

point of view of the stream of life. There is the feeling of cosmic unity permeating the entire book. Blood and wind, words that are so often repeated in the poems, symbolize the unceasing process of life through the universe. Burnshaw feels man's being part of nature, he is painfully aware of the disruption of life's stream caused by the cruelty and mutilations wrought by the mill, by all the mills:

Millions and millions of other humans crazed
In countless other walls like these: young men

The Liberal Looks at Europe

A HISTORY OF EUROPE, by H. A. L. Fisher. Volume II, Renaissance, Reformation, Reason; Volume III, The Liberal Experiment. Houghton Mifflin Co. Each volume, \$4.

REVIEWING the third and last volume of this eminent post-Victorian's history of our Western civilization, the Literary Supplement of The London Times remarks that "it is a delight to advance along the years in company with a humanist who is not on the defensive." Several paragraphs further on the anonymous reviewer, struggling in the meshes of his own liberal impartiality, shakes an admonitory finger: "The weakness of the book," he sighs, "is that it is somewhat anemic. Always moderate, always reasoned [it] has a regrettable tendency to let its opinions run to extremes. . . ."

Thus, with a fine and decorous irony, we are shown the true face of liberalism: humane, but anemic; always moderate, but rushing nervously toward any extremes that promise to save the face of things as they are; always reasoned, but hamstrung by a set of premises from which one, and only one, conclusion can ever emerge. The conclusion that one must never conclude anything that will necessitate drastic action or lead to a decisive participation in events.

Professor H.A.L. Fisher (Oxford) is, without question, one of the most elegant, suave and respectable historians of our day. In the two volumes before me the last 400 years of the European pageant—roughly from the early nationalist strivings of the sixteenth century to the "new dictatorships and old democracies" of the present—are displayed in a narrative distinguished alike for its emphasis upon the abstraction of Liberty and its sedulous avoidance of the reality of class struggle. At the beginning there is noticeable a curious contradiction in the author's treatment of the great historical forces which, through the conflict of Catholic and Protestant, inaugurated the mercantile epoch of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Frankly admitting the rise of the new "middle class" whose growing economic power—especially in France, Flanders, Germany and England—threatened the supremacy of the feudal aristocracy; conceding the "progressive" forces which, under the new commercial

And women beseeching gods to end the daylight
And bring them evening. . . .

Burnshaw's I-poetry attempts to make us feel the harmony that is absent in the mill, "the certain force of cosmic earth," to make us long for a time when man will be able "to turn the work of days—an endless ode of joy" . . .

It is this longing to get out of the mill system into a system of harmony that lends unity to *The Iron Land*.

MOISSAYE J. OLGIN.

ideals of manufacturing, banking and the markets, were emancipating nations, promoting discovery and laying the foundations of the new bourgeois culture—Professor Fisher nevertheless consistently evades the basic economic issue of whose political manifestations he writes so skilfully. He has himself, in words intended as a defense of his own position, revealed the fatal weakness of his whole work:

It would be too great a simplification of issues, [writes this historian whose own country has been for four centuries a proof to the contrary] to regard the European story as nothing but a struggle of classes, a clash of economic interests. That would be to underrate the rich and varied stuff of human nature, the distractions of statesmen and the waywardness of events.

It is indeed surprising with what passion and earnestness the liberal scholar falls back upon "human nature" in order to blink the realities of conflict; and how, to escape the hard logic of events, he dismisses them as "wayward." The full fruits of this nerveless attitude come to maturity in the third volume, which plunges at once into such "wayward" themes as "liberty, socialism, industrialism, nationalism, revolution and war."

Characteristically, Fisher emphasises the butchery and terror of the French Revolution. Shuddering at the excesses of the Jacobins (precisely as Edmund Burke had done) he cleverly insinuates a comparison between their ferocious leader, Robespierre and the Bolshevik, Lenin: thus laying the basis for his later and systematic hostility to the purposes, objectives and achievements of the Soviet Union. The French Commune he dismisses in a couple of malicious pages, rejoicing in the fact that "the gifted, flint-hearted old gentleman," Thiers, (whom Karl Marx described as "that monstrous gnome") showed "little compassion for the wild terrorists who had made a shambles of Paris." Apparently, this Oxford scholar knows well the art—so well received among liberals—of transforming history into calumny wherever he sees a worker's upraised fist.

