

[1959. *Review of Social Responsibilities of Organized Labor*, by John A. Fitch. *Christianity Today* 22 Jun.]

ORGANIZED LABOR

Social Responsibilities of Organized Labor, by John A. Fitch (Harper, 1957, 237 pp., \$3.50) is reviewed by Gordon H. Clark, Professor of Philosophy, Butler University.

Under this title one would expect to find arguments imposing some moral obligations on organized labor, especially since the Introduction says that the inquiry is based on Christian assumptions. One's expectation, however, is largely disappointed. A few mild criticisms of the labor movement are made in the last two chapters, but the bulk of the book is almost totally historical.

Furthermore, the Christian assumptions are discarded in chapter one. The author speaks of ethical concepts, not as the commands of God, but as the outgrowth of human experience. The basis of moral conduct is asserted to be the result of man's search for an acceptable way of life. "Social responsibility, then, is a response to the generally accepted code of behavior . . . and a sense of obligation to its major and most firmly established principles" (p. 4). Thus majority opinion, with no norm by which to correct or oppose it, is substituted for divine revelation.

The majority opinion which controls the selection of historical detail and by which the concluding criticisms are made is largely the opinion of labor officialdom. Thus Charles P. Taft in the Foreword can assert that the labor revelation of the past years "has been accomplished without violence." F. Ernest Johnson in the Introduction speaks of "the stern measures provided for in the Taft-Harley Act." The author in several places shows his hate of the Right to Work Laws. Religious scruples against unionism are to be "compromised" by extorting dues from the resentful worker but graciously allowing him to be absent from meetings (p. 70). Indeed, one gets the impression that the author disallows all rights of minorities. He also admits (p. 46) that in President Truman's 1945 conference the unions refused to specify a single area within which management decisions could not be questioned.

The author quotes Walter Reuther with apparent approval: "We have to assume ever increasing social responsibilities." These include all national politics, foreign affairs and public education. Only a person for whom the unions can do no wrong, for whom official union opinion is the norm, can acquiesce in this bid for unlimited power.