

Patterns of Wealthholding in Wisconsin Since 1850. By Lee Soltow. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1971. Pp. xiii, 168. Exhibits, tables, appendices, notes, index. \$6.50.)

Professor Soltow is one of the most mathematically minded and sophisticated of the new economic historians, and apparently he shares many of the strengths and weaknesses of that select group. As a result he has produced a book that will be read, discussed, and praised only by members of the elite to which he belongs.

In all respects regarding methodology and empirical testing, the author is superb. He follows the canons of a good quantitative approach, clearly explaining what he is going to do and how he is going to do it. He describes his problem, his method for analyzing it, the available data, and his sampling procedure. In the body of the book the reader is confronted with an enormous collection of correlation coefficients, Pareto curves, Gini coefficients, formulae, and tables. All of these analytical displays, the knowledgeable reader will conclude, are absolutely necessary. For any but the most sophisticated student of statistics, however, the impact is intimidating and overwhelming.

Much more than a blow by blow account of the author's analysis of data is required. Although Soltow explains his tables in detail, this is virtually all he does. The last short chapter is the only one in which the reader is presented with a summary of any chapter's content, and this is five paragraphs in length. In the entire book there are only thirteen pages of summary material. Since little discussion exists in this work apart from specific explanations of tables and charts, many readers will be left with the question, "What does it all mean?"

Soltow begins with a statement of the problem: what was the nature of inequality of wealth in Wisconsin in 1850 and its change in distribution over time? In particular he proposes to test the assumption that the relative share of wealth of the rich increased in the last half of the nineteenth century in a rigorous and systematic manner. No reader will doubt the rigor of the author's approach.

Soltow's first chapter contains a very terse statement of his findings. The bulk of the book is devoted to an analysis

of the period 1850-1870; only one chapter concerns wealth distributions after 1870. One chapter compares various nativity groups, and the last chapter presents an analysis of Milwaukee and Wisconsin incomes. In brief, the book is unbalanced and not exactly what might be expected from the title.

Ralph Hidy, in his presidential address to the American Economics Association (*The Journal of Economic History*, March, 1972), argued that conventionally trained economic historians have an obligation to become familiar with the new techniques in economic history. This is inescapable. But Hidy also stressed that writers equipped with the new methods have a responsibility to communicate with a wider audience than themselves, and in this task Soltow has failed.

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Dispossessing the American Indian: Indians and Whites on the Colonial Frontier. By Wilbur R. Jacobs. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972. Pp. xiv, 240. Notes, maps, illustrations, appendices, note on sources, index. Clothbound, \$7.95; paperbound, \$3.95.)

Dispossessing the American Indian consists of three groups of loosely related essays. In Part I Jacobs sketches the background of Indian-white contact, emphasizing the fur trade; he covers various topics in Part II—Edmond Atkin's report, the destruction of Fort William Henry in 1757, and the so called conspiracy of Pontiac. Part III is an overview of colonialism in New Guinea, Australia, and North America, an unusual grouping to say the least. Nevertheless, in this section the chapter entitled "The Price of Progress: Native Peoples on the European Frontiers of Australia, New Guinea, and North America" is worth reading for its anthropological point of view. Too often historians neglect the work of anthropologists, who study people in their environment and who do not rely solely on the written record. Jacobs, in contrast, studied firsthand the aborigines of Australia and New Guinea and found that they shared an experience with the Indians of North America: they occupied land coveted by invading Europeans. Yet the course of events in these areas was not the same. In Australia and America the Europeans displaced