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## BOOKS

### "Humanized Geopolitics"

OUR EVOLVING CIVILIZATION: AN INTRODUCTION TO GEOPACIFICS. By Griffith Taylor. Oxford University Press.

(Reviewed by Dr. Kenneth B. Cumberland)

GRIFFITH TAYLOR, whom some New Zealanders may remember from his sojourn in Sydney, has, according to the Foreword he wrote to this book, done almost everything. He has visited every Continent, the Antarctic included; tramped in every country of Europe except only Russia and Portugal, done research in Sumatra and Java, Japan, the Andes, the Alps and the Atlas, and both north of the Arctic circle and south of the Antarctic circle. Meanwhile he has occupied Chairs of Geography at Sydney, Chicago and Toronto. He was trained in physics, geology and mining, and did post-graduate work on Cambrian fossils at Cambridge; he went with Scott to the Antarctic; he worked for seven years as a "weather-man" in Australia, and in 1920 he began to teach geography. He has found time to write 32 books (they are listed here opposite the title page) on climate, weather, polar research, anthropology, military strategy, geopolitics, education, geology, race—and now on civilization. His productivity increases, for he published six books in 1946 and had three or four in the press at that time. Moreover this book refers the reader—rather irritatingly—no less than 49 times to the author's other books, pamphlets and articles that range in subject matter from water-divining to evolution, and from meteorological science to international affairs.

Now Professor Taylor has invented a new science—"Geopacifics." A New Zealander might reasonably believe that this should have something to do with the geography of the Pacific. He would, however, be wrong, hopelessly wrong. For "Geopacifics" is a sort of post-war Geopolitics devised by and for the victorious. But let Professor Taylor define the new discipline: it is "an attempt to base the teachings of freedom and humanity upon real geographical deductions: it is humanized Geopolitics."

GRIFFITH TAYLOR and Ellesworth Huntington (who wrote just before he died a similar but much better and more thoughtful book called *Main Springs of Civilization*) are the last great "environmentalists." Judging by his repeated and often irrelevant beliefs, Professor Taylor is supremely aware of this and rather self-conscious and sensitive about it. Both eminent geographers are of the school that believes that man is the abject tool of his physical environment; that the environment is the key to the past and future of mankind, the secret to the history of civilization, the spectacles through which the inevitable destiny of the nations can be seen clearly and without doubt. Fortunately the school has been discredited by those geographers who believe that man (and nations) have themselves some control over their ultimate fate, and who in any case look upon geography as an empirical science seeking simply to describe what the regions of the world are like and not to explain history or to make easy the

birth of an inevitable future. Professor Taylor's remarkable productivity in the last few years might appear to the next generation of geographers as an expression of the death pangs of the environmentalist school.

In this book Professor Taylor seeks to explain the evolution of civilization in terms of the "world plan" (by which he means the shape of the earth and the configuration of its surface) and climatic controls. These, it is alleged, control racial differences, cultural distributions, the urbanization of population (the "seven ages of towns"), war and military history ("the seven southern gates of Europe"). The same factors explain the future course of human settlement ("the five stages of development in Canada"), and they will solve the "problems of peace." There is something of mysticism and little of science in all this.

The book covers extensive ground; it touches geophysics, geology, meteorology, anthropology, archaeology, urban geography, and the origins of language; it treats also of religion, military strategy and tactics, geopolitics, and nuclear physics; and it essays a prophesy of the future population of the nations. It is all necessarily superficial—but dogmatic and final. We should always be sceptical of simple explanations such as are given us here: in traversing such wide ground the author does geography, his main subject, a considerable disservice. It is partly the unsuccessful invasion by geographers of the realms of other scientists that in the past has brought their discipline into disrepute, and that has delayed its development and recognition. But fortunately Professor Taylor does not call this work "geography." Other geographers will, I imagine, be satisfied that it has been labelled "Geopacifics."

### AUSTRALIAN ESSAYS

SINGING TO THE CATTLE. By Brian Elliott. Georgian House, Melbourne.

WE are so accustomed to seeing unimportant books dressed up in the hope that they will at least look important that a swing the other way is almost a sensation. This is a book of serious criticism printed and produced with such deliberate restraint that only the dust-cover takes it out of the school text-book class. There was some perversity, too, in giving it the title of one of the least important essays in the collection. "Singing to the Cattle" is a pleasant essay to read—it was first written and delivered as a lecture—but it is not easy to make literary history out of the Australian ballad, and it is surely far-fetched to say that "the cattle-drover sang to the cattle because it was dangerous not to."

Travelling cattle are nervous creatures and liable to stampede if they are frightened. A small noise, if it is sharp and unexpected in the quiet of the night, may set them panicking in a moment, and then the drover may not merely lose his mob or be at great trouble to get them together again, but they may actually trample him down. In order to keep the cattle reassured, one at least of the droving party usually rides round the camp throughout the night, and keeps up some sort of a noise to which they become accustomed. That is the primary necessity: some sort of noise. What emerged out of that necessity was the ballad.

It is easy enough to accept the familiar noise, but why should it tend to be a song?

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