

BARRON'S

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BARRON'S ON BOOKS

Just Minding the Store— It Won't Keep U.S. Free

The Glorious Quest: Reflections on American Political Philosophy, by James R. Evans. Chas. Hallberg & Co., Chicago, 127 pages, \$4.95.

NOT long ago in these pages, I was moved to deliver myself of certain opinions concerning the serious default of businessmen in things public. I made the point, or rather re-phrased the point made by Tocqueville in 1831, that America runs the risk of losing her liberty if too many American businessmen do no more than mind the store. All-consuming though a businessman may think his business is, it should never become his principal concern. The chief concern of businessmen must be to maintain free institutions that allow business to flourish.

But, says almost every businessman I talk to, there is no time. "I read all day and night — you've got no idea how much there is to read just to keep up with the

business. I don't have time to study politics or military history or governmental finance. . . ." (Translation: I prefer to maximize my profit in the short run, and hope that the liberty my ancestors fought for will be passed on to my grandchildren with no further effort on my part.)

Five Minutes a Day

I know how lively the temptation is to stick to straight business. And up to now I have thought that not very much can be done if you only have five minutes out of the day. That is why this little book, *The Glorious Quest*, excites me. If you have five minutes a day, you can get through it in two weeks, and you will have gained an enormous insight into political thought, which revolves, fundamentally, around the question: what makes liberty tick?

James Evans, author of this book, is an engineer and businessman in Chicago. A

few years ago he was struck by the kind of thing I've been trying to describe. He began looking into political questions; did some reading and thinking; and came up with this little essay — the only one, to my knowledge, written by a businessman and expressly for businessmen. And in good, hard down-to-earth language.

Mr. Evans had noticed how difficult it is to unravel the elegant sophisms of professional demagogues. He set for himself the task of designing some simple tools that a businessman, say, might use to evaluate the political ideas that come his way. Mr. Evans gives a sketch of the basic ideas that have actually formed American civilization. They are what I might call the Mosaic Law of America. After showing their development historically, he turns them into the form of a question. He comes up with seven questions, and it is these that you should ask yourself every time you come across a political idea that needs weighing. Try 'em on for size:

- 1) Will this idea promote individual freedom?
- 2) Does this idea assume that all men are perfect?
- 3) Does this idea increase

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the power of some people over others?

4) Does this idea assume that the source of wealth is the government?

5) Would this idea authorize the seizure and distribution of private property?

6) Does this idea encourage individual responsibility and morality?

7) Does this idea propose an action, which, if performed by an individual, would be considered a crime?

It is tempting to give examples of political ideas that run aground on one or another of these rocky tests, but I'll refrain in order to let you have all the fun. Why not clip out that list of questions, put it in your pocket, and refer to it when you study tomorrow's newspaper, or listen to next week's politicians on television?

Point of Beginning

Mr. Evans closes his book with a typically unassuming passage: "Such (crusading) is not the purpose of this volume. Nor is its purpose to change anyone's mind. Rather it is a restatement of ideas, a consideration of values, a suggestion of the application of principled measurement to be applied to the relationship between Man and Government. It is intended only as a point of beginning, and if it has set the reader to further thought, it has served its purpose. No historian of the future will ever be able to prove that the ideals of individual liberty practiced in the United States of America were a failure. He may be able to prove that we were not worthy of them."

One very useful portion of *The Glorious Quest* is the bibliography at the end. It lists some 150 books on the general subject of the relation between citizen and government. It reminds me that Henry Hazlitt's *The Free Men's Library*, issued in 1956 and containing short reviews of about 500 prime sources of libertarian thought, needs to be updated.

Meanwhile, the Evans book deserves to be a best-seller. Tell your friends! Spread the good news!

—WILLIAM F. RICKENBACKER

"THE GLORIOUS QUEST"

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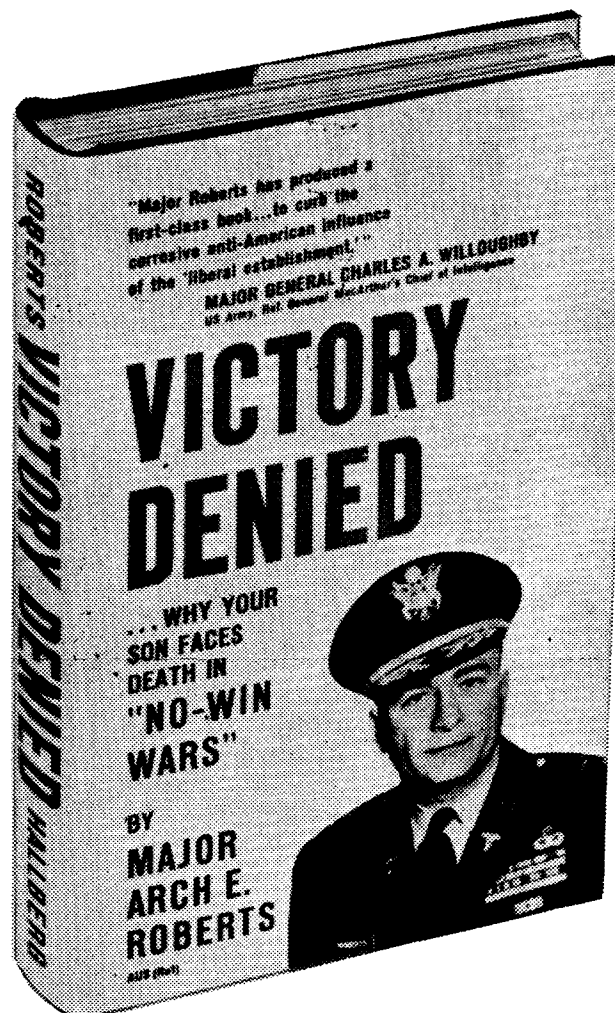
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