

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.

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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

none as succinctly and accurately as by Charles R. Ritcheson. Twenty-five years ago Sir Lewis Namier published his classic description of a fractured political system, and if Ritcheson has not improved on that picture, he has, unlike virtually all of his predecessors, utilized it in his narrative. As an analysis of the American problem in British politics this modest volume is incomparably better than anything in print. It incorporates the latest available research and makes use of manuscript sources not hitherto open to workers in the Revolutionary vineyard.

The broad outlines of the story are well known. George Grenville stirred the sleeping dragon of discontent, and Rockingham won but a Pyrrhic victory in 1766. Chatham's ministry was disastrous and North hardly the man to teach George III the beauties of a "federal empire." Neither America nor the Opposition could unseat North's majorities, however, and too late he extended the hand of conciliation. Within this framework Ritcheson carefully elucidates the development of American policy by the shifting ministries of 1763-1778, and describes the manner in which factional antagonisms weakened and ultimately defeated each succeeding effort. For perhaps the first time in one volume Grenville, Pitt and Shelburne, Rockingham and Burke, all receive equally fair treatment. Ritcheson demonstrates clearly that British statesmen were very much aware of the problems of empire and that the best made every effort, according to their views, to implement one solution or another. Their programs, which are the author's chief concern, are judiciously described and North's conciliatory proposals carefully evaluated. The terminal point of 1778 is selected on the ground that the dispatch of the Carlisle Commission "represented the end of an historical process, which had begun with the first impact of the American problem on British politics" in 1763. Ritcheson credits the destruction of the old Empire to "the splintered condition of the Whig Party" and the rise of "a new conservatism" that could not comprehend "the only permanent solution of the tangled problem . . . the federal principle."

As far as "American" politics (i.e. policy) was a predominating element in factional intrigue (and to the extent that British imperial policy contributed to the emergence of the American nation) Ritcheson's work may stand unchal-

lenged. The boundaries, unfortunately, are far from clear, and the complexities of personal politics cannot be illuminated by a few swift strokes. Ritcheson's characters move across the scene with great precision but without that clash of personality with which the period was replete. Brevity in historical writing is often a blessing, but had the author availed himself of greater pen-room he would have secured a better perspective. It is not sufficient to point out that factions differed on American issues; there were factions long before 1763, and they remained at odds long after 1778 for good English reasons. Ritcheson but mentions in passing those matters which often threatened to obscure the American problem altogether. Still less does he delineate the "new conservatism" which provided North with majorities after 1770. This new conservatism oftentimes appears old King writ large. It was the King, not Lord North, who rose above Saratoga's stricken field, and it was the reaction of 1780, not 1770, that enabled George to weather Yorktown. As neither British imperial politics nor the American Revolution ended in 1778, the subject may be considered open for further discussion.

In brief, though "The American Problem in British Politics" might have been a more accurate title, this book will stand forth with pride of place between Alvord's and Harlow's massive volumes as a work of sound scholarship and lasting merit.

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The Harmony Society: A 19th Century American Utopia. By Christiana F. Knoedler. (New York: Vantage Press, 1954, pp. xi, 160. Illustrations and index. \$3.00.)

Christiana Knoedler, in this little book, has recreated the life of one of the most interesting of the many socio-religious communities that were established on the frontier early in the nineteenth century. The book is scarcely a history of the Rappites or a reminiscence of the way of life of the Harmony Society in its declining years. It is rather a combination of brief historical or background chapters and sketches of biographical or descriptive nature. The author, after all, is describing her own beloved home and the experiences, in part, of her own family and its associates. When she writes: