

cede their western lands to Congress—these are but a few of the topics analyzed and interpreted by the author with impressive skill and insight.

Professor Abernethy has an extraordinary knack for ferreting out the motives of the land speculators. He places much emphasis on family, business, and political connections of the men seeking to exploit early America's greatest natural resource. For instance, the activities of speculator A with reference to speculator B may seem inexplicable until one discovers that A was the son-in-law or father-in-law of B. This reviewer knows of no other work which untangles and exposes these connections in so thoroughgoing a manner; this feature alone is sufficient to make the book an indispensable work of reference.

The history of early western land is exceedingly involved, tied in as it is with colonial rivalries, the intricacies of British politics, and the foibles of human nature. But whether it be the Illinois, Indiana, Loyal, Ohio, or Wabash ventures, or the Vandalia, Transylvania, or State-of-Franklin projects that are under consideration, the author presents facts and interpretations which no student of the period can afford to overlook. By 1789, claims and counter-claims to lands were piled high, overlapping, as the author says, "like shingles on a roof." The wonder is that clear titles were ever established.

The story of western lands cannot be divorced from the factionalism in the Continental Congress, the trading activities of some of that body's members, and the development of foreign policy. For this reason, Professor Abernethy includes many facts that the reader might not expect to find in a book on western lands. Altogether, the book is a vigorous, penetrating, and scholarly exposition of a very significant and complex phase of our early history.

JENNINGS B. SANDERS

Specialist for the Social Sciences
Division of Higher Education
United States Office of Education

FRANK THISTLETHWAITE. *The Anglo-American Connection in the Early Nineteenth Century*. (Studies in American

Civilization, Department of American Civilization, University of Pennsylvania.) Pp. viii, 222. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1959. \$4.50.

Professor Thistlethwaite's lectures at the University of Pennsylvania have been developed into a short but weighty book which makes a worthy contribution to the already extensive literature on Anglo-American relations. The period chosen is that before the Civil War and, for the most part, after the war of 1812; the "Jacksonian age," the America of de Tocqueville. But the author does not attempt to cover the whole subject, even for this limited period. His major interest is the influence of radical reformers in the two nations on each other's activities; the connection "between, on the one hand, a middle-class, business, non-conformist, evangelical Britain, and, on the other, its cousinhood in the northern and western United States" (p. 160).

In this country we know best the upper-class visitors to our shores who, with a few exceptions, found crude, raw, sprawling America rather a warning than a model to England and Europe. But the working men who had supported the Chartist movement, and even the Cobdenite manufacturers, were much friendlier in their estimate of American institutions. The former said "The inhabitants of the United States are governed on the principles of Chartism, the consequence of which is that all legislation is bent towards the welfare of the many, and not of the few," whereas Cobden thought "the government of the United States to be at this moment the best in the world" (p. 43). Of course, most British reformers of all types disapproved of American slavery, but that bound them all the more closely to the abolitionists, who made a special point of celebrating "Emancipation Day"—the day when British slavery ceased in the West Indies. More copies of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* were sold, during the year after its publication, in Britain than in the United States (p. 119).

The anti-slavery movement, however, was not the only crusade of the times, though it has naturally attracted the widest attention. Peace societies, temperance so-

cieties, free trade agitation, popular institutes and lyceums for adult education, prison reform, women's rights, and a hundred other causes brought into close cooperation the do-gooders of both continents. On both sides of the ocean the same names constantly reappear, for while some were specialists for one reform only, more were making a broad Benthamite attack against all the evils of modern civilization. It was the age of the universal reformer. America really was in advance of much of Europe in some respects, such as popular education and a democratic suffrage, but another reason for our popularity with the advance guard of reform was that our thinly peopled land had room enough for experiments in communal living, such as Brook Farm and New Harmony. The left-wing churches—Quaker, Unitarian, Congregationalist—were especially active in both England and America in crusading for human betterment.

Professor Thistlethwaite closes his brief study with the reflection that in the twentieth century, America seems to be more conservative in English eyes, and England to be more radical to Americans. The two countries have, in a measure, exchanged historical roles. Yet, in the long run, liberals in both countries will be better friends than conservatives, for conservatism tends, in his opinion, toward a narrow "introverted" nationalism.

PRESTON SLOSSON

Professor of History
University of Michigan

MORTON KELLER. *In Defense of Yesterday: James M. Beck and the Politics of Conservatism 1861-1936*. Pp. 320. New York: Coward-McCann, 1958. \$6.00.

This is a scholarly, thoroughly competent, biography of a man whose conservatism was so complete that it put him out of sympathy with every major trend in twentieth-century America. James M. Beck became a lonely voice protesting the centralizing, statist tendencies of Democrats and Republicans alike.

Beck began his political career in the 1880's as an anti-corporation Democrat, but by the end of the century "he real-

ized," as his biographer puts it, "that to share in the fruits of legal service to big business he would have to take on a new political affiliation and a new social outlook" (p. 12). Attracted also by the expansionist policies of the McKinley administration, he joined the Republican Party and became Assistant Attorney General of the United States in 1900.

For a few brief years, Beck was happily in tune with his times. As Assistant Attorney General to 1903, and thereafter as a corporation lawyer, he was an eloquent spokesman for political and economic centralization. But the Progressive Movement showed that a strong central government might be used for social and economic reform; this drove Beck, like many of his corporation clients, back to the doctrines of states rights and laissez faire.

Thereafter he never changed his position. The 1920's, which seemed a period of fulfillment to many conservatives, brought no particular satisfaction to Beck. As Solicitor General in the Harding-Coolidge administration, he found it necessary to defend government intervention in which he fundamentally disbelieved. Republican laissez faire did not go far enough, and with the New Deal all his worst fears were realized. Elected to Congress from a Philadelphia district, he waged a hopeless battle against the Roosevelt program, retiring in 1934 in despair at being "one four-hundredth part of a rubber stamp" legislature. At his death in April 1936 he was working for the nomination of Alfred M. Landon, although fearful that he was altogether too much of a "liberal."

Beck was not always on the losing side. As an ardent spokesman for American intervention in World War I, as an opponent of the League, and as an active worker for the repeal of prohibition, he saw three causes triumph. But he found more and more of his real satisfaction in the contemplation of the American past, which he celebrated in speeches and writings.

Mr. Keller adds to our understanding of twentieth-century American history by viewing it through James M. Beck's career. But Beck's "politics of conservatism" were too obsolete to be representative. Most conservatives have been much more willing