti-social institution. He presents the Single Tax theory as a perfect solution of our economic problems, and a solution that still leaves men free from the juggernaut of the State.

Under the Roosevelt administration, faced by the present emergency, the centralized government, Nock shows, has grown by leaps and bounds, the government more and more wiping out State lines, piling up the public debt, taking larger and larger parts of the people's income to support its horde of agents. He shows the centralized

State, by what is called a planned economy, creating a scarcity of production, raising the cost of living artificially—while millions cannot pay the present price of food and clothing and shelter.

Nock points out that when the disastrous Johnstown flood occurred socialized power was immediately mobilized and applied with intelligence and vigor. That a beggar now usually asks in vain for a handout. In both instances of a large or small catastrophe, we all almost instinctively now say "let the government do it." The government does—at great expense, inefficiently, and with an added number to its cohorts, which like the seven-year locusts eat up the harvests of the land.

The other day I was in the country and the long drought had dried up most of the wells and springs of the countryside. On the main road was a perpetual spring that some one years ago had built a wall around to protect it. Many people were getting their water from it. Over the spring were some boards that had rotted. I said, "Let's get some boards to cover the spring properly and keep the dust and leaves out." Someone replied: "Let the town do it." Yes, let the town do it. Call it to the attention of the Town Council to go through the red tape to get a board, to get a man to go with a car, to cover the spring—all at the community's expense and increased taxes.

The author points out that outside of poorhouses and hospitals and such institutional enterprises—destitution and unemployment were usually relieved by what he calls the "social power" of the people. He then states:

"Under Mr. Roosevelt, however, the State assumed this function, publicly announcing the doctrine, brand-new in our history, that the State owes its citizens a living. Students of politics, of course, saw in this merely an astute proposal for a prodigious enhancement of State power."

This is not exactly true or fair in my opinion, and nowhere does Nock point out that Roosevelt was faced with a depression and tremendous unemployment, with millions of men and women ready, able and willing to work and unable to find work. Roosevelt, *not* knowing the remedy for unemployment and the depression, and in order to prevent a revolution, chose the "dole," work-relief, N.R.A., depreciated money and plowing under cotton and pig killing and cutting down production in various ways to raise prices. I believe Roosevelt's fear was not a groundless fear. Millions would not starve peacefully in a land of plenty. Was it the town of English, out west where farmers threatened to take food by force if not fed? No greater surprise to the American people could have happened. I further doubt that all these steps of grasping power was deliberate and intentional, though Roosevelt was glad to have billions of dollars to spend, which incidentally helped build up his political machine.

Nock says:

"Practically all the sovereign rights and powers of the smaller political units—all of them that are significant enough to be worth absorbing—have been absorbed by the federal unit; nor is this all. State power has not only been thus concentrated at Washington, but it has been so far concentrated into the hands of the Executive that the existing regime is a regime of personal government."

He then adds:

"This regime was established by a coup d'etat of a new and unusual kind, practicable only in a rich country. It was effected not by violence, like Louis-Napoleon's, or by terrorism, like Mussolini's, but by purchase."

If increasing prosperity should come, and the wheels of industry really begin to revolve, and the work be available more generally, I believe the revolt of the tax payer, aided by the press, will cut down a goodly portion of this conversion of social power into State power, even though Nock believes we are "a people little gifted with intellectual integrity."

He further believes that:

"The method of direct subsidy, or sheer cash-purchase, will therefore in all probability soon give way to the indirect method of what is called "social legislation," that is, a multiplex system of State-managed pensions, insurance and indemnities of various kinds."

*By Albert Jay Nock. 12 mo. Clo. 209 pp. Price \$2.25. William Morrow & Co., N. Y. City.