

# Book Reviews

By John F. Bauman and Thomas H. Coode. *In the Eye of the Great Depression: New Deal Reporters and the Agony of the American People.*

(DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1988. Pp.x, 230. \$25.00.)

In recent years, historians have mined the notes and reports of caseworkers in social service agencies for the rich data they provide on the lives of the women and men who were their clients. Scholars using these documents, however, find in them equally vivid information on the attitudes and biases that these social workers, most often white and middle-class, held *vis-a-vis* the individuals and families of different ethnic, racial and class backgrounds with whom they most frequently worked. John F. Bauman and Thomas H. Coode's *In the Eye of the Great Depression: New Deal Reporters and the Agony of the American People* uses similar reports for the material they contain both on the ways in which Americans lived during the Great Depression and on the attitudes of the observers. It is at once a survey of conditions during the Depression and a critique of the views that shaped New Deal social welfare policy.

Bauman and Coode's work is based on a remarkable set of documents generated in 1933 and 1934 for Harry Hopkins, head of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. Though the agency had at its disposal vast amounts of statistical data on the problems that the FERA was designed to address, Hopkins also sought, in the words of Bauman and Coode, "subjective, or 'soft', data illuminating the agony of unemployment and the feeling of hopelessness among millions of formerly productive and happy people" (p. 16). More immediately, Hopkins wanted a method of evaluating the Civil Works Administration, a temporary public works project, and the effectiveness of such a work program. He therefore dispatched sixteen writers and journalists to Depression-stricken areas around the nation, to report on the conditions they found and on the public's response to government-sponsored works and relief programs.

The resulting reports contain graphic descriptions of the conditions the writers encountered, but they relate as well comments of and conversations with a wide variety of members of each community the writers visited. Not surprisingly, local business leaders were critical of both relief programs and of the CWA, while the recipients themselves usually welcomed the former as a last resort, but called for more jobs for the unemployed. The reports also contain local relief officials' strong endorsement of public works projects. The documents thus provided Hopkins with evidence he could later draw on when proposing and promoting the New Deal's largest public works program, the Works Progress Administration.

The reports also contain, however, the reporters' own, frequently blunt, assessments of what they saw. Interspersed within Henry Francis's accounts of life in mining "patches" in Pennsylvania and West Virginia, for instance, are his own judgments of the situation. As Coode and Bauman point out, Francis's description of mining communities reek of his "hardly disguised contemptuousness" (p. 101). Similarly, in her accounts of squatter families in North Carolina, Lorena Hickok refers to one family as 'obviously

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very low grade mentally. Probably that man never would be able to make a living farming or any other way unless someone stood right over him and told him what to do.' (p. 162)

These documents thus address three different aspects of the Depression and the New Deal. First, they provide accounts of conditions that New Deal programs were to address. Second, they relay attitudes of different groups of Americans toward these programs. Finally, the reports illuminate the attitudes and concerns that would ultimately shape the United States's entire social welfare structure.

No evidence exists, according to Bauman and Coode, directly linking these documents to programs and legislation. Nonetheless, it is clear that Hopkins, a very influential New Dealer, read and circulated them among his colleagues. President Roosevelt himself received a copy of at least one of the reports. Bauman and Coode thus set out with the premise that the reports, full of prejudices and judgments as they were, became woven into the cloth that eventually constituted the Social Security Act of 1935, for instance, and the numerous agencies and programs it called into being. Even if the reports as such, were, "like the mass of other FERA correspondence" (p. 191), filed away after a quick reading by Hopkins, they still tell us a great deal about the women and men who were attracted to working for the New Deal. For, as Bauman and Coode tell us, the reporters Hopkins called on all boasted solid "pro-New Deal credentials" (p. 18).

*In the Eye of the Great Depression* highlights this aspect of the reports, readily pointing to the class-bound and ethnocentric perspectives of Hopkins's reporters. It suggests that these views had grave implications for the development of social welfare programs in the United States. Unfortunately, because they attempt to use the reports to discuss the conditions described as well as the individuals describing them, the authors only tantalize the reader with the possibility of a greater understanding of how New Dealers' assumptions shaped their programs.

Bauman and Coode also place the reports within the context of the quest among artists and intellectuals in the 1930s "to discover American culture" (p. 191). The reports can be read, argue Bauman and Coode, like James Agee and Walker Evans's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, or John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, as explorations into what constitutes "American culture." The culture that Lorena Hickok and her colleagues found was one in which "the strong, educated, mainly white middle class—that is, the elect—were predestined to triumph over the weak" (p. 192). Bauman and Coode argue that the views that shaped relief programs and public works projects were deeply disillusioned, and even cynical. It is no wonder then that the American welfare system, heir to New Deal policies and thinking, seems designed to keep recipients in conditions of indigence!

*In the Eye of the Great Depression* begins with a study of the reporters Hopkins selected for his special assignment, sketching out their backgrounds and the shared assumptions that would permeate their writings. The rest of the book is organized around the types of communities the reporters investigated: "City Streets and Slouching Men," "Beleaguered Households," "Of Mill Towns, Mine Patches and Stranded

"People," "Stricken Hamlets" (agricultural communities), "The South," "Trouble in America's Eden" (the West).

Bauman and Coode, both of whom teach at California University of Pennsylvania and have previously published on Pennsylvania during the Depression, include several examples from Pennsylvania towns in their work, especially in the chapter on mining communities. This book adds to our knowledge of Pennsylvania coal villages in the Depression, while placing them in the context of the desperation that gripped similar communities throughout the nation.

