

knows our children as more than public-school students. The final somber note of the essay reflects on the sad and pernicious system of social conditioning that crushes individuality instead.

Philosopher J. Roger Lee writes an exposition entitled "Limits on Universal Education." Only when we come to the very end do we comprehend the method in Lee's approach. He presumes a universal education, but wants to enlighten us as to what moral, religious, or political ideas it may legitimately include. He summarizes, "Given that we may include these topics in the domain of whatever universal education we provide children, should we do so? The answer is yes—but not much."

Lee could improve the appeal of his essay immeasurably if readers could grasp its direction at the outset. It reads like a long, meandering stroll, and some will need to be convinced of the value of making the journey in the first place.

Sheldon Richman's essay is the final contribution to the book. I would have preferred that it be the opening essay, as it would have helped lend a framework to the collection as a whole. "Individuality, Education, and Entrepreneurship," would be best, however, as a stand-alone work, perhaps a book in itself. There is an urgency in the quest for alternatives to government's role in education, says Richman, because children "languish" in a system that is not responsive to individual differences. Private education can both afford to use trial and error to weed out unsuccessful methods, and has a strong incentive to do so. Government-directed education distributes rewards regardless of success in meeting client demands, while private education is an entrepreneurial activity—rewarded only if it serves clients' wishes.

Schooling is seen as "a service offered to competent buyers (parents) in the marketplace, . . ." and not "the missionary or therapeutic work of an enlightened elite mercifully bestowed on the benighted and unappreciative masses." Richman's essay argues that only the complete divorce of government from all aspects of education, including vouchers and charter schools, is likely to effect significant

change. Parental rather than governmental oversight acknowledges the rights of parents, encourages them to make competent assessments of their children's needs and progress, discourages continued parental ignorance, complacency, and irresponsibility, and restores liberty, with the accompanying risks and rewards, to citizens and families in our society.

As a volume, *Education in a Free Society* strays from its mission. There is more discussion of reform than of freedom in three of the four essays, and more dissimilarity than cohesiveness. If there is any theme which emerges from every essay, it is the conviction that governmental schools are doing very badly by children in our society, a society that claims individuality, freedom, and personal enterprise as its ideals, but fails to apply them to its youngest citizens. □

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When in the Course of Human Events: The Case for Southern Secession

by Charles Adams

Rowman & Littlefield • 2000 • 272 pages • \$24.95

Reviewed by Joseph R. Stromberg

Some reviewers have had a hard time with the present book. They imagine that there is a single historical thesis therein, one subject to definitive proof or refutation. In this, I believe they are mistaken. Instead, what we have here is a multifaceted critique of what must be the most central event in American history.

This is not Mr. Adams's first book. His *For Good and Evil: The Impact of Taxes on the Course of Civilization* (1999) lives up to its title and underscores the importance of a matter frequently ignored by conventional historians. Taxation and other fiscal matters certainly play a major role in Adams's reconstruction of the War for Southern Independence.

Those who long for the simple morality play in which Father Abraham saved the

Union (always capitalized) and emancipated slaves out of his vision and kindness have complained that Adams has ignored slavery as a cause of the war. That is incorrect. Slavery and the racial issue connected with it are present; they do not, however, have the causal stage all to themselves.

In chapter one, Adams sets the American war over secession in a global context by instantiating other conflicts of similar type. He plants here the first seeds of doubt that political separation is inherently immoral. Chapter two deals with Fort Sumter and Lincoln's successful gamble to have the Confederacy "start" the war. Here one learns that the Fort was primarily a *customs house*—a nice bit of symbolism, especially since the South paid roughly four times as much in tariffs as the North did.

Given that, Lincoln was very concerned about his tariff revenues in the absence of the Southern states. After Fort Sumter, the (Northern) President unconstitutionally established a blockade of Southern ports on his own motion. Soon, Lincoln had robbed Maryland of self-government and was making other inroads on civil liberty—his idea of preserving the Constitution via his self-invented presidential "war powers" (of which there is not a word in the actual document).

In chapter four, Adams unfolds his revenue-based theory of the war. The shift from a pro-peace to a pro-war position by the New York press and key business interests coincided exactly with their realization that the Confederacy's low tariffs would draw trade away from the North, especially in view of the far higher Northern tariff just instituted. There is an important point here. It did not automatically follow that secession *as such* had to mean war. But peace foretold the end of continental mercantilism, tariffs, internal improvements, and railroad subsidies—a program that meant more than life to a powerful Northern political coalition. That coalition, of which Lincoln was the head, wanted war for a complex of material, political, and ideological reasons.

Adams also looks at what might well be called Northern war crimes. Here he can cite any number of pro-Lincoln historians, who

file such things under grim necessity. Along the way, the author has time to make justified fun of Lincoln's official theory that he was dealing with a mere "rebellion" rather than with the decision of political majorities in eleven states.

