

The Inner War

BUSINESS AS USUAL. By I. F. Stone. New York: Modern Age. 1941. 275 pp., with index. \$2.

Reviewed by DAVID CUSHMAN COYLE

I. F. STONE gets a head start in the battle that will flare up, as soon as the war is over, about who is to blame for the inefficiency of our war efforts. There will be plenty more, on both sides, and those who are tough-minded enough to take part in that struggle may as well start now to prepare their minds by reading this preliminary attack on the defense organizations. Whether it is tactful, or good defense policy, to violate the sweet spirit of national unity by attacking the leaders of the defense program need not be discussed. It is too late to decide to maintain sweetness and light till after the war. So here comes the heavy artillery.

The New Deal conclusions in regard to the lessons of defense are gradually taking shape, and tentatively they may be stated as follows:

The American "business man," jumbo size, is, with a few notable exceptions, not a business man in the sense of having a practical capacity for organization, production, or management. Note the form of this statement. There is no implication that real business men lack such capacities, but only that some of the products obtained for one dollar a year were not business men. This distinction is of the utmost importance when the cry arises that the New Deal hates business men.

The second conclusion is that in the case of a number of large industries, notably railroads, steel, power, and aluminum, the judgment of any first-line New Deal economist will be vindicated by events as against that of engineers and other experts familiar with the industry. How many other industries come under this principle, time will show.

The third conclusion is that the chief explanation for the inability of so many out size "business men" to understand business or predict the future lies in their origin in the monopoly sectors of the economy, mainly in high finance and corporation law.

"Business as Usual" consists of a preliminary documentation of these three conclusions. Stone's least effective argument comes at the beginning, with a recital of the material shortcomings of the defense effort. Necessarily, since some progress is being made, nothing is quite as bad as it looked when Stone was writing a few months ago. Moreover, it is an inseparable feature of any war effort that



I. F. Stone

Lotte Jacobi

whatever is done is too little, unless and until it is validated by military victory, so that by definition, a defense effort without a shooting war must be always in a state of failure, relative to an ever-enlarging ideal.

At every point the conclusion stands out that though many Americans do know how to operate businesses and produce goods, most of the big shots just aren't that kind. One gets the feeling that the Administration had made the purely verbal error—like the needle in the soup—of hiring locomotive "engineers" to design railroad bridges.

The difference in ability to predict future events, as between New Deal experts and men whose only qualification is lifelong familiarity with the industry, has of course been conspicuously shown in the arguments over shortages. These incidents, Mr. Stone drives home with facts and figures. He also recounts in detail the case of aluminum, as a concrete illustration of the hypothesis that employment by a monopoly tends to atrophy the ability to understand business problems.

Persons who intend to take part in the great post-war struggle which these accusations foreshadow should use Mr. Stone's book in a severely practical way. It is foolish for either liberals or reactionaries to get off the main issue by chasing the unimportant rabbit of Mr. Stone's personal leftishness. It is true that the author is to the left of the present New Deal, as indicated by his acceptance of the Murray plan with too little sign of fear that it might open the way for a new NRA. But this is a minor point, almost as unimportant as his accidental confusion of tons with pounds in calculating the rubber required for tanks.

"Bearded Runt"

"FIGHTIN' JOE" WHEELER. By John P. Dyer. University, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press. 1941. 417 pp., with index. \$3.

Reviewed by FAIRFAX DOWNEY

"PEOPLE never forgot Joe Wheeler once they had seen him." Certainly this reviewer has not, and it was more than two score years ago that I, as an Army child in the Philippines, beheld that bearded runt (5 feet 5, 120 pounds) of a fighting man. Because of his size, his personality, and his record both as a Confederate officer and a U. S. general, "Fightin' Joe" stuck in the memory, even that of a lad to whom soldiers were no novelty.

A biography of Wheeler was due. He rode through a lot of history. A battle cry of his still rings. Mr. Dyer seems a bit dubious about its authenticity, but it's one of our most refreshing military traditions. It was at the Battle of Las Guasimas in Cuba in '98 that the gallant old ex-Johnny Reb led a charge against the Spaniards with the shout: "Come on, boys! We've got the damnyankees on the run!"

His life was full of action. A youngster out of West Point, he served briefly on the Indian frontier. When his State, Georgia, seceded, he offered his sword to the Confederacy and, young though he was, did fine as one of the South's best cavalry commanders; would have done better if he had campaigned under an abler leader than Braxton Bragg. For years he was a stormy petrel in Congress. Then he donned Army blue—to the disgust of unreconstructed comrades—and fought some more.

This biography should be as vivid and dramatic as the blurb declares it is. But it isn't. The author carefully narrates every campaign tactic and maneuver in Wheeler's Civil War service, but he can't write a battle for sour apples. Sadly missing or scanty are the details, the human glimpses, which make one sense the thrill of a cavalry charge or the commoner panorama of blood and mud and agony and utter exhaustion which is war. One need not have fought in or witnessed a battle to write it. Stephen Crane had not yet been a war correspondent when he wrote "The Red Badge of Courage."

Too often the account of Wheeler's terms in Congress reads like excerpts from the *Congressional Record*. However, his exploits in our grossly-mismanaged war with Spain take on more life.