Marx, [we learn from this shell-shocked defender of the bourgeois faith] hated nationality with the rancour of an outcast, despised liberty with the arrogance of a despot, and throughout his life lost no opportunity of assailing the class from which he was himself sprung.

This thought, which could, and has, found ample expression in the writings of Hitler, Rosenberg and their disciples, dominates Professor Fisher's entire attitude toward post-war Europe and the problem of dictatorships. For him the Soviet Union, so far from being the product of an organized mass revolt against the ultimate enemy of all democracy, capitalism, is the outcome of the efforts of a little group of murderous fanatics, with Lenin and Trotsky at their head. That the Soviets are succeeding in their economic and political objectives is by no means to be attributed to their healthy structure, but merely to a new, peculiarly Russian quirk in the idea of dictatorship. "Communists and Fascists alike have given up the idea that political problems should be settled by discussion. . . . Inhumanity, bred of war and revolution, is a feature common to totalitarian tyranny in all three forms." The words which I have italicized—taken in connection with his consistent whitewashing of British imperialism's foreign policy—completely expose Professor Fisher's position as an apologist of all imperialism, as likewise his entire incapacity for the most elementary logical distinctions. For him "democracy" is the same bourgeois shibboleth it has been for liberals ever since Rousseau proclaimed the Utopian gospel of liberty, equality and fraternity. His three-volume History, for all its brilliant passages and occasionally shrewd interpretations of forces and men, has utterly missed the point and it will remain as just another monument to the sterility of "impartial" scholarship and to the bankruptcy of a "culture" which retreats from all struggle at a moment when only by engaging the sharpest and most unrelenting warfare against all forms of reaction may culture be preserved at all.

HAROLD WARD.

Insurance Wisdom

LIFE INSURANCE: A LEGALIZED RACKET, by Mort Gilbert and E. Albert Gilbert. Marlowe Publishing Co. \$2.50.

THE Gilberts have produced a book of real professional competence. It is an invaluable guide to the buyer of life-insurance, showing him how to obtain the greatest amount of protection at minimum cost. They dispose decisively of the endowment policies, twenty-payment life contracts and, in fact, of any payments made by the policy-holder for anything except net life protection in the immediate future. Above all they help the young insurer by pointing out that there is no need to pay extra-premium costs here and now on the alleged argument that insurance would be more expensive as one gets older.

For the individual policy-holder, therefore, the Gilberts must go down as benefactors. There is no answer to their brilliant and helpful reasoning. On the book as a social

analysis, however, our judgment cannot be quite as laudatory. It is true that insurance from the viewpoint of the buyer should be based on his proximate mortality danger, plus necessary overhead costs and nothing else. In view of the cyclical disturbances of capitalism and the fact that insurance is, after all, paid out of the investment of the life-insurance companies, the overloading of premiums has, in a social sense, been a warrant of safety. It is technically possible, of course, for insurance to be run under capitalism in the manner of the seventeenth century tontine, that is, as a pure administration of inert funds maintained as cash balances and out of which death benefits are paid in any given year, after making proper allowance in the premium cost for administrative charges. But actually no such situation confronts us. The insurance companies are nothing more nor less than the feeders of the large investment banks for their issues of bonds. That is why they are maintained. Were it not for this feature, the capitalists would gladly allow insurance to be a state function. But bonds and mortgages are their reason for existence and the vast fluctuations of earning power and rental receipts back of these investments require an enormous reserve, built precisely out of insanely overloaded premium costs. The last crisis of capitalism jeopardized even the largest companies and many of the smaller ones actually foundered. Insurance today, therefore, makes the middle classes pay in premium costs the risks of the earning power back of the investments sold to these companies by finance capital.

Each individual policy-holder should follow the Gilberts and sabotage this plunder game, but the totality of policy-holders could never do so without precipitating a crisis that would shake finance capitalism and largely cancel their own self-interest.

The working class presents a graver issue. The best chapter in the Gilberts' book is the eleventh, on Industrial Insurance. This monstrous machine has nothing whatever to do with insurance and is a fraud perpetrated on the most helpless of the workers. Its demagogic "health" and "social-service" propaganda is the most nauseating hypocrisy.

In the last chapter the Gilberts call upon policy-holders to organize for the defense of their rights, justly observing that Congressional investigations promise much and are always sidetracked before arriving at their terminus. While the idea of such organization is not wholly quixotic, the fact is that men do not easily combine as consumers, except in the purchase of daily commodities. The historic instinct of the working class tells it to unite at the point of production indicated as the field of class struggle. The historic instinct of the middle class, as its economic powers decline, tells it more and more to find its salvation within the organizations already serving the great destiny of the working class.