Indeed, one very valuable aspect of this study is its national scope. The cited excerpts on the social welfare system in Tucson, Arizona, for instance, illustrate the ways in which programs originating in Washington, in order to be effective, would have to become integrated into existing structures dominated by local conditions and prejudices. As a sometime resident of Tucson, however, I must add that I was dismayed by the repeated misspelling of that city's name.

*In The Eye of the Great Depression* contributes to a growing body of literature, including both scholarly works and published first-hand accounts, on the lives of Americans in the Great Depression. It forcefully adds as well to our understanding the inherent limitations of New Deal social welfare programs by illuminating the attitudes and assumptions that shaped them. Of equal importance, however, is the attention that this book draws to a body of documents that will no doubt provide a rich resource for many more students of the Depression and the New Deal.

Colette A. Hyman, *Gustavus Adolphus College*

**By Barbara Stern Brustein. *After the Holocaust: The Migration of Polish Jews and Christians to Pittsburgh.***

(Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989. Pp. 219. \$19.95.)

Brustein has written a thoroughly researched study of the migration of Polish Jews and Christians to Pittsburgh after the Holocaust under the provisions of the Displaced Persons Act of 1948. The author enriched her investigations with interviews of sixty survivors from each of the ethnic groups. The result is an informed study of the conflicts and experiences of two groups of Pittsburgh's Holocaust survivors.

Although the works of scholars such as Leonard Dinnerstein, Terence Des Pres and Sylvia Rothchild have dealt with the experiences of post-World War II refugees, few studies compare the experience of Jewish Holocaust survivors with those of non-Jews. Brustein has made an important contribution in that direction.

Although both groups were victims of the Nazis, Polish Christians and Jews were suspicious of one another. The legacy of Polish anti-Semitism was a barrier in reconciling both groups as revealed in the Brustein interviews. The Jewish survivors in Pittsburgh blamed the Poles for not coming to their aid during the Warsaw Ghetto uprising and in general for being indifferent to the plight of Jews as the Nazis commenced their plans for the Final Solution in Poland. After the war, many of the survivors recalled the pogrom in Kielce in July 1946 which left forty-two Jews murdered.

For the Jewish survivors of Pittsburgh, there was little in Poland after the war that could entice them to remain and little to discuss with Poles once they arrived in America.

For the Polish Catholic refugees, it was not the Nazis but the Soviet Union that was the cause for their emigration to the United States. For two-thirds of Pittsburgh's Polish Catholic refugees, the Soviet occupation of Poland and the subsequent communist takeover of the country was intolerable. One refugee told the author that the Soviets were worse than the Nazis; compare this to the Polish Jews who welcomed the Soviet Army as saviors. That many of Brustein's Christian subjects believed that Jews were part of the conspiracy that brought Communism to Poland helps us to understand the gulf that continues to separate both groups. Pittsburgh's Polish Catholics are vehemently anti-Communist and pray for the day when the mother country is liberated whereas the City's Jewish survivors are apathetic or even satisfied about the fate of post-War Poland because of the anti-Semitic attitudes that they experienced prior to coming to America. As Brustein summarized the attitudes of Pittsburgh Jews, "Indeed, this feeling of betrayal was the emotional legacy from Europe, the intensity of which has certainly not abated over time and distance" (p. 61).

If both groups came to Pittsburgh feeling hatred toward one another, they did share a common experience upon their arrival. Brustein points out the insensitivity of both Pittsburgh's Catholic and Jewish communities towards the refugees. The older and established Polish Catholic community was unsympathetic to the new arrivals and did a poor job in organizing local Catholic institutions to bring a larger number of Christian refugees to Pittsburgh. The Jewish community, although better organized and more successful in bringing many Jewish refugees to Pittsburgh, nevertheless appeared insensitive to the needs of the traumatized victims of the Holocaust. One Holocaust survivor recalled how shocked he was when a Pittsburgh rabbi announced that in his opinion, the Jews who survived were collaborators. Although Brustein writes about Pittsburgh's reception of refugees, the reality may be that Americans in general simply did not comprehend the enormity of the Holocaust nor its toll on the survivors.

This last point is both the strength and the weakness of Brustein's book. The author has made a significant contribution in helping us to understand the complex problems that were faced by those who survived the Nazis. But Brustein fails to suggest larger conclusions from her study. Were the groups' attitudes to one another and to their experiences upon arriving in the United States typical of other European refugees? Brustein is silent on this point and thus we will have to await additional studies of this kind in order to validate the general usefulness of Brustein's book.

Jack R. Fischel, *Millersville University of Pennsylvania*

**By Steven P. Erie. *Rainbow's End: Irish-Americans and the Dilemmas of Urban Machine Politics, 1840-1985.***

(Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988. Pp. xiii, 345. \$27.50.)

Despite the passing of the heyday of the big-city political machine and the changing nature of the urban electorate, the fabled Irish-American machine continues to

cast a long shadow. Steven P. Erie examines the Irish-American machine tradition in eight cities—New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, Boston, San Francisco, Pittsburgh, Jersey City, and Albany—and explores the varying nature of Irish political activity. Erie's comparative study of the machine experience in these cities indicates that more than one pattern has characterized the interaction between the Irish politicians and their constituencies. In addition, he suggests that the myths surrounding the Irish American political experience may mislead today's ethnic politicians as they attempt to carve out a more influential political niche in the nation's urban communities.

