

1972

Book Review

Beverly H. Briggs

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Recommended Citation

Beverly H. Briggs, *Book Review*, 21 Clev. St. L. Rev. (1972)
available at <https://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu/clevstrev/vol21/iss1/24>

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research, the book is well worth the experience for a short, easily comprehensible introduction to the problems of the school and its superintendent.

*Reviewed by Beverly H. Briggs**

BUSINESS IN THE HUMANE SOCIETY, by John J. Corson, McGraw-Hill Book Company (New York 1971), 314 pp.

On Labor Day, 1969, President Nixon told the nation's governors, "The central race in the world is neither an arms race nor a space race. It is a race between man and change." Thomas Jefferson, a century and a half ago, said, "With the change in circumstances, institutions must advance also to keep pace with the times."

The humane society is the result of evolution of decades of forces of change. A new concept of social structure is growing—the first in history to be based on the demands of the individual to make all the benefits of civilization, in general, available to the entire human race. This is not a welfare state by any means. It is a more ambitious concept than that of the 1940's and 1950's.

Business will have a major role in framing this society which is based on public interest. So, just where do the businessmen stand? Most businessmen think in terms of the welfare of the individual firm—the single enterprise, of making a profit in the enterprise. Now, though, the thinking and acting of businessmen must, and is, slowly changing to encompass the concept of what is in the best interests of all members of society. Spokesmen for business, for labor, for farming, and for medicine will contend that with a myopic concentration on their own interests, they are advocating what is in the public interest.

Public interest is the key to this new horizon for society; but, the public interest has as many definitions as the journalists, educators and politicians can contrive. It can be said that public interest is the reflection of the changing values of the contemporary society, illustrated by the evolution of the industrial society, the post-industrial society, and the now emerging humane society.

Government, the executive and the legislative branches, acting as an impartial determiner of the public interest, is of growing importance in our complex, industrialized society. The president, who has the obligation to serve both private business and the public interest, must perform a monumental balancing act between the two factions. Furthermore, within the structure of a democratic government, he must emerge as a conduit through which policies are brought to the final determining force, that of the power of the people at the

*B.B.A., Cleveland State University; Third-year student at Cleveland State University College of Law.

election polls. It is, after all, the American voter who will determine the economic affairs, the needs, the wishes of the American public-at-large.

Business can be, and *must* be, entrusted with the responsibility for the resolution of social problems—at least some of them! Some problems, such as education and hospital care, the American people do not want supplied at a business profit. Gradually, however, business has assumed, and is continuing to assume, social responsibility, being aided by the tools which the government and the people are supplying, i.e. subsidies, grants, government contracts, technological advancements, prices and wages, the whole new employment process. Corporate philanthropy is broadening to include the immediate communities in which the corporations are located. It not only includes health, education and welfare, but also racial and cultural activities.

The principal contributions of business to the new humane society are new products and services, along with explorations in housing, transportation, crime prevention, urban redevelopment and medical care, in addition to the technology necessary for the conservation of our natural resources, lakes, air and earth.

The humane society holds greatest promise in those areas that have always been regarded as the sole responsibility of government. Today, however, by government entering into a partnership with business, thereby perfecting this framework, we will mark the most significant endeavor in solving the ills that plague us.

*Reviewed by Ann Aldrich**

THE ENVIRONMENTAL LAW HANDBOOK by Norman J. Landau and Paul D. Rheingold with a Foreword by Ralph Nader). Ballantine/Friends of the Earth (New York 1971) 483 pp.

For a slim \$1.25, Landau and Rheingold have produced a slick paperback which purports to convey to the general public (as well as to the lawyer or law student) the variety of forms in which lawsuits seeking to prohibit or impede current polluters of the environment may be successfully maintained.

With all due respect to Ralph Nader's claim to the contrary, "environmental action" is a phrase which *does* still puzzle both the lawyer and the layman, especially the lawyer. Although the book may lull the layman into the comfortable impression that it is all his attorney needs to quickly clean up Lake Erie, or sweep away the Los Angeles smog, the layman will have problems convincing the careful practitioner, who will very shortly discover that cites to cases are often either missing, incomplete, or inaccurate, and that much of what is written here is rather over-zealously stated. Wishing a principle into existence just doesn't always make it so.

*Professor of Law, Cleveland State University College of Law.