

analysis of the position the United States occupies in the contemporary diplomatic world, together with an admirable exposition of the historical stages by which the nation arrived where it is.

Congratulations are especially due the author on his willingness to state definite conclusions on matters where historical judgment is divided. In general, he goes along with the latest theories advanced, and they may not always be right. But undoubtedly the author reflects in most cases the best current opinion among historians. A few instances will suffice to make this point clear. The principal cause of the War of 1812, Ferrell asserts, was "freedom of the seas," despite the theories of Pratt, Hacker, and others; and he cites cogent evidence in favor of an interpretation that takes us "right back where we started from." He brands the attack on Mexico in 1846 as "a war of aggression," while at the same time regretting the absence of a Mexican statesman able enough and smart enough to sell what he could not defend, as Napoleon sold Louisiana in 1803. Ferrell questions whether McKinley "could have defied the war hawks of 1898 in Congress" and so prevented the war with Spain. "If the Spanish government had granted Cuba immediate independence, this alone might have prevented hostilities." He is convinced that "there is no doubt that Germany's submarine measures, above everything else, brought the United States into the first World War." He blames "the traditionally isolationist outlook of the American people toward foreign affairs" rather than the wilfulness of Senator Lodge and his associates for American failure to ratify the Treaty of Versailles. He concludes that "it defies common sense to believe that President Franklin D. Roosevelt would have constructed in diabolical cleverness a Pacific back door to war" in Pearl Harbor. He holds "American military unpreparedness, rather than any such factor as public statements by the secretary of state or General MacArthur" (who said that "only a lunatic would fight on the mainland of Asia"), responsible for the Communist attack on South Korea. These are courageous statements, for they will cost him adoptions that he might not have lost by the safer noncommittal on-the-one-hand-on-the-other dodges.

The one conspicuous flaw in the book is that the index is not adequately analytical. Long lists of figures following an item are an irritation rather than a help.

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*An Economic History of the United States.* By Gilbert C. Fite and Jim E. Reese. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1959. Pp. ix, 714. Illustrations, maps, charts, tables, bibliography, index. \$6.75.)

*American Economic History.* By Donald L. Kemmerer and C. Clyde Jones. (New York: McGraw-Hill Co., Inc., 1959. Pp. xvi, 680. Illustrations, maps, charts, tables, bibliography, index. \$7.75.)

The two books listed above merit careful consideration by teachers and students of general American history and especially by individuals interested in American economic history. Although written for use as

textbooks in economic history, these volumes view American history in a broad perspective. Professors Fite and Reese even bury one of the "sacred cows" of many economists—that self-seeking "economic man" often found in Chapter I of textbooks in economics—when in their Preface they say: "Economic factors, however, are not the only important or motivating forces in human life. Economic wants are strong, but men are also moved by religion, politics, morals, ethics, and other influences." Professors Kemmerer and Jones are not so explicit as their colleagues, Fite and Reese, have been on this point, but the approach and content of their book suggest substantial agreement.

Both volumes place emphasis on how and why American economic life has developed as it has. Their authors wisely proceed upon the thesis that such knowledge is a necessary prerequisite to any significant and meaningful understanding of present-day economic life and institutions. Unfortunately this thesis has been largely ignored, or even rejected, by many economists, but this fact does not alter its validity or essential wisdom. The overall chronological organization of these books is similar. In each instance, the colonial era, the period from the American Revolution to the Civil War, the years from the Civil War to World War I, and the years since 1914 are appropriately treated as basic units. Within these four periods somewhat traditional emphasis is given agriculture, manufacturing, labor, and transportation. In addition, considerable emphasis is also given domestic and foreign trade, capital formation and expansion, banking, public finance, and governmental regulation of the economy. These volumes stress mercantilism as a basic economic and political philosophy of the eighteenth century, and the comments about the difficulties and limitations arising from regulatory efforts of governments in pursuance thereof seem to have more than accidental overtones regarding the governmental regulation of economic life which has developed since the late nineteenth century. The productivity of the American economy and the steady rise in personal income and wealth are stressed in these histories as remarkable achievements. Perhaps, however, both accounts inadequately indicate that many Americans still live at a low economic level for one reason or another. Another item which also seems to be underemphasized is the increasing complexity of American economic life and the growing interdependence of its segments. The authors have perhaps also given inadequate attention to the impact of this complexity and interdependence upon the relation between government and business as well as upon the questions of the proper nature, role, and end of government itself.

Each volume has numerous useful maps, charts, tables, and graphs, as well as a selected bibliography. On the whole, both books are interestingly and well written. Historians and economists will disagree with estimates and "facts" at certain points, with occasional conclusions, and sometimes with the emphasis or approach. But even so, these volumes nonetheless are significant achievements within the limitations of existing information and scholarship.

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