After a brief overview of his study, Erie concentrates on telling the story of the rise and decline of the Irish-American machine. In "Building the Nineteenth-Century Machines, 1840-1896," the Irish migration to America, the entrance of the Irish into the world of urban politics, and the relatively conservative nature of the first generation of big-city machines is examined. "Guardians of Power" explores the phoenix-like rise of the early twentieth century machines from the ashes of the depression of the 1890s. These "new" machines consolidated power, squelched revolts from below, and outlasted reform agitation from above. The Depression and the New Deal, the focus of "The Crisis of the Thirties," altered conditions and the Irish-American political machines both faced new opportunities and experienced new challenges. And finally, as the nation put World War II behind it, machines floundered as structural changes in the economy constricted machine resources and new constituencies threatened the very foundation of Irish political organization. In "The Last Hurrah? Machines in the Postwar Era, 1950-1985," Erie details the denouement of Irish political strategies as America moved toward the twenty-first century.

Erie concludes his examination of Irish-American political machines with a more theoretical discussion of the dynamics of machine politics. "Machine Building, Irish-American Style" focuses on the life cycle of the machine and the interrelationship between machine building and state political activity. The final chapter evaluates the ability of big-city machines to defuse working class political activity and assesses the relevance of the history of Irish-American political life for those groups currently aspiring to increase their power in the urban political sweepstakes.

Overall, *Rainbow's End* increases our understanding of machine politics over time. His comparative approach reveals the complexities of the Irish political tradition. The mere existence, for example, of a sizeable Irish-American population did not insure a nurturing ground for machine politics. Theories which lead to such a conclusion, according to Erie, fail to take into account the dynamics of local politics. A far better theory, Erie suggests, is an intergovernmental one that focuses on the importance of local ties with both state and national political leaders. In contrast to Massachusetts, the partiality of New York's Democratic governors for New York City's Tammany organization helped protect the machine during its formative years. Fractious local politics in Boston within the Irish community and the disinterest of state leaders hampered the creation of long-lived, powerful Irish political machines in Boston. In addition, Erie's study provides further confirmation that the formalization of welfare

state activities during the New Deal did not necessarily ring the death knell for old-time organizations. The New Deal changed both structure and players on the local level but it did not hasten the coming of the end. During the 1930s, bosses like Pittsburgh's David Lawrence were able to use federal programs to launch a new generation of Irish-led machines.

Like any study that attempts to paint a broad picture, *Rainbow's End* suffers weaknesses. For example, although Erie discusses the rise of Irish dominated political machines in the nineteenth century he does so without much attention to the problems of governance faced by urban leaders that made the machine attractive during this period. The desire on the part of the Irish to utilize politics as an avenue for advancement and standing in a community alone does not adequately explain the machine's emergence. Also, as Erie himself points out, his sample is drawn primarily from a very defined part of the country—the North. By disregarding cities like St. Louis and New Orleans and essentially ignoring San Francisco—despite the fact that it is one of his target communities—Erie loses the opportunity to explore the differences and similarities among urban machines in various regions of the United States. Furthermore, not only is his study closely tied to only one region, within that section of the country primary attention is directed toward New York and Chicago at the expense of the other cities, such as Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, that are included in his study.

These weaknesses notwithstanding, Erie's study of the tradition of Irish-American urban politics represents one of the most comprehensive studies on machine politics. Utilization of a number of case studies and a sensitivity to the differences in the dynamics of each target population allows him to demonstrate the complexity of the machine tradition and the dangers of predictive models that ignore context and diversity. All-in-all, *Rainbow's End* provides a handy and comprehensible review of the literature on the life cycle of urban machines. By exploring the varying historical contexts of machine activity, Erie's study also modifies the conventional wisdom which suggests that the machine experience offers a feasible option for minorities interested in transforming the nature of political representation in many American cities.

Patricia Mooney-Melvin, *Loyola University of Chicago*

Edited by W.W. Abbot, et al. *The Papers of George Washington. Colonial Series, Volume 5, October 1757–September 1758.*

(Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1988. Pp. xx, 500. \$37.50.)

Edited by W.W. Abbot, et al. *The Papers of George Washington. Colonial Series, Volume 6, September 1758–December 1760.*

(Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1988. Pp. xviii, 549. \$42.00.)

In the autumn of 1757 George Washington was the commander of the Virginia Regiment, a diminutive army locked in a difficult and not very successful struggle to secure Virginia's frontier and open the Ohio Country to America's land hungry farmers and speculators. Three years later Washington was a married gentleman, his military

adventures were a thing of the past, and he was immersed in the administration of a large tobacco producing estate on the Potomac, Mount Vernon. Obviously these years—the period covered in the most recent volumes of this relatively new edition of Washington's papers—were transitional and of considerable importance to young Washington.

This is the sixth major editorial project on Washington's papers. Jared Sparks produced a twelve-volume series in the first half of the nineteenth century, while Worthington C. Ford edited a more reliable fourteen-volume collection about fifty years later. Until recently the standard edition has been the thirty-nine volumes of Washington's papers completed in 1940 by John C. Fitzpatrick. In addition, two multi-volume editions of letters to Washington have appeared, one edited by the indefatigable Sparks in 1853, and a more recent series completed at the turn of the century by Stanislaw Hamilton. The work under review, however, will be the definitive edition of Washington's papers.

This edition prints both letters to and from Washington, something that none of the earlier series attempted. More important, these letters are accompanied by annotations and editorial comments, again an editorial device not utilized extensively, if at all, in the earlier works. This is also the first work to delineate the changes that Washington subsequently made in some of his earliest correspondence. Finally, the editors of this project have scoured the world for Washington materials, eventually discovering items in more than 400 repositories. While these two volumes contain nothing that will reshape our understanding of this complex man, they do include 21 letters written by Washington that did not appear in the Fitzpatrick edition, as well as ledger books, records of Washington's cash and tax accounts, and several inventories that have not previously been published.

