

BOOK REVIEW

Ernst Posner.—Archives & the Public Interest; selected essays by Ernst Posner, edited by Ken Munden; introduction by Paul Lewinson. Washington, Public Affairs press, 1967. \$6.00 (U.S. currency).

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This volume is a *Festschrift*, collected together to mark the 75th birthday of Ernst Posner, and though the Society of American Archivists does not appear as the publisher on the title page, it can be regarded as the tribute which that Society has paid to Posner. For instance, there is a Foreword by Herbert E. Angel, President of the S.A.A., and in this acknowledgement is made for permission to reprint articles from the *American Historical Review*, *Archivum*, and *Indian Archives*. No acknowledgement is made for permission to reprint from the *American Archivist*, from which journal, in fact, six of the sixteen essays have been taken.

The introduction by Paul Lewinson is under the title "The two careers of Ernst Posner". In fact, Posner followed the same career in Germany as he did in the United States, that of "archivy" (to use the word that Paul Lewinson appears to have adopted for the archives profession). However, there is a very real sense in which Posner has had two separate careers. As a European Jew seeking refuge in the New World from the persecutions and tragic fanaticism of one part of the Old World, he could scarcely step out of German archives administration into a senior archival position in the United States. He arrived in Washington in the summer of 1939 with nothing except a few personal belongings. Whereas his archival work in Germany had been of a practical kind, in the U.S. he was an archivist by precept. In 1939 Solon Buck's course in the history and administration of archives was transferred from Columbia University to the American University at Washington, and Buck was able to enlist the services of Posner as an associate in this course. In 1942, when Buck succeeded R. D. W. Connor as Archivist of the United States, Posner took over responsibility for the course. In 1945 he began the Summer Institutes on Archives Administration, and he directed these for 16 years. In 1945 also Posner was promoted to full professorial status in the American University, and was also made a dean of the graduate division. He retired from academic life in 1961.

The volume now under review must surely be one of the most readable publications on archives administration that has come out of the United States. The essays are everywhere illuminated by Posner's intelligent grasp of archival practice in both the New World and the Old. His sense of humour shows through time and time again. The title given to the *Festschrift*, is to some extent misleading. Posner is not merely writing a commentary on the use of archival resources to protect the inalienable right of the citizen to have access to documents which protect his civil liberties. He writes on basic philosophical principles ("Some aspects of archival development since the French Revolution", and "Max Lehmann and the principle of provenance"); he writes on the training of archivists, both in Europe and in the United States; he interprets for his American colleagues the experiences and methods of archivists in Italy, Germany and elsewhere in Europe; he gives a solid and intensely relevant appraisal of American archival practices and precepts; and he has both the wisdom and the scholarship to look at the archival profession and discuss its contribution to the world of learning generally.

Most of the articles here republished appeared for the first time ten or even twenty years ago. The Editor's decision to use such articles is a wise one. Most of us have runs of the principal archives journals going back to the mid 1950s or earlier. A Bibliography of Posner's writings shows that he has continued to prepare articles for publication right up to the present day, but to gain access to these will not be difficult for the dedicated Posnerophile. The older writings, on the other hand, were harder to find, and at least one was not previously available in English translation. The essays then were for the most part published between 1940 and 1955, only two having been first published within the last decade. In addition, Posner has written a *Postscript* under the title "Archivists and international awareness".

From the point of view of the Australian reader, Posner's ability to look upon the American archival scene with the eyes of a European, and upon the European archival scene with the eyes of an American, is fortuitous indeed. To date, almost all the substantial works we have been able to read have been written about the archives profession in particular countries by citizens of the country in question. Thus Jenkinson's work, illuminating though it is, is a commentary on Public Record Office practice by a Public Record Office man. Muller Feith and Fruin scarcely claim to observe Dutch or other European practices with the eyes of outsiders. Schellenberg helps a little, by observing German, French and British archives as a visiting American, but he was very much a visitor. Posner, on the other hand, is a citizen of two worlds. His stature as a great American archivist is in no sense lessened by his European background; on the contrary, it is heightened and enriched. Though he had little reason, indeed, to be grateful to Hitler's Third Reich, he can comment on German archival practices with affection and tolerance.

This is a fine volume, and constitutes a very worthy tribute to a great man.

R. C. SHARMAN.

LIBRARY ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA ARCHIVES SECTION

Annual Meeting held in Room 81, Main Building,
University of Queensland,
Tuesday, 22nd August, 1967.

MINUTES

Present

The President (Miss S. Mourot) in the Chair; Miss E. Edwards, Miss J. D. Hine, Miss S. Humphries, Miss M. L. McCall, Miss M. Medcalf, Miss M. O'Keeffe, Miss J. Robinson; Mr L. Cleland, Mr R. Doust, Mr K. Green, Mr A. Horton, Dr E. F. Kunz, Mr J. H. Love, Mr G. D. Richardson, Mr R. C. Sharman, Mr D. B. Street and Mr A. Wilkes.

Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Miss M. Lukis, Mr G. Fischer and Miss T. Exley.

Minutes

The Minutes of the previous Annual Meeting which had been published in *Archives and Manuscripts* Vol. 3, No. 3 (November 1966) were taken as read.

It was resolved that they be certified as correct.