

David Solomons and Stephen A. Zeff, Eds., *Accounting Research, 1948-1958, Volume 1, Selected Articles on Accounting History* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1996, 288 pp., \$58).

David Solomons and Stephen A. Zeff, Eds., *Accounting Research, 1948-1958, Volume II, Selected Articles on Accounting Theory* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1996, 288 pp., \$55).

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This two-volume set, reprinted from the British journal *Accounting Research*, includes all articles identified by the editors as Accounting History and a broad sampling of articles on Accounting Theory. *Accounting Research* was a pioneering outlet for British academics from 1948 until 1958. The brain-child of F. Sewell Bray, this journal offered a unique and early attempt to develop a theory of accounting. F. Sewell Bray, a practicing accountant with strong disciplinary leanings towards economics, was the only holder of the Stamp-Martin Chair of Accounting at Incorporated Accountants' Hall. This is noteworthy in that it is "probably the only occasion of a Chair being established outside a university, certainly in the field of accounting" [p. xv].

The selection of articles, for the most part, are readable and enticing. Although it is difficult to critique the editors' selections, curiosity compels me to regret the exclusion of F. Sewell Bray's 1948 discussion of "The Nature of Income and Capital" and George O. May's "Accounting Research." With only eighteen per cent of the articles and communications in the journal included in these two volumes, another collection could certainly be assembled from the omitted works, perhaps on Government Accounting, Social Accounting, the relationship between Accounting and Economics or possibly even on Accounting Curiosities.

The editors' Introduction, which is included in each volume, places the journal *Accounting Research* in its historical perspective as the forerunner of British academic writing in accounting. Further, the conflict in the United Kingdom between chartered and incorporated accountants and its influence on the development of accounting theory in Britain is described.

Volume I on Accounting History include articles by Mary E. Murphy, Cosmo Gordon, R. R. Coomber, Louis Goldfield and B. S. Yamey, among others. Several articles discuss various early

English texts on bookkeeping while others consider the Roman, British and American influences on bookkeeping. Other articles look at the accounts of such diverse entities as an eighteenth-century slaver, a French émigré officer in the late 1700s, a seventeenth-century fishery company, an eighteenth-century clothier, an 1867 railway auditing report and a nineteenth-century public utility as well as the Swedish government in 1623. Each article reflects the author's sincere fascination with the insights into the practical development of accounting such historical evidence gives us.

Volume II on Accounting Theory includes articles by R. J. Chambers, Carl Thomas Devine, E. L. Kohler, A. A. Fitzgerald, G. D. de Swardt, J. Kitchen, and George Staubus. This well-balanced selection considers the fundamental principles of both financial accounting and cost accounting, including such topics as foreign branch office accounts, replacement cost depreciation, the classification of assets, and loss recognition. Particularly noteworthy and interesting is Richard Mattessich's "Towards a General and Axiomatic Foundation of Accountancy," a mathematical treatise, which the editors describe as an "accounting peculiar" [p. xiii], and three historically significant articles on the theory of cost and costing terminology.

Although I found myself fascinated by the substance of the works presented in both volumes, I was particularly enthralled by the dramatic and literate use of the English language. Even topics with which I am unfamiliar kept my attention and pressed me to become involved in the material. It is regrettable that academic accountants in general appear to no longer value this type of well-constructed argument. The journal *Accounting Research* was clearly a product of a *desire* to write. The pleasure these authors took in putting forth their arguments and in promoting the growth and utility of the accounting discipline is obvious. These volumes clearly show that in the pursuit of publishing for academic tenure that which has *perished* is the pleasure in and the passion for writing.