The bulk of these two volumes span the final fourteen months of Washington's service with the Virginia Regiment. Although Virginia had been at war for more than three years by the fall of 1757, the military situation remained bleak. In the first letter published in Volume Five, in fact, Colonel Washington speaks of the horrible devastations wrought by the enemy, and he reports his fear that the Shenandoah Valley soon would be lost to Virginia. What is most fascinating in this volume is to watch young Washington, facing open criticism and under considerable political pressure because the adversary had not long-since been suppressed, coping with his difficulties.

Washington imposed a harsh discipline on his soldiers, labored to mold and shape his officers into effective leaders, fought over the proper strategy with his commander in chief, Governor Robert Dinwiddie, and worked surreptitiously with powerful members of the House of Burgesses to secure his ends. A year later, he had not only earned the undying enmity of the governor, but the military situation, by Washington's own admission, was even worse. "All is lost," he told the Speaker of the House in September, 1758. (5:432) Ninety days later Virginia captured Fort Duquesne, its principal objective from the outset.

Washington was not an attractive figure in these years. He was a callow young man given to a petulant, carping, whining manner. Dinwiddie eventually was compelled to

admonish his young commander for his frequent absences from headquarters and his unreasonable requests, and General John Forbes, the commander of the British army in the Pennsylvania theater in 1758, even questioned Washington's suitability to be an officer. While the higher ranking officers who served under Washington clearly admired their leader, there is little evidence that they liked him. Their correspondence with Washington, even after he had departed the Virginia Regiment, demonstrates their respect, but the familiarity and genuine affability that one might expect to see between quite young men who had lived and worked together for years is absent. The cool, aloof, unapproachable man whom we customarily associate with the Revolutionary and Presidential years is already much in evidence in the 1750s. Washington rarely saw others as his equal. The young men who had served under Washington accepted this in order to maintain their ties with this extraordinary young man, and even as private citizens they continued to write fawning letters praising him "the Darling of a grateful Country." (6:177)

Volume Six contains valuable information concerning the establishment and operation of a large eighteenth century plantation. Washington ordered books on agricultural practices and an enormous quantity of tools. He acquired files (67 were procured in one order), paint, axes, adzes, sickles, and padlocks. Also included are agreements for leasing portions of Mount Vernon to tenants, instructions to workers, and plans for the remodeling of the mansion. One can find inventories of slaves and artisans, as well as detailed enumerations of the possessions that Martha Custis brought to her marriage with Washington. The latter affords a window through which one can see the private life of a wealthy Virginia family. For instance, she possessed a library of over 300 volumes, nearly 40 chairs, 8 tables, numerous tools, and an enormous assortment of chests, mirrors, trunks, stools, beds, and baskets. Not satisfied, Washington purchased curtains, bedding, pewter and china, expensive clothing, luxurious foods, and candles in 50 pound allotments.

Scholars will discover much of interest in these two volumes, and they will be delighted with the careful editorial work of W. W. Abbot and his excellent staff.

John Ferling, *West Georgia College*

**Edited by Ian Dyck. *Citizen of the World: Essays on Thomas Paine.***

(New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988. Pp. viii, 152. \$29.95.)

Eric Foner, in *Tom Paine and Revolutionary America* (New York, 1976) wrote that "while several biographies of Paine now exist, they have not resolved the many perplexing questions about this remarkable man. Paine's ideas . . . have never been grasped in their full complexity, nor have they been successfully located within the social context of his age" (p. xii). With this in mind, readers might wish to avoid the

collection of essays presented in *Citizen of the World*. With few exceptions, the authors of this little book's essays really do not come close to answering Foner's challenge to himself and future chroniclers of Thomas Paine.

The book is organized into two sections. The first part is composed of the work of George Spater, the former Chief Executive Officer of American Airlines who died in 1984. The three chapters in this half of the book, along with the introduction, attempt to chronicle Thomas Paine's life anew. The first sentence of his first paragraph clearly represents the principal problem with Spater's work. "On 29 January 1737, Thomas Paine was born at Thetford . . . to Joseph and Frances Paine, a hard-working couple who lived in conditions of respectable poverty" (p. 17). Consider Foner's treatment of the same event: "Thomas Paine was born at Thetford in 1737 into a humble but by no means impoverished family" (Foner, p. 2). It should be apparent that Spater did not have a firm grasp on the social milieu in which Paine lived and developed. In the eyes of most eighteenth-century men and women, poverty could never be "respectable." Future scholars of Paine, who should realize that they will be working with limited and fragmentary sources, would do well to learn the social and economic climate of the eighteenth-century British transatlantic system in which Paine lived. They should also employ the ethnohistorian's techniques to ask questions of the evidence which Paine and his contemporaries would have asked.

Just as Spater did not grasp the context in which Paine lived his life, he also did not seem to realize that new historical works should place themselves firmly in the context of what has come before them. Simply reading and interpreting primary sources, while inherently more interesting to most scholars, is not a substitute for comparing and contrasting one's own interpretation with those of others. It thus came as a surprise to discover that Spater did not cite or refer to Foner's work anywhere in this section. As a result, while many of the quotations which Spater included are interesting, readers do not get any sense of either the world in which Paine wrote or how other scholars understood Paine (and thus how Spater's interpretation differs from previous work). Readers—especially those interested in Paine's Philadelphia world—would be well-advised to go directly to previously published sources.

