REVIEWS

THE COMING OF THE NEW DEAL. By Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1959. Pp. xii, 669. $6.75.

AT the time the New Deal came to Washington, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., was a prep-school boy at Philips Exeter Academy—undoubtedly a very bright prep-school boy. Had he been some years older, it can be predicted with hindsight, he would have been in the Capital—a very bright young man in an administration that was magnetizing the social-minded and the intellectually adventurous. He would have been a natural in a heady time of more good brains and more good talk than were ever before concentrated in Washington and will perhaps ever be again.

But, as an historian of the epoch, it is doubtless of service to him that he was not a participant. Time has granted perspective and a measure of above-the-battle objectivity. There have been numerous memoirs to draw on (not all in as yet, one hears), interviews, correspondence, speeches, documents, official notes of a highly communicative administration, press comments, and articles of a period that was a saturnalia of the journalists. All this fantastic amount of material has been examined by a trained and perceptive mind, has been arranged and brooded over, has been set down with a lively artistry. The result is a book that will be found both in the college libraries and in the best-seller lists. The device of topical rather than chronological treatment is an excellent one, making for lucidity and for order out of tangled threads. The sharp, if necessarily superficial, portraiture is intriguing. Judicious use is made even of the wisecracks of a witty crowd, and of the telling, though sometimes apocryphal, anecdote. (One of the young AAA lawyers, "on a field trip to the countryside saw his first firefly and exclaimed, 'Good God! What's that?' "[1] The victim of this story tells me that as a youngster in Brooklyn he used to collect fireflies in bottles.)

In his foreword the author states that he "will greatly welcome corrections or amplifications of anything . . . written in this text."[2] One may conjecture that his desk is already piled with documents. There must be many persons still alive itching to give further details and justifications of agency disagreements, to add to the interpretation of trends. In an administration that was as rife with family rancours as a modern Broadway drama, the echoes have not yet died out. Donald Richberg and Hugh Johnson, Raymond Moley and Cordell Hull, Henry Wallace and Jerome Frank, John L. Lewis and William Green, Roosevelt and his "social class"—the roll extends. There are still the various slants on the feudings of Wall Street and the SEC, Rexford Tugwell

1. P. 51.
2. P. ix.

and the advertisers, TVA and Commonwealth & Southern, on the many new implications of government with private enterprise. Schlesinger as judge and one-man jury makes valiant attempt to give adequate time to opposing counsel, to assay the credibility of witnesses. Conceivably it is less nerve-racking to recount the Age of Jackson, where the only clamant voices might be those of other historians.

Take, as instance, the author's treatment of the AAA controversies, the first of the intramural struggles to be detailed. To give a full, and therefore just, accounting would perhaps require a volume in itself. As in other of the experimental and rapidly moving New Deal agencies, many factors entered into the patterning. There were the spokesmen for the small farmers, the large growers, the much neglected consumer interests. There was the perhaps inevitable clashing of efficient men holding uncertain grants of power. The protean soul of Henry Wallace certainly played its part. (Schlesinger characterizes the Secretary as a man "split down the middle,"[3] but one might be tempted to speak of multiple personality.) Recounting a variety of causes, Schlesinger tends to simplify the AAA infancy as a struggle between two groups—the old-time agrarians with a background of rural experience, and Jerome Frank's legal division—reformers, "city slickers," Ivy League Boys.[4] (With journalistic acumen, the author mentions Adlai Stevenson, Alger Hiss, Thurman Arnold, a few others—but omits the fact that the staff soon numbered one hundred and three lawyers, most of whom never reached the headlines.) The issue of city versus rural viewpoint does not, however, quite stand up. The recurring and dominant contest was that between the legal staff and the big processors with their high-priced attorneys—National Dairy, American Tobacco, the large meat packers *et al.*, who, although dealing with products within the province of Agriculture, were themselves scarcely reminiscent of the barefoot boy. When climactically the famous Purge occurred—the dismissal by Wallace, with an odd precipitance, of certain of the legal staff and a handful of the Consumer's Counsel for good measure—the immediate issue was the move of the legal group to safeguard the sharecroppers, that lowliest of folks in the third-of-a-nation category. Rural experts against city sophisticates? ("New-Republic liberals!" Wallace irritatedly called the "reformers" —and then later himself became editor of the weekly.)

