

Four recommendations for your reading list

It is fashionable among writers to speak highly of others whose works they admire. Though I am no slave to fashion, summertime is a long occasion for the reading of good books. So, in this column, I briefly commend four books to every Hoosier's summer list.



ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

Mike Hicks

Joel Kotkin's "The Next Hundred Million" is quite possibly the best written, most easily digested scholarly analysis of America's future written in decades. Kotkin is a serious researcher who is able to see the forest for the trees on the population growth, demographic change and urbanization of America. He traces how and where the

next hundred million Americans will populate the country, what it means to cities and small towns, and how it will make America different from the rest of the world in two generations. Kotkin is the kind of writer we other scribblers detest because of the apparent ease with which he lays out complex ideas with grace and elegance. As a teaser, the news is good for the Midwest. This is a must-read.

"The Ascent of Money," by Scottish-born Harvard professor Niall Ferguson, is billed as a financial history of the world. It is so much better than the title suggests (though it is a play on the 1970s PBS series "The Ascent of Man"). This book looks daunting, but is not. In six chapters, Ferguson traces the development of money, banking, lending, bonds, real estate and the ideas that propelled and sank each investment tool. This slyly

written book reads more like a Sherlock Holmes thriller with a sprinkling of humor than the work of an economic historian.

David Bego's "The Devil at My Doorstep" chronicles two things of great interest to Hoosiers. The first is the experience of an Indiana boy whose entrepreneurial talents took him from a starting factory job to the head of a company with employees in 30-plus states. As a no-nonsense story of leadership, family enterprise and the hard lessons of commerce, this is a great textbook for aspiring entrepreneurs. This tale alone would get my highest recommendation, but the back story is of criminal-like shenanigans the Service Employee International Union foisted upon Bego and his employees. This is a must-read for both budding business leaders and those who support stronger unions and the social justice

movement. It is eye-opening, touching and gritty—good stuff for those Saturday afternoons without football.

"Caught in the Middle" by former journalist Richard Longworth will be familiar to many Hoosiers. Longworth is a frequent visitor to the state who lectures on the essence of his work, which is a canny and reflective narrative of what has happened to small and medium-size towns in the Midwest over the past generation. Though there is more than a little insight in each chapter, his thoughts on education and immigration are especially thoughtful.

These four books are important, and I don't think you can honestly claim to be educated about the matters of the day without having read each of them.

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