

COMMUNICATIONS

To the Editor of the HISPANIC AMERICAN HISTORICAL REVIEW :

Sir :

Any one who presumes to write in the field of contemporary history must be prepared to encounter controversy and sharp criticism. His researches, however extended, can not be so profound as to exhaust materials that ultimately may see the light of day. And interpretations, however judiciously framed, can not be expected to command the agreement of men as well informed whose assumptions, social philosophy, and manners may be different.

When I was invited by a committee of publicists and scholars to make an investigation of our economic relations with Cuba, I discussed the possibilities with an eminent eastern historian. "They want me to bring back the facts", I commented. "But I know the views of many of these men. They expect that I will find something discreditable in our policy. Suppose I do not. That would be embarrassing." "But suppose you do," retorted my adviser.

Prepared to be embarrassed, whatever came of it, I dug into the facts, selected those which seemed to hang together in a significant and relevant sequence, and found that they supported serious reflections upon some phases of our policy, that they compelled recognition of the inevitability of other phases, and that they wholly contradicted some views to which members of my committee had given previous utterance in public. I wrote up my material in what seemed appropriate form, presented my manuscript, and was requested only to reduce its length. The resulting manuscript was published, with negligible editorial changes, as *Our Cuban Colony. A Study in Sugar*. As such it has called forth a review in your columns signed by Professor Charles E. Chapman, which I would not feel called upon to notice were it not that it contains expressions which can be construed as an attack upon my intellectual integrity. Professor Chapman's notions that "an indictment of the United States and Americans generally" is an outstanding characteristic of the book, that I am biased, prejudiced, a rhetorician, given to innuendo, unfamiliar with Spanish and a Democrat, I may safely leave to those of your

readers who may be sufficiently interested to refer to my book. But the suggestion that I have not set forth in this work to the best of my ability those things which I believe to be true and have sought adequately to verify, I must repudiate as wholly false, unwarranted, and malicious.

I am obliged to Professor Chapman, however, for pointing out sundry typographical errors, and for the zeal with which he has sought, but not found, my errors of fact. The one specific factual error which he alleges becomes such only by a misquotation upon his part which wholly distorts the meaning of my original sentence. I can not suppose Professor Chapman to be so naïve as to be seriously distressed at the lack of patriotism involved in speaking of the blood-thirstiness of our antebellum Congress. And I can suppose only that the excitement of the 1928 campaign prompted his curious idea that I had written a Democratic campaign tract, and enabled him to overlook my sundry encomiums of Wood, Root, Roosevelt, and even, in part, of Crowder, or my "bitter" comments upon A. Mitchell Palmer and other sterling Democrats. Reviewers have accused me in the course of uniformly cordial criticisms of being everything from a radical to a new and dangerously subtle tool of Wall Street. But I really, really, do not deserve to be called a Democrat. I am only one of the happily increasing number of Americans who feel that political criticism, like charity, properly begins at home.

LELAND H. JENKS.

Rollins College.

To the Editor of the *HISPANIC AMERICAN HISTORICAL REVIEW* :

Sir :

I have just read Mr. Jenks's comment on my review of his book, *Our Cuban Colony*. His communication has the ring of an honest emotion, such as a worth-while young man might feel over criticism of his first work on an important subject. The present writer recalls a similar heart-burning over his own first book, and may assure Mr. Jenks that he, too, will probably become a little more "case-hardened" in future.

To come to the point. To say that I was "malicious" in condemning certain phases of his book is ridiculous, as I did not know the slightest thing about Mr. Jenks beyond what appears in his volume.

To me he was purely and simply "Mr. X". I wrote my review on the same basis that Mr. Jenks claims for his book, "setting forth to the best of my ability those things which I believed to be true". Furthermore, I still believe them to be true, and perhaps it is well for the peace of mind of Mr. Jenks that he did not see certain letters I received in which the characterizations of his work were somewhat more harsh than those I made.

And yet if he will re-read my review in a calmer frame of mind, he will find that there is some praise. Diligence, thoughtfulness, and a high degree of ability the book undoubtedly does show. And I do not in the least mean to imply any inherent dishonesty in Mr. Jenks. Young men in their first great "investigation" of their country's activities are prone to discover and to weep over evils; to give Jenks credit, however, he did not weep. His work shows promise of fine scholarship, and it is no great crime to be young.

Just one more word. I did not specifically "accuse" Mr. Jenks of being a Democrat, though his probable sympathies in that direction were pointed out as rather apparent. My own political record in presidential elections is at present two out of every three votes for the Democratic candidates. And I even thought of voting for Al Smith, until I heard him over the radio. I do not care whether Jenks is "a sterling Democrat", a Republican, or an Anarchist, but as a reviewer I feel that I am within my province in denouncing what appeared to me to be a too evident manifestation of party prejudice, at the risk of distortion of subject-matter.

CHARLES E. CHAPMAN.

University of California at Berkeley.

To the Editor of the HISPANIC AMERICAN HISTORICAL REVIEW :

Sir :

Since Professor Chapman repudiates any intention to imply insincerity on my part, I beg to assure him that the adjective "malicious" was expressly limited to such sentences in his review as seemed to suggest that he meant to do so.

LELAND H. JENKS.

Rollins College.