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POLITICAL SCIENCE

The Robin Hood Lies: The Socialist Takes From the Rich and Gives to the Poor, Until Everyone is Equally Poor
Frank Merlo
Author House
978-1-4772-6260-3
Two Stars (out of Five)

Robin Hood's concept of taking from the rich to give to the poor sounds good—unless you happen to be rich. Frank Merlo's *The Robin Hood Lies* asks, "What happens when there are no more rich to take from?" Using fifteen brief biographies of his friends and acquaintances, Merlo tries to demonstrate what he believes to be the folly of socialism. Unfortunately, his loosely edited text and rambling narrative don't work to establish his thesis.

The majority of the biographies are about people who did well in business, with a heavy concentration of individuals who built their wealth in real estate. The content doesn't have the objectivity of typical case studies; instead, it reads more like the boasting of a proud family man or a chatty, name-dropping grandmother. The first hero of the book is Merlo's father-in-law, who seems to have introduced the author to real-estate investing.

Merlo's prose is labored and disorganized. Just when it looks like he is going to develop a point or support his thesis, he conjures up a memory and never loops back to complete his original line of reasoning. For example, he tries to highlight media bias by looking at news coverage of antiwar activist Cindy Sheehan during the Bush and Obama administrations. But instead of developing his point with careful analysis or examples, he resorts to name-calling, insisting that "peace-nic [*sic*] liberals" should agree with him. In the wake of this unsupported conclusion, he promptly switches to a story of his college days in the 1970s, a topic that doesn't appear to have any link to media bias.

The author fails to provide readers with a clean, well-edited text. He uses quotation marks and italics inconsistently and makes frequent grammatical errors. The book is also plagued with misspellings; for example, Cindy Sheehan's surname is spelled "Sheenan" in the book. He incorrectly attributes a famous Groucho Marx quote to W.C. Fields. And the book is filled with worn language, such as "gag a maggot." The author's principal punctuation tool is the exclamation point, which he uses liberally—two or more on nearly every page of the book.

Impressed with his own ideas, Merlo reprints a letter he sent to a newspaper but that was never published; and in his summation, he quotes himself, setting off his own words in italics.

The Robin Hood Lies serves as an example of the perils of vanity publishing. The book suffers from sloppy or nonexistent editing. Merlo's language is tortured, and his arguments are poorly constructed. There is more to publishing than printing ink on paper, and *The Robin Hood Lies* proves it.

Thomas Kachadurian