The second, and less troublesome, section contains essays by J.F.C. Harrison, Ian Dyck, and Joel H. Weiner. These are brief pieces which cover the intellectual relationship between Paine and several aspects of late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century thought. They have a strongly European flavor and would probably not be of much interest to many scholars interested in Pennsylvania.

Harrison's brief essay examines the influence of Paine's views on his English radical contemporaries. Professor Harrison argues that "[p]olitical radicalism and religious millenarianism were not alternatives so much as different aspects of the same phenomenon" (p. 80). He finds *some* evidence that Paine's "revolutionary" vision of Europe had *some* connection to the millennial thought in *some* English circles. That being said, the linkages are never fully explored and seem tenuous. Though this essay does not

consider Paine's writings very thoroughly, it does put some of his thought into a larger intellectual context.

Ian Dyck's contribution relates Paine's radicalism to that of English radical William Cobbett. As Dyck argues, "Only Paine, of the major radical thinkers, would Cobbett identify as a positive contributor to the radical movement. . . ." (p. 87). This essay, unfortunately, is far too brief. Readers are given a quick glimpse into the English radical world during the early nineteenth century, and Paine's (as well as Cobbett's) intellectual contributions to and alienations from it, only to come away with more questions about the events of Paine's downfall. What Dyck does most successfully is establish part of the European intellectual climate in which Paine and his ideas alternately flourished and floundered.

The book's final essay, by Joel H. Weiner, is both its longest and its best. Weiner neatly puts Paine and his ideas into their early nineteenth-century English context. Radical journalist Richard Carlile published many of Paine's major theological and political works, unavailable since the 1790s, in the years between 1817 and 1826. Not only does Weiner effectively discuss the effects of this publication on English society, but he also addresses their treatment by other historians. Perhaps the most interesting part of Weiner's essay describes Carlile's almost obsessive behavior in his efforts to reinvigorate Paine's image. "So resolute was Carlile . . . that he named his third son 'Thomas Paine'. When the boy died in 1819, he gave the name to his next son. Carlile's house was furnished with a statue of Paine. . . ." (p. 111) Weiner's lucid (and primarily intellectual) treatment of Carlile and Paine covers enough material to convince the reader that his argument is sound—and grounded in the historical literature. Though his essay is worth reading, it is not enough to make this book either relevant or useful to Paine's Pennsylvania friends.

Alan L. Karras, *Georgetown University*

**By Craig Phelan. *William Green: Biography of a Labor Leader*.**

(Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989. Pp. x, 223. \$39.50.)

Although he led the American Federation of Labor through some of its most turbulent years, William Green remains one of the least understood—and least examined—figures in American labor history. Generally portrayed as an apologist for "narrow" craft unionists and blamed for the 1935 split in the AFL, Green has never been the subject of rigorous analysis. Indeed historians have based their assessment of Green on the most cursory research, ignoring his evolution as a trade unionist and failing to focus directly on his efforts to shape policy as president of the AFL. Craig Phelan attempts to fill in some of these gaps with his book *William Green: Biography of a Labor Leader*, and he investigates the social and political context of Green's leadership and provides insight into the "evangelical-labor tradition" that, Phelan argues, significantly informed Green's behavior.

Phelan reminds us that Green served his apprenticeship as a coal miner, local and national union leader, state legislator, and member of the AFL Executive Council, but he does not delve into these subjects or attempt to reconstruct the early years of Green's career. Instead he opens his book with a fascinating chapter that clearly delineates the intimate relation between Green's "Christian ideals" and his union politics. But if this focus is the most innovative aspect of the book it is also the most troublesome since Phelan asserts rather than proves his case that Green practiced a religiously inspired trade unionism that set him apart from his more narrow-minded counterparts. Rather, his own evidence suggests that the structure of the coal industry and Green's experience with small-scale operators significantly shaped his belief that organized labor and organized capital "could work together for mutual benefit" (p. 11). Green's vision of trade unionism had a long history in the coal industry even as early as the 1880s, and Green, religious or not, was hardly unique in his exposition of what Phelan labels his "accommodationist views." Although he makes it clear early on that these views "were not ethical abstractions divorced from economic reality" (p. 11). Phelan makes little effort to relate Green's actions as president of the AFL to his experience in the trade union movement. In fact it is his lack of interest in the history of trade unionism, and Green's role in it, that allows Phelan to invoke his "Christian" explanation when other, more tangible, explanations would suffice.

If Phelan makes a strong attempt to write a readable and interesting book in his first chapter, drawing on census data, local history, and family history to round out his picture of Green's early life and environment, subsequent chapters do not fulfil this early promise. More interested in developing a better explanation for Green's failure in 1935 than in questioning the very concept of failure itself, Phelan retells a familiar story based largely on secondary accounts. Indeed the voice of William Green is strangely silent throughout this book. The reader learns little about the day to day struggles encountered by the president of the AFL, little about his activities or relations with affiliated unions, little about his family life or personal relations. To be sure this kind of information is not always easy to come by and involves labor-intensive work in primary sources and the labor press. It seems likely however that the William Green Papers and records generated by the AFL, cited in the bibliography, could have provided better information and a more nuanced treatment than Phelan presents. Christopher Tomlins' careful work on the AFL, for example, makes it clear that organized labor's story is a far more complex one than is usually presented.

Because Phelan works within perimeters set by previously published works—regardless of the quality of research that informed those works—he has missed a chance to expand our knowledge of this labor leader who got his early training in an industrial union, who played an active role in politics, and who tried to extend unionism to all kinds of workers long before the federal government endorsed such action in the 1930s. No one will argue that William Green, like those who came before him, succeeded at this task. But as long as historians continue to ignore the wealth of primary resources

that are now readily available on microfilm, students will continue to base their opinions on books that tell only part of the story.

