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Book Reviews

Uncle Sam's Acres. By MARION CLAWSON. Dodd, Mead and Company, New York, 414 pages. 1951.

HERE is a nontechnical presentation of the origin, extent, location, use, and administration of our Federally owned lands; also some discussion of the major Federal developments in regard to water. The author is a westerner who grew up in a public-land environment and is now Director of the Bureau of Land Management, Department of the Interior.

Although the picture is painted with a broad brush, considerable detail is sketched into some of the chapters, especially those relating to disposal and reservation of public lands. To some extent this may limit the appeal to the general reader, while those who have a specialized interest in public-land problems will wish that the author had made specific references to source material at certain points in the text. Inserting numbers to identify citations in the back of the book probably would not have frightened the casual reader.

Laymen readers will be rewarded with an overall view of how and why one-fourth of the land area of this country is in Federal ownership, and will become acquainted with some of the problems of public-land administration. Many people east of the Mississippi River who have not traveled in the Western States have little conception of the kinds of land owned by the Federal Government. Perhaps their only contact with Federal land is a post-office site or a military reservation. Even the national forests and the national parks in the Eastern States do not compare with the vast areas in these categories of public land in the West. Consequently, it is difficult for the laymen to understand why most of this land is not in private ownership.

Comprehension of the Federal land problem requires a knowledge of the kinds of land involved and the conditions under which the different classes of land were reserved for special types of public administration. For example, the national parks were reserved because of their unique scenic and recreational values; the national forests to protect watersheds and timber. Most of the land in the Western States now administered by the Bureau

of Land Management was long open to homestead entry, but no one found it worth while to enter a claim on it under the several homestead laws. Even the forest reservations were made after much of the better, at least the more accessible, forest land had gone into private ownership. The so-called submarginal lands which were purchased in the Western States during the 1930's had been homesteaded, but settlers had failed to establish successful farms.

The author points out that private uses of Federal lands predominate under such arrangements as rentals, timber sales, and range permits. And even the 31 million visits to national parks in 1949, and the 81 million to national forests, constitute private use of these lands, although the use is for personal enjoyment rather than for production. But much of our federally owned land has a multiplicity of uses that frequently compete, and must be reconciled in the general public interest. For example, grazing on certain watersheds must be regulated to prevent floods, and to provide water supplies for farms and cities in other parts of the watershed.

Private use of much of our public land involves its utilization in combination with privately owned lands and frequently with other public lands. The western rancher may have a privately owned home ranch for the wintering of his livestock, but perhaps he is dependent upon Bureau of Land Management range for part of the grazing season and on the national forest for the rest. This system of operation grew up when there were no public restrictions on the use of Federal lands. Consequently, access to grazing on public lands to a considerable extent has become capitalized into the value of ranch headquarters. In contrast, the homesteading of humid areas that were suitable for farming involved entry on all the land. Therefore, the gradual capitalization of the use value of the homestead did not include access to free land.

In the last chapter, "Policies and Politics," the author develops a philosophy of public-land administration. In approaching this subject he recog-

nizes that: "One's experiences, if not his biases, condition not only his analysis but what facts he seeks for analysis." Many of his suggestions do reflect his experiences in the Bureau of Land Management. The author mentions the need for widespread public discussion of Federal land problems in order to obtain a more general understanding of the public interest in these lands. He says that "no legitimate special user interest should fear from having all the facts about its interest known to the public." But the question still remains of how to obtain as adequate consideration of the public interest as of the special user interest in both the advisory process and the administrative decisions.

The conflicts in administration of public lands and in development of water resources are touched upon. In connection with water resources, the author suggests that development of a consistent

water policy may be the basis for solution of some of the administrative conflicts in water development. He expresses the hope that the President's Water Policy Commission will develop an adequate policy framework. By implication at least the need for such a policy commission is indicated with respect to administration of Federal lands.

The author summarizes by pointing out that Federal land management is here to stay. There will be an increasing demand for use of public lands and greater need to conserve and develop them. Multiple uses will become more important in the future, and higher uses often will displace the lower uses of Federal lands. All of these forces will emphasize the need for capable public-land administration, which can be achieved only by a wider and more comprehensive understanding of this important public problem.

Sherman E. Johnson

The 1950's Come First. By EDWIN G. NOURSE. Henry Holt and Company, New York. 184 pages. c1951.

IN VIEW of the press and radio publicity that attended Dr. Nourse's resignation as the first chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, persons acquainted with him only through these media might well expect this small volume to contain some fireworks. It does not. It is a lucid and sober analysis of a number of developments which, in his judgment, constitute serious threats to the economic progress and well-being of this country.

Dr. Nourse is concerned first of all with what may be termed "groupism"—the tendency of organized agriculture, labor, and industry to make demands which, if granted, are certain to be detrimental to the economy as a whole. Second, he is concerned with the tendency, not only of these particular groups, but of people generally, to demand from the economy, in the name of security, more than they are willing to contribute. Third, he is concerned that excessive demands in the guise of military preparedness will result in an over-commitment of the Nation's industrial system and in the imposition of oppressive controls. Finally, he is concerned that, instead of rejecting excessive demands, an attempt will be made to meet them

through a continuous process of general inflation, that will seriously undermine the basic strength of the economy.

This discussion of these threats to the economy is neither reactionary nor doctrinaire. He recognizes the legitimacy of many group aspirations and that groups will organize and act collectively to achieve them. He recognizes also that the desire for security is a deep-seated human craving which cannot be ignored. He does not expect that the economic system can be shaped to the ideal of free competition.

This reviewer thinks that what Dr. Nourse regards as "weak-spots in our economic armor" would be so regarded by a majority of economists. The real difference of opinion will arise with respect to the degree of apprehensiveness about them. It is rather clear that the author regards our economic system as already seriously undermined and that unless the weak spots are speedily repaired we face national insolvency and a dismal economic future. Personally, this reviewer thinks that the American economy is in considerably better shape than the author believes it to be.

James P. Cavin