Other chapters treat the so-called Copperheads, the "treason trial" of Jefferson Davis (which never took place, quite possibly because the unionist case could not have survived a fair trial), a comparative view of emancipation, and the problems of Reconstruction. The author's deconstruction of the Gettysburg Address will shock Lincoln idolaters. Adams underlines the gloomy pseudo-religious fatalism with which Lincoln salved his conscience in his later speeches. This supports M.E. Bradford's division of Lincoln's career into Whig, "artificial Puritan," and practical "Cromwellian" phases—the last item pertaining to total war.

To address seriously the issues presented by Adams requires a serious imaginative effort, especially for those who never before heard such claims about the Constitution, about the war, or about Lincoln. Ernest Renan wrote that for Frenchmen to constitute a nation, they must remember certain things and were "obliged already to have forgotten" certain others. Adams focuses on those things that Northerners, at least, have long since forgotten.

What Adams's book—with or without a single, central thesis—does, is to reveal that in 1860 and early 1861 many Americans, north and south, doubted the existence of any federal power to coerce a state and considered peaceful separation a real possibility. In the late 1780s *The Federalist Papers*, for example, laughed down the notion that the federal government could coerce states in their corporate, political capacity. For much of the nineteenth century Americans saw the union as a practical arrangement *instrumental* to other values. That vision vanished in the killing and destruction of Mr. Lincoln's war. Americans paid a rather high price for making a means into an end. □

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One Market Under God: Extreme Capitalism, Market Populism, and the End of Economic Democracy

by Thomas Frank

Doubleday • 2000 • 414 pages • \$26.00

Reviewed by Brian Doherty

Thomas Frank is the hippest leftist theorist around. He publishes *The Baffler*, a journal of cultural criticism mostly aimed at the evils of corporations. Frank is a hero at *Harpers's* and gets his books—essay collections of social criticism, not generally considered hot properties—published by the biggest New York publishers. His first book, *The Conquest of Cool*, lamented that corporations and advertisers have co-opted the language of radicalism and rebellion, tamed them, and made them meaningless.

Frank is one of the most well-known exponents of a widely spreading trope among socialists: that the laissez-faire free-market mentality has completely conquered the worlds of intellect and policy; that we live in a free-market dystopia where everyone is poor and getting poorer, on the verge of unemployment, and where no one dares suggest, much less act on, the idea that unfettered corporations in an unbounded free market should be interfered with in any way.

This may strike actual advocates of radical laissez faire, who haven't noticed their decisive victory, as peculiar. It might be interesting to actually see the evidence this intellectual wunderkind musters to buttress this notion. Alas, Frank thinks his assertions are beyond argument. His book's almost infinite ratio of derisive summation to actual argument against his opponents indicates that, despite his weird claim that free-market ideology reigns uncontested, Frank believes his readers already agree with him. He's merely the high priest at the ritualized verbal flaying of the heretics.

He starts with the assumption that laissez faire has triumphed, and says his book will tell "the story of . . . how the American corporate community went about winning the

legitimacy it so covets, persuading the world that the laissez-faire way was not only the best and the inevitable way, but the one most committed to the will and the interests of the people."

What this means, in practice, is hundreds of pages of witlessly ironic summations of writers to whom Frank attributes this supposed laissez-faire rout. People who say the Internet could be liberating, like George Gilder, or that the microchip has profoundly changed the world, like Kevin Kelly, are gibbering jerks. Those who hyped the '90s stock-market boom and growth in mutual-fund ownership are enemies of the people, from Peter Lynch to the Motley Fools to the Beardstown Ladies. Those who suggest even partial privatization of Social Security are deluded dupes of Wall Street barons. Boosters of the changing nature of business management, from the Body Shop's Anita Roddick to pop-management consultants like Tom Peters or Peter Senge, are all liars and charlatans.

Frank is correct that the triumphalist blatherings of certain neo-globalists like the *New York Times's* Thomas Friedman are overdone, and that the contentless "constant change" rhetoric of pop-management consultants is frequently laughable. Alas, it's hard to get a chuckle even out of those parts since Frank's relentless tone of haughty sneering leaves little room for the joy of a skilled, witty evisceration of the deserving.

Like most post-Soviet leftists, Frank avoids explicitly articulating his vision of a just and proper world. In effect, Frank argues, the only valid definition of "radical" is: that which is opposed to those with more money than me. (One couldn't say Frank thinks radicalism should be aimed at "the rich," since by any objective definition the American workers whose burden Frank assumes are fabulously wealthy compared to the overwhelming majority of humans, living or dead.)

Frank believes that the world of business and work is one of pure coercion and the destruction of the weak. No one who works is doing what he wants to do, and attempts to make the workplace more appealing—casual days, free juice, a more decentralized structure—are laughable attempts to paper over