Grace Palladino, Samuel Gompers Papers Project, *University of Maryland*

**By Jo Anne E. Argersinger. *Toward a New Deal in Baltimore: People and Government in the Great Depression.***

(Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988. Pp. xiv, 284. \$29.95.)

Jo Anne E. Argersinger's impressively-researched local study is far more than just local history. It does recount in great detail the story of the Great Depression and the New Deal in one city—Baltimore. However, drawing on relevant studies of other urban areas and of the U.S. as a whole, the author puts her work into a national context, compares her findings to findings about other locales, and, at times, argues with the methods and conclusions of other writers. In essence, she sees her book as a part of a collective effort to develop a multidimensional, global understanding of the New Deal.

In fact, the book's main concern is of national magnitude: how much did New Deal policy, promulgated at the pinnacle of the federal government, really change things for the masses of the people? The answer is sought by examining the struggle—no other word will do—to implement the New Deal at the state and local levels of government. Indeed, Argersinger's underlying view is that one of the most important social conflicts of the depression took place between the various branches and levels of the U.S. state apparatus.

The book chronicles the struggles of New Deal figures and agencies such as Harry Hopkins and the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) with local forces like Baltimore Mayor Howard Jackson, the city council, the private city relief agencies, and the local business elite, over such issues as the distribution of public welfare; the Maryland state government frequently weighed in as a third combatant. The results of such disputes were often inconclusive. On the question of public welfare, for example, FERA held that relief would only be effectively and fairly distributed if a permanent department of public welfare was established in Baltimore. Mayor Jackson and the city government resisted, hoping to preserve the tattered tradition of voluntarism by channeling relief through a temporary, quasi-public committee run by business. After a two-year tug of war, a municipal welfare department was finally established, largely through the intervention of newly-elected Republican (!) governor, Harry Nice. But, with FERA disappearing soon after, the new municipal department fell under the same influences as its quasi-public predecessor (the latter even continued to have some relief responsibilities for a time) and was no more capable of meeting the welfare needs of the people. In this and other cases the New Deal was, at best, only partly institutionalized on the local level; at worst, it was sabotaged.

The discussion thus far makes it appear that this book is largely a work of institutional political history. This is only half of the story, though, for the author also

examines the dialectic between the various levels of government and the social movements that emerge in the Baltimore area: the social struggle in the governmental system is related to social struggle in civil society. In adding this dimension, the author blends the methods of institutional political history with those of the "new social history"—something social historians are quite rightly attempting more and more frequently these days.

The social movements investigated by the book include Baltimore's unemployed movement, its housing movement, and its labor movement; particular attention is paid to the social conditions that produced these movements. Not only is class oppression and culture explored, but also contradictions involving gender, ethnicity, and especially race; the social circumstances of African-Americans in Baltimore and their role as activists in these movements are emphasized. The book's discussion of the unemployed movement is especially valuable because it includes the best account available of the People's Unemployment League (PUL), one of the most remarkable organizations of its type in the US. This Baltimore-based, Socialist Party-initiated organization, founded in early 1933, expanded rapidly to an interracial membership of 18,000 in 33 locals throughout Maryland by 1934, and confronted a plethora of public officials in City Hall, Annapolis, and Washington, while organizing a wide range of self-help relief efforts along the way.

The book's account of the complex interactions between the government and the social movements is empirically rich and lucid; only occasionally does factual density overwhelm the analytical framework. The book's overall verdict on the New Deal's effectiveness is relatively negative. It concludes, as do other similar local studies, that the New Deal in Baltimore was applied conservatively, and its reforms had limited effects on most people's lives. Unlike other commentators though, the author argues that the most significant change and the most important legacy of the New Deal was accelerated organizational growth—both in local governmental structures and popular organizations.

Despite the book's many successes, there are a few problems that should be mentioned. For instance, the combination of social and institutional history in this study is not always completely satisfying. Sometimes social movements are treated too much in an institutional manner: too much in terms of the negotiations of their leaderships with governmental bodies; too much in terms of formal descriptions of their structures and activities. Even in the book's discussion of the PUL, for all its strengths, the reader doesn't get a real understanding of the inner dynamics of the organization and the process of its development. This gap might be partly a problem of sources. If so oral history, used only minimally by the author, could have been helpful.

Relatedly, the book's overall analysis sometimes gives too much priority to the institutional over the social. The book repeatedly emphasizes that the New Deal challenged and stimulated the people to organize. What is seldom said is that popular organizing also challenged the New Deal and sometimes dragged it forward. Fortu-

nately, if the book does not sufficiently emphasize this in its interpretative statements, it provides ample evidence of it in its narrative.

Finally, although this book addresses the social conditions of the Baltimore Black community and documents Black participation in the unemployed, housing, and labor movements, the Black freedom movement itself receives scant attention. The modern civil rights movement emerged in Baltimore in 1931 and continued as a virtually uninterrupted process through the 1960s. Its organizations and activities in the 1930s—the City Wide Young People's Forum, the "Buy Where You Can Work" campaign, the reorganized Baltimore chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People under Lillie Jackson—had major impact locally and nationally during that era. Unfortunately, much of the new social history has tended to focus on workers' movements (and secondarily on the women's movement) to the neglect of the Black freedom movement; this book does not fully break with that tendency.

Nonetheless, Jo Anne Argersinger's book is highly recommended. Those interested in the New Deal in general will find new insights and methodological ideas in it. Those concerned with urban history during the Great Depression will find it to be an extremely useful for comparisons and as a model. And those who, like myself, are studying Baltimore during that era, will find it indispensable.

