

invaded by the bitter feeling that no sheltered home is waiting for them, when they must return. These sections depict the fugitive nature of post-war German youth on the road.

The novel might be said to deal with a generation that was orphaned almost with birth. (Schoenstedt's narrative opens with Peter's father going off to war, and the mother beginning work in a factory.) Schoenstedt's youth is not lost or uprooted, only because it has never found itself, and has at no time known a home. What persuasion can this generation gather to fight against an enemy it never came to recognize? What concrete insights can it muster for setting the coordinates for communal planning? To be sure, the novel ends with Peter Volkers finding new hope in America. But Schoenstedt is forced to invoke a kind of Santa Claus, in the person of a well-to-do American friend. It is a fairy-tale conclusion that follows "naturally" enough from Peter's life, depicted as governed by brutal contingencies against which he was indeed helpless. For Peter Volkers' exile did not begin when he left Germany. He was homeless from childhood.

Still, as the title indicates, the novel has a positive undertone. Schoenstedt's book expresses faith in the final liberation of the German people, a liberation in which this generation will have its part. For, despite the fact that time and history have forced upon it an unheroic role, this youth has been "educated" in its way, and has been awakened to political consciousness. It has retained a strong, if tender, desire for freedom. This value was not killed, but remained stored up, awaiting an opportunity to be discharged. It is this humanity and yearning that Walter Schoenstedt's *In Praise Of Life* recreates in a prose that is carried by a lyrical rhythm, even as it paints the stark reality.

HARRY SLOCHOWER.

## The Fight for Security

SOCIAL SECURITY, by Maxwell S. Stewart.  
W. W. Norton & Co. \$3.

THE present economic crisis has re-accentuated the challenge of insecurity. Fifteen million unemployed and their families—President Roosevelt's one-third of the nation—have been dumped on the social scrapheap by Wall Street. They need protection from the main evil of capitalism, unemployment. They, and the rest of the people, need to be cushioned against the hazards of old age and sickness. The Social Security Act, a hesitating step toward solving the problem, is attacked by the Liberty Leaguers on the false ground that its destruction is necessary for prosperity. The fight for social insurance, it is clear, is far from being won as some liberals, two years ago, believed it was.

Maxwell S. Stewart, the well-known lib-

eral writer on economic and social problems, has written an excellent book illuminating the background and perspectives of the security movement. It should be better known to all who endeavor to maintain and improve the present social-insurance system. Although written some time ago, the volume is especially pertinent today when the reactionaries are attacking relief and unemployment insurance.

Mr. Stewart has the happy knack of writing simply about technical topics, and of compressing a great array of facts into a persuasive and convincing argument. Although he says he has not attempted "a comprehensive survey," he has put the essentials of an enormous field within the confines of a short volume. His sound approach avoids the pitfalls of the actuarial fanatics, and the do-nothingness of the "objective" specialists. This puts him squarely in line with the program evolved in the struggle for relief and social insurance by the unemployed movement and the trade unions.

Students and workers will find valuable material in every chapter, especially those chapters in which Mr. Stewart tackles the long-range problems which will occupy public attention in the immediate future—the need for compulsory health-insurance, old-age pensions available to all sections of the population, adequate unemployment-insurance, and a national, integrated system of social insurance covering every hazard of capitalism.

His comments on all these problems are helpful, because he never loses sight of their roots—capitalism's inability to provide the necessities of life for an ever increasing percentage of the population. He points out that even when the average worker retains his health, youth, and employment, he is far from well off, "but let anyone of these slip away (and who can prevent it?) and he finds himself facing a struggle for mere existence."

Mr. Stewart sets a goal which is a fundamental plank in the program of the progressive movement. He urges "not mere protection against the risks of modern life," but a plan "embracing a consolidation of present gains and the establishment of a rich normal life." The struggle for this goal embracing the very right to live is the central question of our times. For the reactionaries, as demonstrated by the present sitdown strike of big money, are resisting even the inadequate measures of the Roosevelt administration. They are driving for the ragged individualism of reaction and fascism, and their attacks against relief, the WPA, and the Social Security Act are but one phase of their general campaign against the living standards and democratic rights of the people.

That is why Mr. Stewart should have emphasized the need of implementing the fight for security with the united political action of all the progressive forces. The struggle for security is inextricably bound up with the defense of democracy. Economic security is the basis for the preservation of democracy; in turn, democracy guarantees more security for the people. Both can be achieved through the

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instrumentality of a common democratic front of all genuine progressives.

At only one point does Mr. Stewart get off the rails of sound argumentation. He tries to show that a social-insurance system based on taxing the rich would ensure the stability of capitalism. His own observations in the Soviet Union should have convinced him of two things: only a Socialist society can make social insurance truly all-inclusive and adequate; while, under capitalism, social insurance cannot preserve the capitalist order or prevent recurring crises which are inherent in the system itself. The fight for security helps protect the people from the worst evils of capitalism; in this fight they learn the necessity for the Socialist reorganization of society which alone can solve the paradox of starvation amidst plenty.

DAVID RAMSEY.

## No Quiet on the Labor Front

LABOR'S NEW MILLIONS, by Mary Heaton Vorse, Modern Age Books. 50 cents.

NO JOURNALIST in the United States is better qualified to write about the rise of the Committee for Industrial Organization than Mary Heaton Vorse. In twenty years of labor struggles she has seen the repeated failures of craft unionism and labor's demand for industrial unions that would not be afraid to organize the unskilled and the semi-skilled.

Covering the steel strike of 1919, Mrs. Vorse did everything that a labor journalist could possibly do—and more—to help the strikers win. She saw that splendid struggle end in defeat, and she analyzed it in *Men and Steel*. Organizing then for the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America in Pennsylvania, she knew at first hand the hostility of state troopers, called into action by scared employers.

In Passaic, in 1926, she was on the job in support of the textile strikers. She tells about it in another small book, *Passaic*. Three years later it was Gastonia, and she was there, as her story, *Strike—A Novel of Gastonia*, testifies.

But the past two years have seen something new in the labor movement, a force swift, mighty, and unbeatable. Not one major strike in a year, but a dozen or more and in basic industries at the very center of big business itself. Union agreements in du Pont's own General Motors Corp. plants. "Whole communities of workers have been transformed." White-collar workers have organized. Even the most exploited agricultural workers are now in a union, 113,000 strong.

Such a story demands the skill of an experienced labor journalist like Mrs. Vorse, one who is capable of writing what, for lack of a better name, is called *reportage*. It is that much discussed method of journalism that is more than mere reporting, something that in-

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