

the Pendergast machine in a reportorial style which manages to combine plain city desk prose with a great deal of humor, irony, and insight. He has dwelt with obvious delight on the local characters, the factions, and feuds, and has given several brilliant personality sketches, notably those of Colonel Nelson and Mary McElroy, and, for comic relief, the rambunctious police chief installed by the reformers, an ex-G-man so disturbingly conscious of his divine mission to suppress criminals, Reds, and labor leaders that many Kansas Citians "began to wonder if democracy could stand the strain of absolute rectitude."

Reddig has not only told the story of "Tom's Town" with all its color and corruption, but he has also studied its implications, giving the book a political depth and interest far beyond the accidental timeliness of its background material on the Thirty-Third President.

John D. Weaver was for five years a feature writer and copy reader on the Kansas City Star and was one of the three reporters who covered the sentencing of Tom Pendergast.

Our Outmoded Economy

OR FORFEIT FREEDOM. By Robert Wood Johnson. New York: Doubleday & Co. 1947. 271 pp. \$2.50.

Reviewed by HERBERT HARRIS

THIS is one of the most important books ever written by an American businessman. For Robert Wood Johnson sends crashing down many of the idols before which the majority of U. S. industrialists still bend and bow. It is hardly possible to accuse Mr. Johnson of never having had to meet a payroll, or of being a theorist with flowing tresses. He is chairman of the board of Johnson & Johnson, and during the war was a key figure in the WPB and a brigadier general in Army Ordnance. He is convinced that our economic system, despite the flush of its current prosperity, may really be "staggering toward collapse." He is similarly convinced that the confidence of the American people in management's ability to lead is on the decline. He affirms that the American Century is less a brilliant intuition of Henry R. Luce than an obligation, urgent and challenging. Above all he is sure that to accept that obligation, and to deliver on it, we will have to reevaluate and to recast many of the rules that govern our work, our well-being, and our will-



—"American Tragedy," by Philip Evergood.

"... higher take home pay would be less costly in financial terms and far more advantageous in human terms [than public or private welfare assistance]."

ingness to grow up, individually and collectively.

He suggests that we might start by throwing off our enslavement to the "Laissez faire, laissez passer" doctrine of Adam Smith which, from the outset, became a "code of business freedom that bordered on nihilism." Moreover, when Herbert Spencer married Smith's economics to Darwin's survival of the fittest, the result was a moral monster. Mr. Johnson describes it as a "system of savage brutality disguised by the terminology of science." He adds that "to men already battling for wealth it gave authority for competition as ruthless and impersonal as that waged by weeds and wild beasts. It also justified exploitation . . . and dignified greed as part of the struggle for existence."

Moving from Spencerism to the famous encyclical "On the Condition of the Working Classes" (Rerum Novarum), issued by Pope Leo XIII in 1891, Mr. Johnson refers approvingly to the papal stricture that the consolidation of production and trade into the hands of a few fabulously powerful magnates enabled them to lay "a yoke little better than slavery" on the laboring masses. In our more recent days, declares Mr. Johnson, American business, notably Big Business, forsook its faith in the blessing of a free market-place and developed monopolistic methods that further concentrated economic power and national income into a tiny but dominant top-layer group in our society. During the

New Deal period when such "rugged individualists managed to make themselves offensive as well as ridiculous," Mr. Johnson continues, our labor unions too often duplicated the socially irresponsible performances of industry. The professional management of labor was frequently as arbitrary and dictatorial as the professional management of a giant corporation. Even today in many a union, the rank-and-file member has no more chance of influencing its conduct than a 100-share stockholder has in shaping the policy of General Motors.

Whatever the errors of our past, Mr. Johnson implies, they are as nothing when compared with the primary error of our present, namely, our failure to realize that "for the first time in history men can produce enough of the goods and services to provide a decent living. That is the novel and basic fact by which we must gauge the future success of our economic system." He quickly points out that this new sufficiency is potential, rather than actual, and is at the moment confined to the 140 million inhabitants of the United States. Yet the damage done by the scarcity consciousness which prevails among our executives, labor leaders, and politicians is beyond calculation. Their blunderings derive mainly from their attempt to put twentieth-century productivity into the straightjacket of eighteenth-century economic ideas. They refuse to concede that we have been progressively repealing the law of do without by developing mechanical

energy to supplement human energy, and multiply it in field and factory. This explains in part why the American businessman tends to be parochial and separatist in his outlook, to act on the assumption that he can secede, as a sovereign entity, from the rest of the national economic community. It explains why businessmen, for example, lobbied in Washington to defeat the recent proposal to raise minimum wages to sixty-five cents an hour—even though the passage of this measure would have enlarged the national purchasing power on which their own profits ultimately depend; even though it would have saved them money. For in one way or another they have to meet the costs of sub-standard wages. They have either to pay higher taxes to sustain social services, or contribute larger sums to charity. Today, Mr. Johnson reminds us, we have eleven million wage earners permanently underpaid. They get less than sixty-five cents an hour, or \$24 a week, gross. To maintain them in a condition where they have constantly to be assisted by private or public welfare agencies is not only stupid and wasteful and cruel; it is inordinately expensive. "To pay the bill at the source," in the form of higher take home pay, says Mr. Johnson, would be far less costly in financial terms and far more advantageous in human terms.