Andor Skotnes, *Columbia University*

**By Robert D. Ilisevich. *Galusha A. Grow: The People's Candidate.***

(Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1988. Pp. xiii, 320. \$39.95.)

In many ways this is an old fashioned biography, the genre that became so popular in the nineteenth century in America—"the public life and times" of some political luminary or another. What Professor Ilisevich has provided is in large part a study of Pennsylvania politics during the ante-bellum and post-Civil War years with attention centered on the political career of Galusha A. Grow. Grow's dates, 1823-1907, embraced the period, 1850-1903, in which he occupied or strove to occupy important public office. He was but moderately successful.

Chroniclers of Grow's life and career are handicapped in that most of his personal papers were lost years ago in a house fire. Ilisevich, however, makes good use of sources available—newspapers, legislative records, manuscripts which are a part of the papers of Grow's contemporaries, and numerous secondary works. There are also a few biographical sketches and autobiographical notes. The Grow Papers which survived are deposited in the Susquehanna County Historical Society archives but are limited in number. Of the 554 endnotes used by Ilisevich, only a half dozen cite the Grow Papers.

Grow had high political aspirations never fully realized. One does not have to accept his biographer's statement that Grow "was as prominent and important as most of his political contemporaries in the state, including Simon Cameron, David Wilmot, and Thaddeus Stevens" (p. xi). He was never more than a secondary figure in Pennsylvania political circles and filled but a tertiary role on the national scene. His

major contribution was as a Member of Congress who faithfully, even doggedly, pursued passage of the Homestead Bill. Ilisevich cites the testimony of others that Grow was one of a number deserving the title, "father of the homestead bill."

The subject of this biography did make a notable impact on local, state, and national politics as conducted in the Northern Tier counties of Tioga, Bradford, and Susquehanna. In that mid-nineteenth century Democratic party stronghold, he gained voter support first as a fervent Jeffersonian-Jacksonian Democrat, next as a dedicated free-soiler of the David Wilmot stripe, then as a reluctant recruit into Republican party ranks who in wartime became an enthusiastic radical member of that party. Grow lost his hold on the electorate of his district in the Democratic sweep of 1862, flirted with the Liberal Republicans in 1872, and then returned penitently to the fold to become a party elder-statesman in the waning years of the century.

Throughout his career, Grow was something of a political maverick, loyal to his party's principles but ready to challenge the party organization. This explains, perhaps, one reason why Grow never held statewide office except in his declining years when the state's Republican party rewarded him for past services by sending him for four successive terms as Congressman-at-Large in Washington, 1894-1903. Meanwhile, voters in Pennsylvania's Twelfth Congressional District had earlier elected him to represent them in Congress for six terms (1850-1862), three as a Democrat and three as a Republican.

In the practice of law, his nominal profession, Grow was less than successful and he concluded early that his purpose in life was politics. Here, his forte was oratory. Contemporaries described him as having few equals and no superiors in winning over a crowd. "What he lacked in diplomacy, tact, and finesse," writes Ilisevich, "he made up for in clarity, directness, and raw conviction" (p. 85). Managing to avoid the pitfall of hagiography, Ilisevich notes that Grow's political expectations fed on his inflated ego, that he was "often impressed with the exuberance of self-importance" (p. 226). Such no doubt made it difficult for Grow to understand and accept his frequent rejections by party moguls who ignored his popularity with the rank and file, a popularity which made him, in the words of the book's sub-title, "The People's Candidate."

Ilisevich provides us with an instructive example of how a public figure in mid-nineteenth century America could begin a Jacksonian Democrat and end up a Gilded Age Republican. Like many Whigs and Democrats, Grow was brought into Republican ranks in opposition to the Kansas-Nebraska Bill of 1854. Yet, Republican sectionalism and the fact that the new party was led by his erstwhile political enemies, the Whigs, caused him to hesitate. But once converted, Grow became a thorough partisan and, to Southerners, "a paragon of northern bias" (p. 158).

Grow became such a prominent and effective spokesman for Radical Republicans in the war years that in July 1861 he was elevated to the Speakership for the special session of Congress called that month. In the post-war years he was one of the last to abandon the "bloody shirt" tactic in party warfare. The changing times also wrought an evolution in his economic views. During the 1850s, "having been reared in an area where

poverty was not a stranger . . . [Grow] was not to be bought off with a set of euphemisms contrived as a defense of the free-enterprise system" (p. 66). In post-Civil War America, however, anxious to be successful in business and politics, "he was willing to forget all the bad things he had said about speculators and moneyed interests" (p. 223).

One wishes that the portrait drawn of Grow was more rounded, had given us an image of the man as he was in the flesh. Given the paucity of sources at hand this no doubt was impossible. What emerges from this study is an incomplete impression of a politician (hardly a statesman) who merely reflected rather than changed his times in any significant way. But the book has real value in providing a look at Pennsylvania politics for the period it covers.

Robert L. Bloom, *Emeritus, Gettysburg College*

**By Pamela C. Powell. *Reflected Light: A Century of Photography in Chester County*.**

(West Chester, Pennsylvania: Chester County Historical Society, 1988. Pp. 79. \$29.95.)

The Chester County Historical Society, one of the oldest and largest county historical societies in Pennsylvania, has become well known for award winning catalogs published to accompany exhibitions mounted at the Society. *Reflected Light: A Century of Photography in Chester County* can now be added to their impressive list of well-designed award winning publications.

