

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Economic History Association

Thorstein Veblen: The Carleton College Veblen Seminar Essays. by Carlton C. Qualey

Review by: C. E. Ayres

The Journal of Economic History, Vol. 29, No. 2 (Jun., 1969), pp. 386-387

Published by: [Cambridge University Press](#) on behalf of the [Economic History Association](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2115976>

Accessed: 31/01/2014 11:27

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at
<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Cambridge University Press and Economic History Association are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Journal of Economic History*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

research effort, and it qualifies her as a leading expert on Lionel Cranfield, but the book is of limited value for economic historians. The *Sackville Manuscripts* provide excellent reading for specialists in Tudor and Stuart economic problems.

LYNN MUCHMORE, *Grinnell College*

Thorstein Veblen: The Carleton College Veblen Seminar Essays. Edited by Carlton C. Qualey. New York: Columbia University Press, 1968. Pp. xiv, 170. \$6.00.

When Carleton College celebrated its centennial in 1966, one of its exercises was a "Veblen Seminar," honoring the most eminent alumnus of the college. It was a working seminar. The fifteen seniors who were admitted to it spent the preceding summer plowing through a hefty reading list as well as all of Veblen's principal works; but they were also privileged to hear discussions of various aspects of Veblen's work by five eminent scholars in addition to their professor, who is also the editor of this book.

In his opening essay Professor Qualey points out that Thorstein was not the only Veblen to come to Carleton. Six of his brothers and sisters did so; but apparently none of the others came under the tutelage of John Bates Clark. This may have been a fateful difference. Whatever else may have passed between that remarkable teacher and that no less remarkable student, it is inconceivable that such a mind as Veblen's should have failed to recognize the quality of such a mind as Clark's and to hear its call.

One rare privilege enjoyed by Carleton's Veblen Seminar was that of hearing Isador Lubin's reminiscences of his association with Veblen as a young graduate student at the University of Missouri and a little later in Washington. Young as he was, Lubin instantly recognized Veblen's greatness, and Veblen responded warmly, so that the young easterner became a familiar of the Veblen-Bradley household. His picture of this strange ménage—the prevailing abhorrence of conspicuous waste and leisure-class' canons of taste especially in feminine attire, the furniture hand-made by Veblen, and the prevailing atmosphere of tender loving care of the presumably frail genius—is perhaps the most touching that has survived. Worth noting, too, is Lubin's insistence not only in his essay but also in seminar discussion as reported by the editor, that the widely held supposition of Veblen's "animus toward capitalistic society" is not true. Lubin also makes Veblen's proposals for getting in the wartime crops make better sense than has been supposed hitherto.

For the members of the Veblen seminar to hear "The Background of Veblen's Thought" discussed by the distinguished author of the definitive study, *Thorstein Veblen and His America*, who is also the author of the massive (five-volume) monograph, *The Economic Mind in American Civilization*, was no less rare a privilege. Once again, and perhaps more lucidly than ever, Joseph Dorfman traces the influences that played upon the young Veblen. Those Carleton seniors must have sat spellbound as Dorfman recited the intellectual history of the 1880's and 1890's, noting the giants of those days by whom Veblen was more or less intimately touched.

No chorus is without discordant voices. One wonders what the seminar must have thought of Thomas Cochran's attempt to explain Veblen away by arguing that "Business in Veblen's America" was then in a uniquely monopolistic mood which has since passed, so that (in effect) if Veblen were writing today his theme would be quite different. One wonders also about David Noble's obsession with seventeenth-century Puritanism and his consequent identification of Veblen as a primitive Puritan theologian.

Whatever else Veblen may have been, he was a consistent and systematic critic of American capitalism and of the classical economic theory which has served as its "standard" apologetic. In recent years Professor Charles B. Friday of Oregon State University has made an enviable reputation as an interpreter of Veblen's economic principles, and Carleton was wise to enlist his talents and fortunate in the result. His essay "Veblen on the Future of American Capitalism" is perhaps the best short statement of Veblen's economic and social principles in existence. Indeed, this essay, taken in conjunction with Professor Qualey's digest of the whole seminar, and with Lubin's personal recollections and Dorfman's background, makes this book the best brief introduction to Thorstein Veblen, the man and his work, now to be found.

C. E. AYRES, *The University of Texas at Austin*

Histoire générale de la population mondiale. By Marcel R. Reinhard, André Armengaud, and Jacques Dupâquier. (Third edition). Preface by Alfred Sauvy. Paris: Editions Montchrestien, 1968. Pp. x, 708. 90F.

This is the third edition of a book originally published under a slightly different title in 1949 (reviewed in this JOURNAL in Vol. XI, No. 1). Some of the chapters dealing with Europe before the nineteenth century have been extensively revised in this edition and give the latest results of scholarly research. France receives a large space in this, but the authors have nevertheless shown impressive thoroughness in surveying the literature of other countries as well, such as the Low Countries and Scandinavia. Many accepted ideas on population estimates, particularly on the use of hearth counts to generate them, are questioned, traced back to their origins, and reevaluated. Once more, the myth of a natural pattern of population with early marriages, uncontrolled fertility adding one child every year to a total of twelve per family, is dismissed. Modern research shows that the average age of marriage was between 24 and 27, that nuptiality was sensitive to changes in economic environment, that birth intervals were longer than two years, and that about four children were counted in most lower-class families. Fertility control existed and was based on coitus interruptus and induced abortions.

The authors adhere to the view that the demographic response to short-run economic changes in the preindustrial period generally conformed to the mechanism of "subsistence crises," i.e., of downswings of births and marriages and upswings of deaths following harvest failures. This neglects the influence of changing conditions in the rural cottage industries, even though it is well