

# New Mexico Historical Review

---

Volume 28 | Number 4

Article 5

---

10-1-1953

## Book Reviews

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nmhr>

---

### Recommended Citation

. "Book Reviews." *New Mexico Historical Review* 28, 4 (1953). <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nmhr/vol28/iss4/5>

This Review is brought to you for free and open access by UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in *New Mexico Historical Review* by an authorized editor of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact [amywinter@unm.edu](mailto:amywinter@unm.edu), [lsloane@salud.unm.edu](mailto:lsloane@salud.unm.edu), [sarahrk@unm.edu](mailto:sarahrk@unm.edu).

## Book Reviews

*The Mexican Venture: From Political to Industrial Revolution in Mexico.* By Tomme Clark Call. New York: Oxford University Press, 1953. Pp. xii, 273. \$4.50.

Mr. Call obviously enjoyed his year's leave of absence from his post as Associate Editor of the *San Antonio* (Texas) *Express* and *Evening News* while he studied and travelled some 12,000 miles through the Mexican scene on a Reid Foundation fellowship. The product of his year's activity is this volume. Its style is free-flowing and, at times, almost impressionistic as the author describes the kaleidoscope that is Mexico.

The reader, however, soon becomes aware that Mr. Call has not produced another travelogue. He is fundamentally concerned with the astonishing new social and industrial developments of our southern neighbor. He devotes whole chapters to detailing economic and social, commercial and agricultural changes of the past decade. A population growth of approximately double the rate of that of the United States causes him to endorse apparently the idea that Mexico must prepare to enjoy—or suffer from—a population that may be expected to reach fifty to sixty millions of people by the end of the twentieth century. To meet such rapidly expanding needs he agrees that government stimulation and control of industry is inevitable in view of what has already been done and of existing conditions. His conclusion is: "The eggs cannot be unscrambled at this late date, but certainly the omelet can be improved" (p. 132).

Petroleum production is one of the interesting factors in the present situation. After nationalization of the industry production fell to 33 million barrels, its lowest point, in 1932. It rose to 59 million barrels in 1948, and to approximately 80 million barrels in 1951. Even more striking is the fact that gasoline consumption in Mexico itself rose 285% from 1937 to 1950 (pp. 63-64). In other words, the quantity sold abroad actually declined while the rapidly rising production was being used for the welfare and development of the nation itself. The condition of government finances is set forth

(pp. 124-131), and the new program for the encouragement of foreign investments is explained with some care (pp. 219-226). Yet, in spite of his interest in industrialization the author realizes that the people of Mexico are fundamentally a rural folk. He points out that much real progress will have to be made in the realm of agriculture (with its background of village ownership of land through the *ejidal* system) if a rounded economy is to be established.

The author is keenly aware of the contradictions with which he is dealing. In spite of a mixed heritage, ineffective communications and tragic misgovernment for many years, he has an abiding confidence in the continued progress and development of the people concerned. For instance, serious inflation (pp. 112-114) and tragically low teachers' salaries have not blocked an astonishing school construction program (pp. 146-148). Labor unions have become a definite part of the national life and have settled down from an experimental period to a fairly steady program on behalf of the nation's workers. These and other experiments and activities he feels have resulted in a practicing democracy that enjoys a reasonable freedom of expression for the press and of elections in which popular wishes may be expressed in spite of a one-party control of affairs (chapter 11).

As a professional historian the reviewer must record that this volume is not history (the sections on history and the formation of foreign policy are so brief and the statements made are so sweeping that a number of them will cause the historian qualms)—but it is the stuff with which historians work. The reviewer's own jottings while reading Mr. Call's book include the following: Well written; Sweeping historical statements and guesses which are shrewd and usually correct; The author loves Mexico and genuinely appreciates its people and problems; Has worked hard on his statistics and uses them effectively; Has visited much of the country and skillfully interprets what he has seen. In brief, ~~this is a first class interpretation of Mexico for the period 1940-1950.~~ The general reader will enjoy it and the student should use it.

University of South Carolina

W. H. CALLCOTT