

employs the expected convention of being a direct representation of real life. It only seems to be: in Camus one sees a flat, straight-forward realism, as unadorned as Hemingway's, used for ends as non-objective as the crayons of Paul Klee. What Camus impels the reader to do is to re-relate the world of the "stranger" to the reader's world; and the only key he willingly provides is a repetition of the effect of absurdity. This perversity in the esthetic of Camus, which seems to pass in certain circles for "difficulty" and a kind of heroic grappling with intangibles of existence, is the reflection of the perversity Camus seems to find in all human relations. As a literary showman and the prepotent founder of a cult, he complies with the old paradox of being "original" in proportion to his difficulty and popular in proportion to the number of those who fail to understand him. He seems well on the road to directing straying intellectuals to the stalemate of contemplating absurdity and willing to lead them into an anti-intellectual labyrinth.

One may inquire of Camus the sources of the manifest absurdity his nonentity of a hero quickens to when a sense of every other aspect of existence deserts him. If the absurdities of living seem omnipresent and overwhelming now, there must be a reason, and since Camus affects the dual role of *philosophe* and artist, one might expect that somewhere one could find a clue to his reiterated emphasis on absurdity. But I find in his writing a complete absence of respect for historical development; the contradictions in our society that make the most shocking moral and social disturbances commonplace of life, in itself an absurdity of no mean proportions, seem to be replaced by a private vision of the world in which the present historical situation is exchanged for a general, timeless condition. According to one of the exegetists whom Camus

sensational "difficulty" has made necessary: "For Camus, man is essentially the stranger because the world in general and man as man are not fitted to each other; that they are together in existence makes the human condition an absurdity." I am quite ready to believe that here is an absurdity that tops them all, for it defies every last atom of knowledge that man has struggled for centuries to possess. One really stands aghast at the strange impulse for self-blinding, for the mutilation of intellect such an attitude suggests.

We are also told that "Camus has a double personality. As the philosopher of negation, he denies all values; as a man of action, he crusades for justice, for integrity." In an insane world, there is apparently much to be learned from the advanced schizophrenic. One reflects, however, that in Camus' novel his stranger is cursed with an idleness of mind that is capable of producing some monstrous irrationality of action. This state of mind—the vision of a dim chaotic meaninglessness in the outside world—requires that if he participates at all, it will only be as if he were blinded, and that is just the way the stranger behaves when he murders the Arab: he is blinded—blinded, he says, by the sunlight! I offer this as an unintended allegory on the potentialities of a philosopher for whom action has nothing to do with ideas.

In the final analysis, Camus' image of a world dominated by absurdity arises out of his projection upon the whole of society of a state of mind in which the contradiction between thought and action seems intolerable and yet irreconcilable. If he can go no further than this, there is not much more to be hoped from him than from others who dance around their anti-intellectual traps while their victims are stumbling into them.

ALAN BENOIT.

Analysis Without Insight

FULL PRODUCTION WITHOUT WAR, by Harold Loeb. Princeton University Press, \$3.50.

MR. LOEB notes in the preface to his book that in the land of the Mentawai rice is not cultivated nor milk cows tended because these people have so many holidays that they have little time for work. As a consequence, they have a lower standard of living than their neighbors who have fewer holidays. From this he draws a parallel

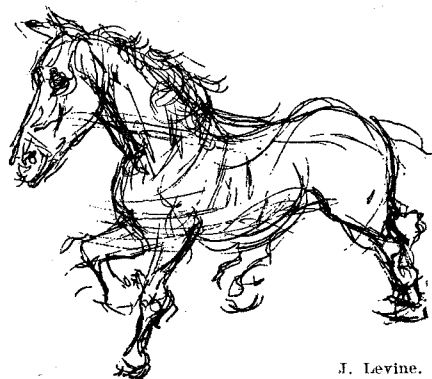
with contemporary capitalist societies whose people do not live at the level at which they might were unemployment liquidated.

The absurdity of idleness on the one hand, and desperate need on the other, must have made a lasting impression on the author, for shortly after the 1929 crash he became associated with Technocracy. In the present volume, he recants his technocratic past, asserting that he had tended "to underrate the function of the complicated business procedures by which prices and wages are set." In short, Mr. Loeb has suddenly discovered the "invisible hand" reputed to guide capitalist economy.

Mr. Loeb turns, therefore, to bourgeois economics for the tools of analysis he deems necessary to solve the riddle of unemployment. One cannot help feeling, however, that he is not entirely at home in this medium. His handling of the problem is amateurish and frequently inept, and the errors he makes are numerous. To mention just two, and not necessarily the most serious: the law of increasing costs is confused with the law of diminishing returns; it is claimed that people in the \$3,000-a-year income class saved only one percent of their incomes in 1929 when the source quoted clearly indicated that the savings was \$1,000,000,000, coming to thirteen percent, not one percent. Mr. Loeb apparently has little familiarity with the data. These are however, relatively minor considerations and a criticism of this book must be based on its main thesis.

The basic problem to which Loeb addresses himself is the impact of the growth in labor productivity on the economy. "Let us suppose, for example," he states, "that each man-hour of labor produced twice the quantity of goods formerly produced in a period when employment, wages and other prices were constant. It is evident that in this situation demand would be insufficient to buy the supply, in fact demand could acquire only half the supply."

Loeb has given expression here to a fallacy which is as old as economic theorizing, namely, that aggregate prices (supply) can exceed aggregate incomes (demand). The change in productivity at constant prices which he describes would result in a shift in the distribution of incomes, with profit growing to a larger percent of the national income. The effects of this



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growing maldistribution of income would be a reduction in "effective demand," and this apparently is what Loeb really means although it is plain throughout the book that he has never grasped the distinction between aggregate demand (in the sense of available purchasing power) and effective demand.

