

A SHORT HISTORY OF LABOUR CONDITIONS UNDER INDUSTRIAL CAPITALISM. Volume I. 'Great Britain and the Empire, 1750, to the Present Day.' By Jurgen Kuczynski. (Muller; 12s. 6d.)

There can be few more terrifying spectacles than a statistician with an axe to grind. Mr. Kuczynski flourishes his axe, shakes it threateningly, and grinds it steadily. His thesis is that 'an improvement in the standard of living of the working class will not be possible within the capitalist system.' As this is in obvious contradiction to experience, it is fascinating to watch Mr. Kuczynski manipulate his figures to their inevitable conclusion. His method, in his own words, is 'wherever we are able to point to improvements we are at the same time, unfortunately, obliged to point to deteriorations which over-compensate the improvements in the condition of the working class during the last fifty or a hundred years.' So, if money wages go up, an elaborate calculation is needed to show that real wages have not improved. But if, in spite of this, real wages still improve, then a further calculation is needed to show that 'relative wages' (which are not wages at all) have deteriorated. All other questions, health, death-rate, cost-of-living, and so on, are similarly maltreated.

This is most distressing, as Mr. Kuczynski is a competent statistician and assembles many useful tables relating to Great Britain, the Dominions and India. But as a propagandist he is a failure; indeed his bias betrays him into being unscientific and selective. When dealing with the distressed areas he can refer the reader to nothing more scientific and comprehensive than Ellen Wilkinson's book on Jarrow and a Communist Party production by Wal Hanington. Moreover, in the index of proper names one finds that the authority most often cited is Engels.

This book should stand as an awful warning of what the specialist will do when he must fit his facts to his hypothesis; it shows, too, that Marxism is the opium of the specialist. Without the author's glosses and manipulations it would have been a serious indictment of the capitalist system; as it is, it does a dis-service to the cause which he seeks to serve.

JOHN FITZSIMONS.

MY CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP. By Lucis Amator. (Burns Oates; 1s.)

This little book is sure of a warm welcome from many Catholics. As a handbook for study-circles it shows certain deficiencies such as lack of order, inaccuracies of thought or expression.

R.H.