

minority. Its estimated quarter of a million adherents in the USA means that only one in eight hundred Americans subscribe to its ideals. It could well be something that will grow and help purify the present poisoned air of the "Free World." On the other hand it could be something which flowered too quickly in the deceptive short lived thaw of the Cold War and is now destined only to wither in the face of the harsher climate of "reality." Only time will tell.

G. STANLEY MOORE

**A HISTORY OF TRADE UNIONISM IN AUSTRALIA,**  
 by J. T. Sutcliffe with a  
 foreword by G. W. Ford.  
 MacMillan, 282pp, \$2.50.

CONGRATULATIONS are due for those responsible for the reprinting of this valuable outline of trade union development in Australia up to the end of the First World War.

Originally published in 1921 as one of a WEA Series on economic, political and social studies, the work remains the only national history of trade unionism in existence.

Sutcliffe's *History* provides essential background material for any study of Australian trade unionism. It reveals its origin in the craft benefit societies coming directly from or patterned on those of the British Isles and shows how the pattern changed, with the taking on of characteristics flowing from the "wide, brown land," in the formation of mass organisations, particularly in the pastoral and mining industries.

The book is particularly useful for students in its painstaking chronicling of the many moves to bridge distances and cut across State boundaries to bring into being nationally representative bodies.

The great need for such outlines is almost self-evident. In a thought-provoking foreword, G. W. Ford, of the University of New South Wales, has much to say about the paucity of written trade union histories. . . "In particular, authors of high school history texts almost invariably include glowing accounts of the growth of such industries as wool and steel . . . yet with rare notable exceptions these writers barely mention, let alone discuss, the contribution of sweat, blood and tears of the workers, whose toil, sacrifice and tragedy were the real life blood of our developing industry."

Bravo, Mr. Ford, for a refreshingly enlightened approach!

On the other hand, it must be said that there is little of "sweat, blood and tears" in Sutcliffe's rather colorless story. It is an outline of the institutions built by the workers, with an emphasis on parliamentary reflections of them, rather than of their industrial struggles. Some of the outstanding battles of the 1880's are not even mentioned, the big clash of the 1890's is given but cursory treatment, as is also the case with the 1909-10 struggles and the general strike of 1917.

Mr. Ford himself criticises the work for its lack of attention to syndicalist influences and emphasises its narrowness, but, of course, the author himself categorised it as "a preliminary step to a more exhaustive and intensive examination". It is not really an interpretative work at all in the sense of E. W. Campbell's analysis of Australian labor history from the marxist standpoint or Brian Fitzpatrick's history of the labor movement. Hence, the value of the book is limited, but it is very valuable, nevertheless.

Surveying the rather bleak field, Mr. Ford has brickbats for both academics

and trade unionists for their lack of appreciation of the need for recording labor history. In my view, the approach is valid. I would go further, indeed, and assert that trade union officials, with rare exceptions, underestimate the value of even taking the elementary step of preserving and classifying their records, let alone ensuring that their story is told.

Mr. Ford correctly complains of an "anti-intellectual" approach on the part of some union leaders, but I have a word for the intellectuals, too! Academics should do much more to encourage trade unions to do their job by rendering material assistance and extending publication facilities... it is an open secret that University pigeon-holes are stacked with documents on trade union history, written as theses, unhonored and unpublished.

Mr. Ford does well to emphasise the value of trade union history. He points out that the general reaction to industrial crises is to cry for some new law or "a more severe application of old laws" rather than to study the historical causes of the crisis. I would underline that by making so bold as to say that trade union leaders would not make so many mistakes today if they had examined what happened yesterday.

Sutcliffe spoke prophetically when he wrote, in 1921, that the trade union movement would be called upon to play "a most important part in the solution of economic and social problems after the war." The period was to see perhaps the greatest ferment of ideas in labor history, leading to the adoption of the socialisation objective by the Labor Party, the attempts to form a One Big Union of the working class, and the formation at last of a national trade union centre in the Australian Council of Trade Unions.

Sutcliffe's words apply with equal

force in this period, after the *second* world war.

Has comparable progress been made? Material on origins and early development like that provided by Sutcliffe's *History* is essential reading, and the chronicle needs to be brought up to date. And the vast changes that have been made in industrial technology and the class structure of Australian society need to be thoroughly examined from the standpoint of the role, policies and mission of the trade union movement. The quickened interest in labor history which Mr. Ford goes so far as to call "a new era", of which the reprinting of this book is an example, gives some promise of the need being fulfilled.

EDGAR ROSS

### **ERA OF MAN OR ROBOT?** by G. Volkov, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 183 pp, 55c.

THIS SMALL PAPERBACK deals with the sociological problems of the technical revolution and no one concerned with today's and tomorrow's world can afford to miss reading it. The author surveys the vital sociological issues, many of them controversial, which spring from the current swift scientific and technological progress. This is done from a marxist view of the trends and laws of technical and scientific development. It raises vigorous polemic with anti-marxist and reformist theories and conclusions.

Some woolly thinking and careless use of terms revealed in the Communist Party pre-Congress discussion could have been avoided and greater clarity reached on the issues of the day had this book, particularly its final chapter, been available. So if you want to know the difference between the "second industrial revolution" and the "scientific and technical revolution", and lots more, be sure you read this booklet.

VIN BOURKE