

BOOKS

Essays on Freedom

ONE IS A CROWD. By Frank Chodorov.
Devin-Adair Company, New York. 1952. 176
pp. \$2.75.

Reviewed by MARSHALL CRANE

A line on its title page announces that this is a book of "Reflections of an Individualist," and it is indeed. Ever since the early years of the century the liberty of the individual—and his loss of it—have been matters of great importance to Frank Chodorov. As a student soapboxer, as a lecturer at the Henry George School, as editor, at various times, of *The Freeman*, *Analysis*, and *Human Events*, and as the author of many essays and articles he has been a tireless champion of freedom—the freedom of speech, pen and property which the Constitution declares is his and ours.

There are nineteen chapters in this little book, each a separate essay, but all devoted to the thesis that society is an aggregation of individual human beings, and that it can never be more than the sum total of its constituent members. He emphasizes that the welfare of society is simply the welfare of these persons. And though he travels a different road, it leads him to the conclusion arrived at by the great religious teachers of the past three thousand years, viz., that a "good society" is composed of "good people."

To some of us at least these ideas may seem obvious and platitudinous, but the author points out that many of our laws and institutions presume doctrines which are quite opposed to them. For example, the Sixteenth Amendment to the Constitution gives our Congress the legal right to take from the individual citizen as large a share of his earning as it sees fit. There is provided no limitation whatever to this power. In other words, his right to his own property only exists insofar as government does not exercise its prior right to take it from him.

Now, the right of private ownership is surely a very basic one. The essential difference between a free man and a slave is that one may own property while the other may not; that one is permitted by law or custom to take from the other the product of his labor. Are we then subjects of a slave state? Not yet, perhaps, or rather, not entirely. However, the income tax has been rising fairly steadily since 1913. What may we expect of it in the future?

Mr. Chodorov is a writer, as well as a political and social philosopher, and his book is as entertaining as it is thought provoking. It is both readable and re-readable. Much too good to miss.