

Undoubtedly Horan was in possession of fresh material, and his book is made more interesting by reproductions of some of it. It is a pity that the manuscript was not carefully edited and checked, for Horan might have made a really valuable contribution. Inasmuch as the book was not adequately checked, the most appealing character in it turns out to be Colonel Sweet's midnight rider. He is a veritable Paul Revere, who shouts a warning even to a drowsy reader.

Indiana University

Kenneth P. Williams

Era of the Oath: Northern Loyalty Tests During the Civil War and Reconstruction. By Harold Melvin Hyman. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1954, pp. xiv, 229. Illustrations, bibliography, and index. \$5.00.)

Throughout the Civil War the United States government wrestled with the problem of setting up tests which would prove the loyalty of its citizens, and when the war was over and the Reconstruction period set in, the problem remained as vital as ever. In the one period, loyalty and the knowledge of who was loyal were necessary to win the war; in the other, they were equally necessary to win the peace.

The authorities never got beyond the oath of allegiance in their quest for a test, but for twenty-three years, from 1861 to 1884, which might be called the "Era of the Oath" in American history, they devised one oath after another and fought over methods of applying it. By the first few months of the war, the old oath of allegiance had come to be considered insufficient, and although the executive departments had devised new oaths or had reapplied the old oaths, Congress in August, 1861, passed a law setting up a uniform new oath. The next year Congress devised an oath for jurors, but by far the most important of the oaths Congress adopted was the famous "Ironclad Test Oath," passed on July 2, 1862. This was the oath which became so important in Reconstruction times, for it not only related to present and future loyalty, but also included past loyalty.

It was this oath which became the most potent weapon in the hands of the Radicals in establishing their control over the South. It was a great political weapon in the fight between the Radicals and President Johnson. The President attempted

to build his reconstruction program on present and future loyalty, but if this oath were applied, the base of his government crumbled; for nearly all southerners had given aid and comfort to the Confederacy. The Radicals by administering this oath sifted out of the South for the foundation of their governments the unterrified southerners who had never bowed the knee to Davis.

Practically everybody in the North and in the South at one time or another was required to take an oath. If he were a federal official, a soldier or sailor, a member of Congress, a state official, a postmaster, a steamboat captain, a country merchant, or whoever he might be, sooner or later he was confronted with an oath to take.

What was the purpose of all this oath-taking? Apart from the politics which was mixed up with it during the Reconstruction, it was an attempt to establish a person's loyalty. Was the oath a success in establishing loyalty? The author concluded that it was not. An investigation of the facts of a person's life would have been a much more potent method, for many people were willing to take an oath lightly with many mental reservations. Yet that person was accepted, whereas the conscientious person who put the sanctity of an oath above all else, and refused to take it, was rejected. It is an interesting fact that John F. Potter, a Wisconsin Congressman, headed a committee to ferret out the disloyal, but its methods gained for the committee a reputation reminiscent of a present-day committee headed by another Wisconsin member of Congress.

Harold M. Hyman, the author of this book, has made a remarkably complete and scholarly study of the oath. He has presented his vast body of factual material in a logical and readable arrangement and has throughout shown a mastery of his subject.

University of Georgia

E. Merton Coulter

British Politics and the American Revolution. By Charles R. Ritcheson. (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954, pp. xv, 320. Illustrations, bibliography, and index. \$4.00.)

The role of British politics in the imperial convulsion of 1763-1783 has been described by many historians, but by