

employed in medieval England, are of questionable relevance to his main theme.

Although there is no bibliography, it is obvious from the footnotes that Hogue has read widely in the sources and literature of his subject. It is therefore surprising to find no references to Sutherland's important book on *Quo warranto*, to Holt's book and Cam's paper on Magna Carta, and to Galbraith's two volumes on the public records and his book on Domesday. But, as Hogue admits, he has been eclectic in his treatment. What emerges is a clearly written, somewhat repetitious, pulling together of most of the standard works on English common law. If the book is intended for the layman, as the Preface and Glossary suggest, then Hogue has achieved his purpose, although it is difficult for the reviewer to believe that the classic works of Pollock and Maitland and Plucknett "assume professional legal training." If the book is intended for the student, then it would have to be for the student who has never had a thorough course in English medieval history. For one who has had such a course, it would add little to what he should have learned.

Emory University

G. P. Cuttino

Agents and Merchants: British Colonial Policy and the Origins of the American Revolution, 1763-1775. By Jack M. Sosin. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965. Pp. xvi, 267. Notes, illustrations, selected bibliography, index. \$5.50.)

Agents and Merchants searches the causes of the American Revolution even more closely than did the author's first book, *Whitehall and the Wilderness*. In so doing, it maintains the fine scholarship so characteristic of Sosin's work.

This volume offers perhaps the best defense yet written of British administration from 1763 to 1775. Several historians will disagree with the imperial point of view and argue the case for colonial sovereignty; but this book will force modification of the charges of ignorance or tyranny, or both, often levelled against the men who guided Britain's empire after the Seven Years' War. Indeed, given Sosin's premise that the critical factor in imperial relations after 1763 was the colonial challenge to the mother country's sovereignty, a Britain not only well-informed but eminently reasonable is revealed. So long as the colonies recognized the authority of Parliament, successive ministries compromised with America over specific measures designed to implement that authority.

The author focuses on the relations of colonial agents and merchants trading to America with the various British ministries and examines their influence on ministerial decisions. He finds this lobby securing considerable benefits for the colonists until 1773. After that he sees its influence dwindling. The lobby did not significantly affect ministerial decisions in the last two years of peace.

Before 1773 every administration, even Grenville's, altered its colonial legislation to meet colonial requests. Concessions made de-

pended largely on the advice of the people most aware of colonial wishes, the agents and merchants. This group might even have stopped the Stamp Act had the colonies allowed them to present an alternative tax to Grenville. As it was, the First Lord modified the Mutiny Act and was prepared to lift some trade restrictions before he lost office. The agents and merchants' greatest success came with Rockingham's ministry. Their influence did not cause repeal of the Stamp Act, for Rockingham had determined upon repeal before consulting them; but they helped present the case for repeal to Parliament. They further influenced the establishment of free ports in Jamaica and Dominica and a reduction in the molasses duty. Their lobby prompted the Grafton ministry to abandon all save one of the Townshend duties and the North ministry to ease significantly the currency restrictions established in 1764.

Unfortunately, when the agents and merchants needed strength and unity to prevent or modify the Coercive Acts they were at their weakest, in numbers and influence. Many agents had died; and the few remaining came to be associated in ministerial eyes, Benjamin Franklin in particular, with factions in the colonial assemblies who advocated independence from parliamentary rule. Ministers had decided not to temporize with the Americans after the Boston Tea Party—especially when the only effective colonial lobbyist avowedly denied parliamentary sovereignty—and the Coercive Acts ensued. The subsequent olive branch North offered owed more to Gage's military assessment of the situation in North America and the unity of colonial opposition than to any work of the agents and merchants.

In the course of his narrative Sosin offers some provocative incidents concerning Grenville's offer of an alternative to the Stamp Act, American misunderstanding of the effect of its economic boycotts on British policy, and final misinterpretation by the agents to the Americans of the basic purpose of the Coercive Acts. As Sosin states, if the Americans advanced a principle between 1763 and 1775 so did the British. Every ministry asserted that sovereignty must lie within the Parliament of the parent state, not within the various assemblies of the North American continent, if the empire were to survive.

University of Massachusetts

Franklin B. Wickwire

Naval Documents of the American Revolution. Volume I, American Theatre: Dec. 1, 1774-Sept. 2, 1775; European Theatre: Dec. 6, 1774-Aug. 9, 1775. Edited by William Bell Clark. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1964. Pp. xliii, 1,451. Illustrations, maps, notes, appendices, bibliography, index. \$9.00.)

The first of a projected fifteen-volume series, *Naval Documents of the American Revolution* represents a departure from current editorial ventures related to the revolutionary period of American history. *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin* are, after all, devoted to correspondence to and from Franklin; problems of identification and association exist, but they are manageable. This reviewer is concerned with the