

"The Answer of Nature Herself to the Riddle of the Ages," by L. D. Beckwith. Published by the Author, Stockton, Calif. 1941. 219 pp. \$2.50.

This neat little volume, attractively bound in flexible leather, is ~~Part I of a proposed two-part treatise on the science of economics~~ by Mr. Beckwith. "Written from Nature's Notes by L. D. Beckwith" is the modest manner in which the authorship is set forth, indicating the approach to be an effort to uncover the natural laws underlying economic phenomena.

In his introduction, Mr. Beckwith relates the evolution of his ideas—the impetus given by Henry George, the direction indicated by G. McM. Ross, and the revisions offered by W. R. B. Willcox, Emil O. Jorgensen, and Robert J. Otto—the contingent recently named the "Western" school, because of their divergence from the orthodox Georgean-Ricardian school.

The presentation of the subject matter is in the form of short pithy dialogues—over a hundred of them—a technique familiar to readers of Mr. Beckwith's paper, *The Forum*. In conversations between the author and various people—a college sophomore, a unionist, a farmer, a technician, etc.—the arguments unfold. In this volume, says Mr. Beckwith, the outlines of his philosophy are set forth. The proposed second volume is to consist of illustrations of his principles.

Mr. Beckwith holds that economics is a science as exact as any, that Nature has provided for the needs of the body politic, and that selfishness is not an "anti-social" instinct, but a constructive factor in society. With this outlook we will not quarrel. Mr. Beckwith also accepts most of Henry George's economic doctrines, including his proposal to collect the rent of land for public services; and we commend the author for his work in propagating these ideas. However, there are some features of Mr. Beckwith's economics that depart from the orthodox Georgeist viewpoint. He holds that rent is not at all due to natural fertility; that it has nothing to do with land as such, but is purely the result of social activities. He contends that rent enters into the price of products. His definitions of economic terms diverge from those we accept. (For instance, labor is "any human effort." Land is not thought necessary of definition.) These and other views of our Western friends have been discussed from time to time in the pages of LAND AND FREEDOM, and we will not in this review attempt an analysis. We will say, however, that we do not accept these departures from the Georgean system, believing that the economic philosophy of Henry George is completely sound.

Nevertheless, we are in sympathy with Mr. Beckwith's suggestion that George, like Columbus, has opened a new world, and that all progress in economic thought will develop from the discoveries he made. We do believe that there is a great deal to be done in this direction, and we give Mr. Beckwith full credit for his thought-stimulating ideas in this interesting volume.