

do, as a whole, present an excellent account of the types of research in administrative policy that have been done and the nature of the records that are available for such research. This volume should do much to decrease the unfamiliarity of researchers with the nature and potentialities of federal archives for research in this field. No researcher studying the federal agencies should proceed very far without first consulting this book. Although the conference was concerned only with the federal level of government, the researcher who has imagination and is interested in public policy at the state and local level should also be able to get ideas of possible types of records and problems he might find at these levels.

—Homer L. Calkin  
Arlington, Virginia

*The Letters of Bernard DeVoto*, edited by Wallace Stegner.  
Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1975.  
393 pp. \$10.00.

During his lifetime Bernard DeVoto wrote twenty-four books and close to nine-hundred articles. He also wrote thousands of letters, and a precious 148 of them are included in this inviting volume edited by Wallace Stegner. Stegner, author of the highly praised biography of DeVoto, *The Uneasy Chair*, knows his man, and the selected letters richly display the public and private life of a complex literary giant, warts and all.

The letters are arranged under nine topics so that letters on the same general subject may be read together. In order the topics are: Self-Scrutiny; Education; The Mark Twain Estate and the Limits of Patience; Controversies, Squabbles, Disagreements; Certain Inalienable Rights; The Literary Life; The Writing of History; The Nature and Nurture of Fiction; and Conservation and the Public Domain. Helpful headnotes and footnotes are provided by Stegner.

Reading the letters is an experience. Written to newspaper editors, publishers, politicians, fellow authors, admirers, bitter enemies, intimate friends, and others, they reveal a full picture of the man. Historian, novelist, journalist, editor, cultural critic, essayist, teacher, conservation expert, and general All-American gadfly, DeVoto fought against censorship, denial of civil liberties, corrupt politics, the plundering of natural resources, and anything else he considered "stupid" in American life. Again, he could be an exasperating enemy or a fabulous friend. He was always a man of controversy. As Stegner puts it, "Nobody took a neutral position on Benny DeVoto anymore than he took a neutral position on anything or anyone." And anyone who reads these fascinating letters will have an interesting, maybe even frustrating time deciding where to stand, as a human being, in relation to DeVoto.

DeVoto, of course, wrote great popular history. Who can forget *The Year of Decision* (1943) and *Across the Wide Missouri* (1947). Anyone familiar with the books, or anyone who is interested in the story of westward expansion should read his letters, for many of them detail how he went about creating those "celebrations of the frontier experience." Many professional historians considered DeVoto a "lightweight," and he felt many of them were dry and dull. Countless Americans, however, appreciated DeVoto's romantic approach, and he won notable success, including a Pulitzer Prize.

Finally, the real beauty of these letters is that they enable the reader to derive an inside look into the personal life of an incredible man, a famous American of dispute, and this should be an inviting prospect for the many millions of people who have been, in one way or another, influenced by his published works. The personal touch is very pronounced. Also, for the uninitiated, the letters should send them running to the nearest library to check out DeVoto's books, articles, and pieces from his long-standing column in *Harper's Magazine*, entitled "The Easy Chair," as well as to Stegner's magnificent biography, previously mentioned.

—Bradford Luckingham  
Arizona State University

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