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The Rise Of The Accounting Profession To Responsibility And Authority, 1937-1969, Volume li.

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BOOK REVIEW

THE RISE OF THE ACCOUNTING PROFESSION TO RESPONSIBILITY AND AUTHORITY, 1937-1969, Volume II.

By John L. Carey. New York: American Institute of Certified Public Accountants. 1970. Pp. XVI, 504. \$10.00.

In Volume I¹ of *The Rise of the Accounting Profession* Mr. Carey describes the background and origin of the accounting profession and relates its early growth and approach to maturity. Volume II deals with the "growing pains" of a maturing profession during the years 1937 to 1969. Mr. Carey looks at the growth and problems of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants rather than the profession as a whole; this is a natural emphasis for two reasons. First, Mr. Carey was an administrative officer of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants during this period and consequently was intimately associated with the events about which he writes. He retired from his post of Administrative Vice President in May, 1969. Second, the Institute has been the central organizing influence within the profession. Consequently a narrative of the Institute's growth and problems is a fair representation of those of the accounting profession.

Volume II consists of eighteen chapters, each of which deals with a different problem which the Institute has faced. The events of the period are not presented in chronological order, but instead are classified according to particular areas. Each chapter chronicles all that happened during the period in relation to the particular problem; rather than treating the events of the period in "journal" fashion, Mr. Carey has used the "ledger" format. Hence, the Volume is a history of the major problems of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants from 1937 to 1969. As he admits in the preface, however, not all problems of the Institute are included; only those which he deems most important. Some of the major events, or areas, which he discusses are improved financial reporting; uniformity of accounting principles; the authority of the Accounting Principles Board; auditing problems such as the *McKesson & Robbins* case; and ethics and independence. He also examines problems relating to tax practice and the Institute's relations with the legal profession.

Mr. Carey treats both the problems and the individuals involved with them with a kindly air and soft touch. Seldom is he disposed to unfavorable criticism of any individual or group. For example, in his

¹Volume I was reviewed in 27 WASH. & LEE L. REV. 191 (1970).

discussion of the struggle of the Institute with the legal profession over the right of certified public accountants to give tax advice and to practice before tax authorities he carefully avoids outright condemnation of the legal profession or any individual lawyer even though his description of events would seem to warrant such.

The reader gets the impression that throughout this volume Mr. Carey is trying to establish that accountants have achieved a professional status which is equivalent to that enjoyed by the legal and medical professions. Certainly the progress of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants has aided accountants in approaching this goal. Unresolved problems remain, however. Two particularly important problems, the lack of uniformity in financial reporting and the level and significance of formal accounting education, must be resolved before accountants can enjoy such professional status. Because of Mr. Carey's lack of critical analysis the reader may not be aware of these unresolved problems.

Mr. Carey's prime objective is to make the book readable rather than a reference work. He has accomplished this purpose very well. The volume is easy to read, coherent, and above all easily comprehended. It is a significant contribution because such works are needed to help the public understand and appreciate the profession about which so little is generally known or understood.

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