It is in his emphasis on the human side that Mr. Johnson makes his most valuable contribution. He confronts

the problem of faceless men along the assembly line. He perceives their need to feel that they "belong," to achieve dignity on the job, and pride in their skills; to be recognized as persons, not only as badge numbers, or as marks on a comptroller's cost sheets. Underscoring the conclusions of Harvard's Elton Mayo and B. W. Selkman, Mr. Johnson insists that the emotional security of the worker is quite as important as his economic security, and that management has to foster both. He believes that by means of imaginative job analysis, even routine repetitive tasks can be made meaningful when the worker is shown how his particular operation connects with the overall production scheme.

It is this same stress on the human side that underlies Mr. Johnson's plea to decentralize management functions. He points out that big business, in piling department upon department, layering upon layering, is guilty of the very charge it levels at government: that of building a bureaucracy too cumbersome to move swiftly, effectively, flexibly. In this respect Mr. Johnson echoes the Brandeisian view that a factory should be about as long as a man's shadow. While he admits that some industries such as steel and automobiles require large-scale operation, he contends that these cannot produce

efficiently when responsibility is diffused by indulgence in too many experts, too many conferences, too many memoranda in triplicate. He is certain that the huge plant can itself be decentralized by giving to each "manageable" unit a head with authority enough to decide things on his own, on the scene, without chain command referrals. Indeed, to break an administrative or economic or ethical issue down into its components and to relate the parts to the whole would seem to be the essence of Mr. Johnson's creed. The deficiencies of that creed become the major defects in this book. What Mr. Johnson seems to lack is a realistic appreciation of government's role in the economy, the need for a new partnership between government and industry and labor and agriculture. Equally important, he seems also to lack any awareness of the peril of having most members of Congress, radio and press editors, commentators, and educators think and act precisely as Big Business wants them to think and act; thus we fashion our new totalitarianism of the mind, a uniformity that is non-violent but quite as lethal as the body-burning kind.

Herbert Harris, formerly special adviser to the War Production Board, is the author of several books and studies on economic affairs.

Your Literary I.Q.

By Howard Collins

SOME ANAGRAMMED BIOGRAPHIES

The following anagrams of famous biographies and autobiographies were prepared by Jane and Alan Otten, of Washington, D. C. As for the scoring—let your conscience be your guide! Answers are on page 26.

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| 1. Mt. Stipperfaced | A. A. Kleisch |
| 2. Dean Chandau's Theory of Time | May Handers |
| 3. Red Sporger's Pals | Lord Peeldash |
| 4. At Tea Time in Reno | W. E. Fitzegans |
| 5. Try Poison, Lasher! | Steven N. Chainé |
| 6. Emily F. | Vachel Kolesil |
| 7. Mamie Ebershirm | Ezra N. Shniss |
| 8. Alias the Primer | Ben Gardner Fluddin |
| 9. Joan Wrecks Dan | Squire J. Amsam |
| 10. Ann Poole | Will U. Digem |
| 11. Inquire at Cove | Tony Y. St. Charlet |
| 12. Oh, Nose Full of Jasmine | Sewel J. Basom |
| 13. Eeler | Frau Salome Gast und Holle |
| 14. Ease Thy Hand | N. M. Chenkel |
| 15. Life Teaches Dana Moora | Austin Romeo Millsoe |
| 16. Marlin B. Cohalan | Dunbar L. Scrag |
| 17. Happy Times, Prince | Abbie B. Tewcer |
| 18. Godwin, the Poet, Cringes | Nero E. Flewg |
| 19. Anna Bit on a Ruby Lip | Lillian W. Milethawe |
| 20. Jane Minkrinn Balf | Vera N. Rocland |
| 21. And Vipers Entice It | Don Rowlace |
| 22. Muse Might Pun | Theresa M. Gowammus |
| 23. Voodoo Letters Here | Lynn Ferephrig |
| 24. Mary of Pluvers | Hobart Tonkin Gowes |
| 25. Oslo Window Row | Barrant A. Dankersy |

FRASER YOUNG'S LITERARY CRYPT: No. 221

A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 221 will be found in the next issue.

PA BET PLITOR BETO

LRPCSXEO, XRHHRO LEH ZE

PH XB SWGKRV.

C. X. VSWF — QWMPQV AEO

ORKEGTHPELPHVH

Answer to Literary Crypt No. 220

Fighting is an instinct and civilization means simply the conquest of instincts.

GEORGE SANTAYANA