

Benjamin, Curtis G. *A Candid Critique of Book Publishings*. New York: Bowker, 1977. 187p. \$15.00. LC 77-21286. ISBN 0-8352-1033-2.

A longtime spokesman for the publishing industry, Curtis G. Benjamin is former president of McGraw-Hill, member of many trade and government committees, and twice chairman of the Book Industry Joint Committee on Copyright. Still active in retirement, he serves as consultant to the Association of American Publishers on Education for Publishing and he is still speaking for and to the industry to which he has devoted a lifetime of energy.

A Candid Critique of Book Publishing contains the ideas and opinions that he has voiced over the years, now brought together, updated, and shaped into a cohesive statement of concern for the many aspects of publishing that seem to need either clarification or improvement. In clear, colorful, and vigorous prose, Benjamin points out the weaknesses of the industry while affirming his devotion to it and his conviction that those who publish books will continue to perform an important intellectual and commercial function in our society.

Composed of twenty short chapters, *A Candid Critique* begins, logically, with a definition of book publishing and goes on to a discussion of its "siren attractions" with Benjamin's sharp condemnation for the industry's willingness to use a perennial oversupply of job seekers as an excuse for a low pay scale and a tolerance of the inefficiency created by high personnel turnover. Each chapter concerns a specific topic, and, while one subject may not necessarily lead directly into the next, there is an overall pattern that generally satisfies the reader.

The chapters on author-publisher relationships follow naturally the discussion of publishing as a profession. Those chapters that deal with the economics of publishing, such as marketing, product promotion, underpricing, overprinting, and mergers, are grouped together as are those concerned with foreign markets, multinational publishing, and publishing in needy countries. The problem of copyright as the "key to survival" is included, of course, as an important issue still unresolved in many ways.

Each topic is handled succinctly and di-

rectly, for Benjamin has the ability to impart a lot of background information in a few words as he selects what is essential to highlight the points he wants to make. The language is clear. The author's approach is direct, sometimes conversational. His quotations are appropriate.

Librarians will see themselves here through a publisher's eyes. On the one hand, they are praised as in their activities to promote reading and books by National Library Week, while publishers' neglect of such product promotion is "something that should long ago have the attention of an industrial psychiatrist." On the other hand, on the issue of copyright, librarians are chastised for "their overriding concern for their own convenience and for the facility of service to their patrons." More important, though, than any emotional reaction to praise or rebuke after reading this book will be librarians' enlarged perspective of the book publishing industry.

To be sure, some issues are oversimplified, but an annotated bibliography is provided for those who would read more deeply about particular topics. Also, this reviewer would have enjoyed a few more pages on some subjects omitted, such as the decline in the quality of books produced, publishers' relationships with jobbers, the future of mixed-media formats, etc., for Benjamin's opinions are always interesting and his experience in publishing is a rich source to explore. Ostensibly written for book publishers, *A Candid Critique of Book Publishing* should have a much wider readership.—Mary E. Thatcher, University of Connecticut, Storrs.

Foskett, A. C. *The Subject Approach to Information*. 3d ed. London: Clive Bingley; Hamden, Conn.: Linnet Books, 1977. 476p. \$12. ISBN 0-85157-238-3 Bingley; 0-208-01546-9 Linnet.

"Perhaps librarians could solve some of the problems of recall and relevance by encouraging some kind of literary contraception" (p.19). If the reader believes Foskett's figure of speech extreme, compare the out-raging "All language is fascist" of Roland Barthes or George Steiner's "Often a language will filter out from the field of recog-