Finally, many of Mr. Dyer's footnotes seem unnecessary.

Aydelotte in Action

AN ADVENTURE IN EDUCATION: *Swarthmore College under Frank Aydelotte*, by the Swarthmore College Faculty. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1941. 236 pp. \$2.50.

Reviewed by EDWIN R. EMBREE

FOR nineteen years a wise and passionately sincere leader has been trying to introduce sound education into an American small college. 'Leader' is just the word for Frank Aydelotte. He has been the moving spirit at Swarthmore for two decades. He had the original ideas. He stirred the faculty to want to put these ideas into practice, and he chose the new teachers to bring the ideas to fruition. He persuaded the conservative Quaker community to try what seemed to them a daring experiment, and he raised the money to carry the experiment through. Yet some way he avoided being a dictator or a fanatic. Aydelotte as a leader in a democratic college community is quite as interesting a study as the particular educational plan that is associated with his name.

Leaders in American colleges and universities are rare items. Try to think of even a half dozen presidents who today can be said to be of direct, constructive influence over their institutions. Frank Graham, perhaps, at the University of North Carolina, and Sproul at the University of California, and Hopkins at Dartmouth. And who else? You can think of plenty of tyrants who under stiff and stupid trustees rule their faculties by intimidation. You can name men whose personal ideas have got a lot of publicity without affecting their own institutions. You can think of several who have made a splash for a few years and then faded out or been thrown out. And there are hundreds of presidents who are simply business promoters or official managers. But the presidents who have ideas and also the gift of arousing the conservative college community to active coöperation in realizing those ideas—such men are rare indeed. Aydelotte is one of them. He has built a fresh center of learning and he has built it with the inspired help of the whole body of his colleagues. A proof of the coöperative spirit at Swarthmore is this book which the members of the faculty have written as a joint effort, as a joint tribute to their leader as he leaves Swarthmore to undertake another educational adventure at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton.

The heart of the Swarthmore plan



Richard Aldington

is the so-called honors courses. At the conclusion of the general college work of the Freshman and Sophomore years, about half of the class, as a reward for having shown unusual interest in scholarship, are allowed during their final years to concentrate on a small group of related subjects. Intensive, independent reading is directed and "inspired" by small seminars that meet for half-day sessions once a week under a faculty leader. Without the busy-work of lecture courses and daily recitations, without fragmenting their learning by many courses and the accumulation of credits, the honors students stand or fall by comprehensive examinations on the whole range of their two years of reading and discussing and thinking. The honors plan sounds simple enough when briefly stated. But it has been no simple matter to turn a college in these days of mass education and rote learning into a place where students and faculty alike are interested not in courses and credits but in learning and ideas. This is just what has been achieved at Swarthmore under Aydelotte to an astonishing degree, for the honors courses have affected the atmosphere and the standards of the whole college. This book is a good report on how the thing was done.

The book is written with quiet humor, with recognition of failures as well as successes, with zest tempered by sound sense. It is not exciting reading such as would come from the pen of fervid fanatics or of juicy scandal mongers. It is a sane record of a sane attempt to maintain an interest in learning and ideas in a small college. It is an important record, for through this adventure in education this small college has become one of the really influential institutions in America.

The Aldington Opus

THE VIKING BOOK OF POETRY OF THE ENGLISH SPEAKING WORLD. Chosen and Edited by Richard Aldington. New York: The Viking Press. 1941. 1,272 pp., with index. \$3.50.

Reviewed by WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

ENGLAND, Scotland, Ireland, and the United States, not to speak of Canada and South Africa, are all laid under tribute in this new "omnibus" anthology of English verse which contains one and a half times as many lines of poetry as appear in the best similar anthology now available. But quite aside from the matter of mere size, the poems have been chosen by a distinguished English man-of-letters with a considerable reputation as a poet in his own right. Mr. Aldington's is a popular anthology, but embellished by choices that only a man of ripe taste could have made. With his introductory letter to his publisher this reviewer finds himself in delighted agreement—in the matter of the Augustans, with respect to Shelley and Wordsworth and Kit Smart—in fact, throughout. Where Mr. Aldington turns up good things little known, as with the "Verses Copied from the Window of an Obscure Lodging-House," and where he pursues an original kind of selection, as with the blank verse from Marlowe's plays, he deserves complete endorsement. The present reviewer, as an American, is particularly glad to note his appreciation of the poetry of Herman Melville as instanced by generous selections. But it would seem that Emily Dickinson's strange love story had too far influenced Mr. Aldington's choices from her, and we ourselves should have chosen otherwise from William Morris. The selection from Lanier is original, but there might have been others more characteristic. What of John Davidson's "A Runnable Stag?" The Yeats section could have been much bettered. Two splendid poems by Lionel Johnson are not here. The brilliant work of Elinor Wylie seems treated in a manner strangely cursory, and Edna St. Vincent Millay fares little better. A facile poet like Frederic Prokosch is accorded two pages, and Louis MacNeice, a far better modern poet, allowed but a single slight lyric. On the other hand, a poem by a little-known modern Irishman, by the prosaic name of Dobbs, is a genuine discovery. These criticisms are of the kind, however, to be accorded any anthology. In general, Mr. Aldington's is a superior achievement.