

POVERTY IN SPITE OF PROGRESS

POVERTY AND PROGRESS IN NEW ZEALAND. By Dr. W. B. Sutch. Published by Modern Books, Wellington. Price, 5/-.

RH. TAWNEY speaks of the Middle Ages as a time in which an effort was made to control economic activities and to direct them to moral ends. Nineteenth century economic teaching took up an exactly opposite standpoint. "Give unlimited scope to the quest for competitive profits and morality will for certain be a by-product" was its teaching.

Dr. Sutch on page 21 of his book, *Poverty and Progress in New Zealand*, stigmatises this teaching as meaning "in its plainest terms, every man for himself," and goes on to say, "This doctrine of rugged individualism was held to be the best method of advancing the wealth of the nation."

It made things tough in the Old Country and rather surprisingly just as tough



Reviewed
for
"The Listener"
by
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in a new colony which in 1860 had only 60,000 people to 64 million acres. It was particularly hard on the social services which never seemed able to catch up on their time lag. If every man was to be strenuously and single-mindedly absorbed in self-advancement it stood to reason that community services would be given a back seat. These community services, Education, Health, the prevention of unemployment, are the matters with which Dr. Sutch most concerns himself. In his knowledge of his special subject, he may have some peers, but few, if any, superiors. His presentation of his argument is clear and orderly. His main theme seems to be that Progress, even when making visible headway, has never been able to rid itself of that old man of the sea, Poverty. The slumps re-

curring nearly every decade from 1840 on, lend weight to this contention.

THE book has half a dozen interesting angles. That most interesting to the present writer is the manner in which, in spite of laissez-faire (no State interference; let everything look after itself) collective authorities keep butting in. The theory was all against their doing so, the facts, those of sickness, destitution, unemployment and ignorance made it imperative that they should. So whether Tories, Radicals or Liberals ruled, the trend was toward an ever-increasing amount of State activity, the continuous expansion of the State services.

The growing number of readers who feel it their duty to know New Zealand first will be grateful to Dr. Sutch. He has his own point of view, and while he collates and states facts, he regards them as stepping stones to a better state of things. But to have a standpoint is not necessarily to be a partisan, and those who disagree with him will be able to dissent amicably. He may not see things as they do, but he sees straight according to his (pretty powerful) lights.

POVERTY AND PROGRESS is an account of an evolutionary growth of collectivism, sometimes painful, some-



Spencer Digby photograph
DR. W. B. SUTCH
His lights are pretty powerful

times ham-strung. It drags its wounded length along from epoch to epoch, yet on the whole it rather amazingly waxes in strength. The belly and the members even seem in a dim and fumbling manner to be arriving at the conclusion that the body is more important than any of them: that indeed it is both them and more than them.

In making so very much clearer this concept of well-being as a community matter, Dr. Sutch has performed no mean service to his generation.

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AFTER SCHOOL—WHAT?

THE BACKGROUND OF GUIDANCE. By H. C. McQueen and Others. (N.Z. Council for Educational Research). Printed by Whitcombe & Tombs.

THIS is a well documented account of what the children of our New Zealand cities do when they leave primary school. Some get a job, others go on to High School or "Tech." or a private school. What determines their choice? Or do they choose at all? Are family circumstances or personal aptitudes the more important consideration? Why are so many drafted to an academic course? Why are there so many "misfits" at school or at work? Is it the child's fault, or the school's? What are the work prospects of boys who have no secondary schooling and of those who take an academic course, or engineering? These are some of the questions which McQueen and his five collaborators—Harris, Glasgow, Boyes, O'Halloran, and Woods—all competent research workers, try to answer after a five years' study of primary school "leavers" in two New Zealand cities, with check figures from a third.

IT is in many respects a disturbing book. The most enthusiastic advocate of freedom cannot be quite happy to discover what elements of chance, operating early in the child's life, may begin a drift towards futility and frustration,

or the friction of an uncongenial environment. The writers do not argue the case for adult guidance and help in these matters, but the need is implicit in the picture they draw of the New Zealand setting in which a guidance programme must work, and in the difficulties they find to be in the way.

The schools are well in the picture. With personal experience of the difficulties in the school situation the authors reflect with regret upon such features as poor co-ordination between primary and post-primary schools, the obsession with uniformity, the inadequacy of the methods of recording and passing on relevant information about the child,



H. C. McQUEEN
Has five collaborators

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and the effects of so-called liberal courses, claimed to be without vocational bias, by which "from the day that children enter post-primary schools they are gradually edged into a limited number of channels, each of which can lead to only a limited number of destinations." The intermediate schools try to explore aptitudes, but the writers suspect that "the aptitudes discovered tend to be those for which provision already exists" in the post-primary departments. Those who believe that our democratic system provides fairly equal opportunity to all will find much in this book to make them think. Even in New Zealand, it seems, "socio-economic grades" tend to perpetuate themselves.

ALTHOUGH this is an interim report, and by no means a pronouncement as to what ought to be done, the book makes many constructive suggestions. Great responsibility must rest with the schools and their teachers, but parents, employers, administrators and all concerned with the basic problems of our

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