In order to make available for purchase the increment of production resulting from increased productivity, Mr. Loeb suggests three paths: (1) reducing prices (2) raising wages (3) deficit spending. Should none of these measures be taken, unemployment would ensue and the increment would not be produced at all.

During the era of competitive capitalism reduction in prices was the chief method of releasing the increment of production for consumption, but Loeb notes that since 1900 this has no longer been true and attributes this fact to the growth of monopolistic competition (a bourgeois euphemism to characterize the condition prevailing under imperialism). During this period of monopolistic competition demand has been bolstered up by deficit financing and where this has not been of sufficient volume, unemployment resulted.

This is in essence Mr. Loeb's thesis. He does not believe in the possibility of organizing production in a systematic planned fashion, asserting that "no other procedure [than capitalist pricing] for allocating resources economically in a changing world has as yet been devised." He relies for this opinion on the writings of the notoriously reactionary economists von Mises and von Hayek. Since the existence of the planned economy of the Soviet Union belies his opinion Mr. Loeb can do nothing else than deny that Soviet society has a planned economy and to assert that the market mechanism of capitalism has been restored in the USSR.

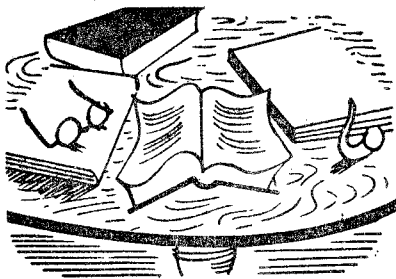
The author makes a very useful distinction between full production and capacity production. The former merely implies full employment regardless of what it is that is being produced, while the latter involves not only full employment, but that allocation of resources and labor which will produce the optimum output of goods—for example, less mansions and more workers' homes. Loeb thus contradicts himself. If the capitalist pricing mechanism is a method for rationally allocating resources in the economy, how can

there arise the distinction he has made between full production and capacity production?

What does the author present then as the solution to the problem of unemployment? Earlier in the book Mr. Loeb seemed to imply that all that was necessary was that industry expand production whenever there are unemployed men and idle machines, citing the huge increase in profits which took place as production rose from the trough of the depression to its peak during the war. He has apparently forgotten that the market problem is central in the capitalist dilemma and that the expansion of production he refers to was made possible only because the government provided a stable and enormous market for war materials. It was not the expansion of production which solved the market problem, but the temporary solution of the market problem which permitted the expansion of production.

Apparently as he approached the end of the book this fact became clearer to him, for the final solution he offers to the problem of full production without war is "new money spending, graduated taxation and the establishment of a minimum wage." While these are no doubt desirable, they can no more stabilize capitalism than can pious hopes or the fostering of illusions. Those who have arrived at the Marxist standpoint understand that it will take much stronger medicine than these proposals to put men and machines back to work.

The readers of this book who had hoped to learn of some technique to maintain full production will be sorely disappointed. Mr. Loeb lacks insight into what really makes capitalism tick and his analysis runs the gamut from the superficial to the erroneous. He does not come to grips with the fundamental and underlying problems presented by contemporary capitalism and if mention is made at all of class antagonisms it is only to depreciate their importance. His painful ignorance of the differentiating characteristics of various economic systems is admirably illustrated by the following quotation: "In our day theorists on the political Left usually advocate pure monopoly—over-all planning and control by representatives of the working class (Marxian Socialists), by engineers (technocrats), or by a strictly conditioned more or less arbitrarily chosen elite (fascists)." If the astonishment at finding a socialist economy described as



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monopoly has not floored the reader, the lumping together of Marxian socialism, technocracy and fascism, as representatives of the political left, undoubtedly will. This is the caliber of the political wisdom brought to bear on the problem by Mr. Loeb.

ALFRED DONSKY.

Feeble Blaze

THE BURNING MOUNTAIN, by John Gould Fletcher. Dutton. \$2.75.

THIS is the seventeenth volume of verse of a former Pulitzer Prize winner, who made his poetic reputation on the eve of World War I as a champion of that Imagist movement so noisily press-agented by the now almost-forgotten Amy Lowell.

John Gould Fletcher, we are informed in a biographical note, as a young man "read extensively the poets of the late Victorian period." Apparently he has never forgotten them. Even the Imagists' chastening influence on poetic language—to say nothing of later developments—has failed to rid him of his fondness for such old-hat poeticisms as "ere" and "naught" and "bygone." His poetry is slack, loose, inexact, its imagery almost never memorable; it sprawls. The ideas suit the language, deriving from the late-Victorian stock-in-trade of wholly humanitarianism, just as the poetic technique is an amalgam of the styles of Walt Whitman and Tennyson's minor successors.

At their best these lines run along with a sort of lulling murmurousness. At their worst they grate as harshly as these (addressed to those latter-day hobgoblins, our industrial plants):

*Pontifically their hammers had roared
down*

*The years onspeeding, ready to vent
their wrath*

*And quench repeated blows. The drift
of time was spanned*

*By that which was uprooted speeding
on*

From north into the south . . .

When things like this get by (and win Pulitzer Prizes) one wonders: were the poetic standards of Mr. Fletcher's youthful days really so low that a reputation could be founded on such performances? Or has Mr. Fletcher just been running downhill? Certainly a poet starting out to win his way in the world today has to try a bit harder.

WALT McELROY.

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