The difficulties of the conscientious historian are many, not least of which is the irruption of new evidence after the presses have stopped. Witness the sundry accounts of the destiny of the little pigs—the little pigs that did not go to market. (The political opposition, with Wallace their target, did not allow the public to forget any of the "plowing under," but cannily failed to mention the use of the commodities in relief work.)

Writes Russell Lord in *The Wallaces of Iowa*: "The Committee [named by the corn and hog farmers representative of ten states] met . . . in Chicago

3. P. 33.
4. Ch. 3.

. . . and unanimously agreed to urge AAA to contract with the packers to purchase and process [small] pigs . . . , the product to be disposed of to the Red Cross and other relief agencies."[5] And Schlesinger: "Nor, indeed, did the pigs die in vain. . . . Wallace, with Harry Hopkins and Harold Ickes, organized the Federal Surplus Relief Corporation which brought over 100 million pounds of baby pork to hungry people on relief."[6]

Here is Jerome Frank's account as given on a tape-recorded interview:

> Wallace detested the idea. But hogs were down and something had to be done to keep this pork off the market. When I heard about this I said, "Rex, why can't Harry Hopkins use this product?" . . . . I suggested forming the Federal Surplus Relief Corporation. We discussed that Wallace would be a director and Harold Ickes and Hopkins. . . . They went up to Hyde Park and got the blessing. I was told to go full steam ahead. But I was bothered that the Comptroller General would step in and cause all kinds of difficulties, although the corporation itself would really be a conduit. . . . So I organized the corporation. It cost about thirty-five dollars to organize it and I paid it out of my own pocket. Fortunately the next session of Congress appropriated money which legitimized the bastard.[7]

Of the whence and the why of the "endless stream of bright young men" that flowed into Washington, Schlesinger gives an astute account. "Depression, by cutting off normal outlets in law practice or in the universities, had made men of intellectual ability available as never before . . . . Like circles beyond circles, both the legal network and the academic network were limitless."[8] To the impulsions of those he names the "prominent New Dealers," the top men who were forever on the point of resigning and did not resign, he gives scant analysis. These were men whose former positions had not felt the dent of the depression. Many of them had abruptly left fruitful careers to throw themselves into the Washington melee. Their salaries were inadequate to the demands of the top offices, a careful government having seen to it that its best servants are not overpaid. (More than one memoir mentions financial strain.) For months on end they worked at a remorseless pace they had never known before—the sixty-year-old Ickes as well as the forty-two-year-old Hopkins. They were harassed by department pressures, public criticism, the uncertainties of their Chief's support. (Ickes has said that they were never certain of tenure.) Roosevelt in his First Inaugural had likened the national crisis to a war emergency. But modern warfare means conscription. These men were volunteers. Why did they come to the New Deal, why did they stay with it?

A too ready explanation, suggested by Schlesinger and some others, is the

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5. LORD, THE WALLACES OF IOWA 365 (1947).

6. P. 63.

7. Columbia University Oral History Project, Interview with Jerome N. Frank on November 17, 1952.

8. P. 16.

Roosevelt personality.[9] Loyalty to a dynamic, if capricious, leader. Loyalty to a charmer who could exacerbate and then deftly apply the poultice. It is only a fragmentary answer.

Other responses were implicit in the scene. Where else but in the Capital, in the frustrated and unhappy America of 1933, was there optimism, belief, the forward thrust. The Washington climate was emotionally, even though not physically, salubrious. Men here were not talking about the end of things, but about beginnings. It would not be far-fetched to speak too of an escape into altruism, into aims that, whatever the mistakes might be in methods, were the larger social good. Especially for a generation nurtured on the profit ideology, these intentions can be releasing—or at least so the preachers rumor.

Above all, one must conjecture, it was the fascination of the job that held men of ability—actually the multifarious jobs, since there were constant informal consultations among the agencies, and a lawyer or economist might be asked for advice in any number of matters beyond his immediate concern. It was work of range, involving not specialized problems, but those of a nation. The trials, the errors, the failures, the triumphs were at least as exciting as helping to seize a railroad or cornering the market. The techniques of an emergency period became absorbing, obsessive. (I had to ask Tommy Corcoran to please stop phoning us at three in the morning, just because he had been seized with a sudden solution.) For those of the builder temperament the early New Deal, whatever its buffetings, was evidently worth-while.

