

BOOK REVIEWS

Dispossessing the American Indian. By WILBUR R. JACOBS. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972. Pp. 240. Preface, prologue, maps, illustrations, epilogue, appendices, footnotes, note on sources, index. \$7.95.)

In this day of the awakening interest in the civil rights of all minorities, Wilbur R. Jacobs has joined the critical throng in trying to make the white man feel guilt and remorse for the plight of the American Indian. Professor Jacobs is presently with the history department at the University of California in Santa Barbara. He is on several editorial review boards and has written many articles and books on frontier history.

Dispossessing the American Indian is an intriguing book. Although not everyone will feel the guilt pinpointed by Dr. Jacobs, some will definitely see the loss to the ecological balance of nature. The Indian was truly in harmony with the world around him. Dr. Jacobs comments on other Stone Age cultures, but the bulk of the book deals with the cultural changes of the Iroquois. Dr. Jacobs blames the white man for bringing technology to the Indians, pointing out in passing how the Indian became dependent on the white man's material goods. This necessarily changed the Indian's way of life and put him out of balance with his habitat.

The tenor of the beginning of the book is extremely disturbing when Dr. Jacobs seems to be asking his readers to feel sorry for the Indian. This seems monstrous on the surface. It was bad enough to defeat the Indian and take his lands without now saying, "I'm sorry," while yet keeping him a second-class citizen. But was the red man really vanquished? Dr. Jacobs proceeds to point out how the numbers of Indians are increasing, how they selectively take what they want from the American system, and how they are reviving those aspects of their culture that are relevant to today's life. Even more important, Dr. Jacobs outlines several facets of the collective American character. He claims the white man absorbed from the red man — the love of nature, sly ways of fighting, respect for the cleancut hero (here citing Fenimore Cooper's *Leather-stocking Tales*), and a generous gift-giving nature. Granted, not all American whites exhibit these traits, but then neither did all Indians exhibit them.

Bearing in mind that Wilbur Jacobs has written extensively about the great frontier historian Frederick Jackson Turner, in *Dispossessing the American Indian* he takes Turner to task for glorifying the businesslike exploitation of the frontier. George Croghan also gets

his share of criticism for contributing to the ruination of the ecology. Professor Jacobs's approach no doubt has a great deal of merit on this score since he is a historian's historian. He may sway enough professors to teach the importance of an ecological balance to enough teachers who in turn may have some influence with their students, thus reversing the pollutant trend so prevalent in America today. It is quite evident throughout the book that Professor Jacobs envisions himself as a crusader, almost a dictator to other historians.

Aside from the foregoing critical comments, the book is well written, well documented, extremely informative, and very interesting. The footnotes provide a bibliographical source par excellence.

Richmond, Virginia

HELEN FRANK COLLINS

Pithole, the Vanished City. By WILLIAM C. DARRAH. (Gettysburg, Pa.: The Author, 1972. Pp. 240. Bibliography, index. \$8.50.)

Given a very capable historian with a thirst for accuracy and a facile pen, plus twenty-five years of dedicated research, and you should have an outstanding book. And that is exactly what we have in this latest volume about *Pithole, the Vanished City*.

William C. Darrah of the Gettysburg College faculty, author of ten previous books (the best known being *Powell of the Colorado*), first became interested in Pithole, oildom's most famous boomtown, while an undergraduate at the University of Pittsburgh years ago. He never lost that interest, but twenty-five years ago he seriously commenced his research, and this definitive book is the result.

While the book is completely interesting and very well illustrated, several chapters deserve special mention. Chapter 3, "The Birth of Pithole," is a fine summary on how the city came to be, the unusual methods of handling land and lease sales, and the myriad details of a town springing from the wilderness. Chapter 8, "Plank Roads, Pipelines and Railroads," is the story of the teamsters, their greed, and their displacement by the introduction of the pipelines and the coming of the railroads with lower rates and much greater capacity to move crude petroleum. Chapter 10, "The Production of Oil: 1865 in Retrospect," tells of the most famous productive wells; of producing troubles compounded by fires, explosions, and nonstandard barrels; and most important, the first attempt at rotary drilling by Luther Atwood's patented process. In chapter 15, "Some Technology," author Darrah pro-