

YOU CAN'T SAY HE DIDN'T TRY

"Democracy against Unemployment," by William H. Stead. Harper and Brothers, New York and London, 1942. 260 pp. notes and index. \$3.00.

According to the blurb on the jacket of the book, Dean William H. Stead of the School of Business and Public Administration of Washington University has enjoyed the advantage of ten years of active association in the Federal government with problems of the organization and conduct of the Federal Employment Service. He writes, so the blurb informs us, from a close first-hand knowledge of the factors which help to cause unemployment, of the ways of attacking recurrent unemployment and of the more long-time adjustment necessary to solve this major problem of our industrial Society.

Mebbe so, mebbe so. Blurbs are seldom over-modest, and they *have* been known to gild the lily a trifle. If Dean Stead has "first-hand knowledge of the factors which help to cause unemployment" and of ways of attacking the problem, he exhibits singular skill in concealing the fact. He may have "enjoyed" his ten years with the Federal Employment Service; there is nothing in the present volume to indicate that they taught him anything as to the basic cause of unemployment.

Jobs, it would seem, come out of the air; men are unemployed because they can't find work; a beneficent Government will have to make jobs for them. Nowhere in the entire volume does the author betray the least glimmer of a perception that land has anything to do with employment. His tome abounds in charts and tables. If nothing else, the good dean is a glutton for punishment when it comes to statistical research. You may regale yourself, should such be your bent, with such thrilling and heart-warming sentiment as is found in the table showing the "Sensitivity of employment to depression in specified segments of the economy," or would you prefer Charley McCarthy?

Like many scholarly writers, Mr. Stead is not going to be guilty of using two words when he can make six do. And not all, by any means, are amiss. He thinks that government control means bureaucracy and that bureaucracy is annoying and costly.

He thinks it is conscious planning and therefore the

opposite of the liberty and freedom which we are supposed to have and to hold here in the United States.

He thinks that the consequent restriction of individual initiative won't be liked by anyone wishing to live and act independently as God meant man to do.

When he is thinking along those lines he is going great. Now if he could only let himself know that there can be no widespread unemployment when land is made of ready access to all men, and that that condition could be brought about by the simple expedient, as Henry Ford puts it, of taxing land into use, then we'd all stand up and cheer. But, even at that, he would put *himself* out of a job—the job of writing 260-page books in which he tries—unsuccessfully—to tell what causes unemployment and how it can be cured.

When he gets his eyes open he can do the job in one page—successfully this time—even with his prolixity.

—C. O. STEELE