Schlesinger gives a provocative account of the heightened Capital atmosphere during the first two years. ("[The New Dealers] altered the whole tempo and tone of Washington as a community.")[10] But it is only the Filii Aurorae, as Judge Learned Hand called them, that appear from the Schlesinger record to have activated the change. The phenomenon of the "bright young women" has strangely escaped this historian despite his flair for social anthropology. Yet there they were in great numbers, their New Deal incursion making feminist history. As World War I had first brought the flood of female typists and secretaries, so the New Deal released the gates to the young college-trained women—lawyers, economists, social workers, but mostly lawyers. They looked like the Junior League and talked like Adolf A. Berle, Jr. Unwittingly they were the Twentieth Century juxtaposed to the woman-conducted archaic ritual of officialdom. They had none of the formal obligations that engaged, almost full-time, the energies of countless wives. The ridiculously elaborated protocol need be none of their concern. They were there for the job, not as social surrogates of husbands. At the seminars, miscalled cocktail and dinner parties, they became the listened-to feminine voices.

These young professional women had been trained in a different, often more radical school, than the scattering of older ladies that made New Deal headlines. Yet actually the landmark in contemporary feminism was Frances Per-

9. Ch. 35.
10. P. 17.

kins' first Cabinet Tea. A once-a-month obligation, these affairs presumed the Secretaries active at work, the wives their traditional representatives. But here was Miss Perkins both hostess and symbolic host—a notable hermaphroditic feat not commented on by any of the social historians.

In the concluding chapters of the book, in his summation of the President, Schlesinger achieves his most balanced piece of writing. During the last several decades of our Freudian era, with Roosevelt's love and hate affair with the American people still simmering, the what-manner-of-man query has provoked a bevy of answers. He has been interpreted in terms of the country squire, of family tradition, of Groton, of Harvard, of the overly protective mother, of his crippling illness and the characteristics acquired in its mastery. (The indefatigable optimistic energy of Eleanor Roosevelt seems, however, to have much the same texture.) For Emil Ludwig, Roosevelt is nothing short of a divinity, a democratic divinity, of course.[11] Jim Farley speaks of a man made arrogant by power.[12] Donald Richberg delights in calling attention to immaturity, to the perennial boy. (Note, he says, the passion for stamps and ship models.)[13] John Gunther, although awed by Roosevelt's courage and energy, finds feminine his compulsion to exercise charm.[14] Frances Perkins sees him as the creative artist—not the classical, but the modern artist, who, according to her, works through automatism.[15] Rexford Tugwell follows the master politician from his early years to what he knew was his fate-destined place in the White House.[16] Arthur Schlesinger approaches his subject as the Great Enigma, and then proceeds to give the least enigmatic account of the Roosevelt temperament that has yet been done.[17] Enigma, perhaps—but aren't we all? Schlesinger's portrayal has the competent journalist's deftness and the major biographer's feel for character and motivation. It is the most credible statement so far of this fallible man's greatness.

FLORENCE KIPER FRANK

ELIZABETH I AND HER PARLIAMENTS: 1584-1601. By J. E. Neale. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1957. Pp. 452. $6.00.

SIR JOHN NEALE has hunted Elizabethan parliamentary documents all of his professional life. In this volume, and in the preceding one which encompassed the years 1559-1581,[1] he integrates diaries, letters, manuscripts of speeches, and

11. See LUDWIG, ROOSEVELT (1938).
12. See FARLEY, JIM FARLEY'S STORY (1948).
13. See RICHBERG, MY HERO 294 (1954).
14. See GUNTHER, ROOSEVELT IN RETROSPECT 34-36 (1950).
15. See PERKINS, THE ROOSEVELT I KNEW 163 (1946).
16. See TUGWELL, THE DEMOCRATIC ROOSEVELT (1957).
17. Ch. 35.

1. NEALE, ELIZABETH I AND HER PARLIAMENTS: 1559-1581 (1953) [hereinafter cited as Volume I].