WILL BLAKE.

Wanted: a Marxian Book on Labor Problems

LABOR IN MODERN INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY, by Norman J. Ware. D. C. Heath & Co. \$3.50.

TEXT books on labor problems commonly used in college courses have not kept pace with the progressive interests of many economics professors and students. It is unfortunate that Ware's new book, because he has won an outstanding reputation for earlier books on American labor history and because it is one of the "economics and business series" edited by Alvin Johnson, is likely to have a large circulation in colleges.

Prefacing his book as written from the standpoint of labor, Norman Ware is at least clear-cut on the issue of genuine trade unions as against company unions. He sees that the economic mechanism in the United States has failed

so to distribute the product of industry in good times as to maintain an equilibrium between ability to consume and capacity to produce. Trade union recognition, shorter hours, minimum wages and social insurance will not solve this problem entirely, but they will help.

He condemns the anti-union policy of big employers and concludes that their attitude is an invitation to mass action of a revolutionary nature, "the only significant incentive of this sort now found in the United States." It is not the Communists "we" have to fear, he states, if "we" have to fear anything, but hunger, necessity and suffering. He is, of course, against any mass action of a revolutionary nature.

On the all-important questions of industrial unionism and a Farmer-Labor Party, Ware's book is directly contrary to the workers' needs and interests. The author is against industrial unionism because "experiments with 'mixed,' 'labor' or 'industrial' unionism have not been particularly successful." Indeed he thinks that "industrial unionism has everywhere broken down," and that craft unionism must continue as the basis of the American labor movement. He does not even recognize the widespread revolt against craft union divisiveness which had become a vital issue in the A.F. of L. long before his book was completed.

On the problem of forming a national Farmer-Labor Party, Ware does not seriously consider the matter as a present-day issue. He makes a decidedly inaccurate statement about an earlier movement for a national Farmer-Labor Party. In dismissing with a few words LaFollette's five million votes under the Farmer-Labor banner in 1924, Ware remarks in a footnote that "The Farmer-Labor Party of 1924 had practically no labor support"!

As a matter of record, for the first time in its history, contrary to its traditional non-partisan policy, the executive committee of the American Federation of Labor in 1924 endorsed an independent national ticket. The

A.F. of L. specifically approved Senator Robert M. LaFollette for President and Senator Burton K. Wheeler for Vice-President on the ground that both "have, throughout their whole political careers, stood steadfast in defense of the rights and interests of wage-earners and farmers," and "have proffered a platform in which the economic issues of the day are met in a manner more nearly conforming to labor's proposals than any other platform." Contrary to Ware's assertion, very many of the five million votes cast for LaFollette were obviously labor votes.

Ware's book, as its name implies, is intended to present a well-rounded, comprehensive picture of labor in the United States, bringing American labor history up to date through the N.R.A. period and covering the important labor problems, including organized labor and the courts, violence in strikes, present-day labor organization, industrial paternalism, labor and the state, labor philosophies, and the "factors, social and economic, which condition labor relations at this time." Its record of labor history is in the main a good summary of events and for such important facts as the terms of the Danbury Hatters' case and of the Clayton Act it is a valuable, convenient reference book.

Ware, however, would stop the workers' movement exactly at the point where collective bargaining brings them minimum wages, shorter hours and a little social insurance. He is against any extension of workers' control beyond this point. He believes in labor's "accommodation" in order to save the present capitalist system which finds itself "in a difficult position in the modern world" where "adjustments are demanded."

Marxism is anathema to him. He repeats all the time-worn, nineteenth century attacks on Marx; asserts that Marxist economics no longer holds. In the present-day labor movement he describes A. J. Muste as "among the idealists" while "among the neurotics are some of the Communist leaders, both men and women." William Z. Foster he describes as "an opportunist, disillusioned," but still "intelligent and an able organizer."

The significant point is that with all this anti-Marxist bias, the author finds it necessary to devote so much space to a discussion of Marxism. He is forced to the conclusion that "withal, Marx remains today the most significant influence on labor thought even when that influence is chiefly negative, as in the United States." If Marxist influence in the United States were negative, would Ware have spent so much time in attempting a refutation? GRACE HUTCHINS.

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