

Mar., 1945
185

tempered only by some such legend as: "The views of our syndicate writers do not necessarily coincide with the editorial policy of this paper."

Fisher evidently enjoyed dissecting the cosmic writers, prognosticators, key-holders and ax-men. He evinced particular affection for the late Raymond Clapper (who was esteemed by men of all political and economic shades, as well as by most newspaper men), and for Ernie Pyle. He put his tongue in his cheek when discussing Dorothy Thompson.

Fisher is not happy about Walter Lippmann whom he calls "ex-liberal," and whom some people describe as verbose. The author gives considerable space to Walter Winchell, dubbing him "the most democratic of millionaire columnists."

In his gallery of sour-pusses, Fisher lists Sullivan, Pegler, Kent and Mallon. Among the columnists he regards as the most ardent exponents of the New Deal are Lindley and Grafton.

WILLIAM W. NEWCOMB

* * *

Everybody's Political What's What, by George Bernard Shaw. Dodd, Mead & Co., 1944.
PROGRESS GUIDE Book Department. \$3.

IN THE true Shavian manner *Everybody's Political What's What* sets before the world the mature views of Shaw on religion, social reform and political science. Although these messages have all appeared before in his writing, this book is not a re-hash. It is as new and fresh and stimulating as anything Shaw has written.

Shaw has never quite lost what he calls "the divine sense that liberty is a need vital to human growth." He insists that he is a Socialist and has given credit more than once to Henry George as the first writer to influence his political views. On page 189, he writes that in 1881 "I then had my attention diverted to economic science by Henry George."

Like Henry George, Shaw has in all his writings stressed the importance of the Law of Economic Rent: "I must insist that the crux of the land question is the classical

theory of Economic Rent, dubbed by Ferdinand Lasalle the Iron Law of Wages. Like the roundness of the earth, it is unfortunately not obvious. . . . Our politicians simply do not know of its existence. Karl Marx, by an absurd reference to it in *Das Kapital*, proved that he did not understand it. John Ruskin was stopped dead by it. . . . I am tempted to add, nobody who has not read my paper on the Economic Basis of Socialism, in the *Fabian Essays*, should be allowed to write, speak, vote or agitate politically in any fashion in this unhappy country."

The law itself should be carried over into our taxation practice, says Shaw. If the rent were paid into a common fund and used for public purposes, there would be "no slums, no ugly mean streets and buildings, nor indeed any rates or taxes. Everybody would benefit by the rent; everybody would have to contribute to it by work." This is evidently Shaw's first step into a new social world.

In order to clarify the theory of Economic Rent, Shaw devotes an early chapter to the Land Question. "Suppose we begin," he writes on page 7, "with the land question. It is so fundamental that if we go wrong on it everything else will go wrong fundamentally." Economic Rent grows out of the fact that a given application of labor and capital will yield different results on different sites of land according to the advantages or disadvantages of the sites, and this difference in yield is a measure of economic rent. In business and landownership the reward for your labor depends more upon the site in which you exercise it than upon yourself.

If, therefore, we wish to understand Shaw, instead of dismissing him with a smile, we must follow this thread of economic rent, of which he has been a faithful teacher and prophet. It not only explains Shaw, but will lead us through the mazes and perplexities of our social and political problems, for, as he says: "Class monopoly of capital follows class monopoly of land as inevitably as winter follows autumn."

DOUGLAS J. J. OWENS
Manchester, England

* * *