Published to accompany an exhibition by the same title, the catalog provides a mine of information which stands on its own even though the exhibit closed in February. *Reflected Light* is an example of what can be done when the right combination of source material, scholarly research, and public support is directed at a specific historical subject.

The author, Pamela C. Powell, spent three years researching the biographies of ten Chester County photographers and selected over one hundred photographs from more than 60,000 images in the Society's permanent collection for inclusion in the exhibit. Generally when photographic histories are published on a county level, the result is a "picture book," devoid of scholarly studies and failing to provide a historical overview in which the reader can place the importance of regional activity.

In contrast, the compilers of *Reflected Light* really did take a look at the "big picture" when they assembled the publication and a great deal of ground is covered in a relatively compact space.

A brief introduction describes the relationship of Chester County photography to that of nearby Philadelphia and provides a concise Chester County History. The introduction is followed by an essay outlining the history of photography, beginning with its discovery in 1839 by Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre, which led to the introduction of the photographic process to Chester County in 1846. The essay covers the technological advances in photography throughout the nineteenth and early

twentieth centuries and follows their effects on County photographers and on the lives and social habits of Chester Countians.

Following the essay, the biographies of ten Chester County photographers are chronicled, accompanied in each instance by reproductions of their photographic works. Each biography examines the importance of the photographer to the recorded history of the County. The photographers selected represent a broad cross-section of both amateurs and professionals from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Two checklists, one for the works in the exhibition and one listing photographers working in Chester County, follow the essay. The latter provides an important resource for future Chester County photographic researchers. A glossary of terms also helps readers unfamiliar with the technical terms used in the essays and plate captions.

In spite of the fine research compiled in the publication, the most impressive asset of the catalog, as one might expect, are the more than fifty photographs reproduced throughout the book. The early daguerreotypes and tintypes are reproduced close to their original size, giving the reader a true sense of the proportions of these miniature gems. Later glass plates and larger originals occasionally appear in the catalog as full-page photographs which translates into approximately an 8" x 10" format. The half-tones and reproductions of advertisements, all of high quality, complement the typography of the book which is well-designed and easy to read.

*Reflected Light* is not intended to be a best-selling, monumental production. It does, however, provide the reader with a well-balanced, informative, and entertaining treatise on the history and results of Chester County photography.

David W. Dunn, *The Packwood House Museum (Lewisburg, Pa.)*

**Edited by John Ferling. *The World Turned Upside Down. The American Victory in the War of Independence.***

(Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1988. Pp. x, 250. \$39.95.)

Each of the recognized authorities who produced the eleven essays comprising this anthology has examined in considerable depth and in some cases with striking insights a different military aspect of the American victory in the Revolutionary War. Collectively, they provide comprehensive coverage of the subject. Beginning with an explanation of the evolution, from a common Elizabethan-era root, of diverging military concepts in Britain and America, they proceed to address the mandatory topics of the Continental Army, the American soldier, George Washington, the key subordinates, the resolution of logistical problems, the French Alliance, and the political (read "congressional") support of the military effort. Adding to the collection's completeness are valuable studies of the perhaps less obvious but equally important topics of frontier warfare, the British armed forces, and (focusing chiefly on the British) naval warfare. Inevitably, the essays vary in quality, but all have merit and some are nothing less than superb.

At the same time, assessment of the collection as a whole is difficult. Given the book's intention to examine each facet in the light of why America won, allowance can

be made for those essayists who, like the seven fabled blind men each feeling a different part of the elephant, are led to assert the primacy of their own topic in determining the outcome. The discriminating reader can readily discount excesses of enthusiasm and recognize that, while each aspect was important, it was the combination that was decisive. Eagerness to make a point, however, cannot justify the extremes to which several of the writers have gone both in misusing documentation and ignoring evidence conflicting with their theses. In a number of cases, the most charitable conclusion that can be reached is that they either misunderstood or were ignorant of important pertinent details.

Regrettably, the problem is not to find examples but to select a sampling. Quotations actually relating to militiamen are used (pp. 40, 43) to characterize the *Continental* soldier—a significantly different figure. An individual is named (p. 36) as a member of Thompson's Battalion (a noted Pennsylvania unit) and later (p. 46) as "a Virginia rifleman." Similarly, we are told (p. 120) that the frontier rifle companies brought to Cambridge from Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania proved "too undisciplined to be incorporated into a conventional army"; without dispute, initially they *were* undisciplined, yet the Pennsylvania companies in question went on to become the 1st Pennsylvania Continental Regiment, serving through the war as one of the most outstanding units of the Continental Army. Again, northern militia is asserted to be superior to southern because *its* units consisted of neighbors (p. 42), whereas in fact both were organized on the same principle; in any case, the alleged superiority is not supported—if northern militia won at Oriskany and Bennington, southern militia won at King's Mountain and played a vital role in winning at the Cowpens. In the same vein, in support of the contention that Washington was vindictive toward officers he perceived as his rivals, we are told (p. 65) that after Saratoga he never again "urged" a command on Gates; yet in 1779, if he did not *urge* Gates to accept, he *did* specifically offer him command of the major expedition against the Iroquois which went to Sullivan only because Gates refused it. In still another example, the discredited idea is advanced (p. 194) that with their naval dominance, the British should have landed troops behind Charlestown Neck and cut off the Americans at Bunker Hill; modern scholarship has shown not only that tides and shoal water would have made such a landing suicidal but also that the British knew it.

By no means all of the essays are comparably flawed. Among the most informative are the opening study, Fred Anderson's "The Colonial Background to the American Victory," and W. J. Eccles' "The French Alliance and the American Victory," the latter particularly enlightening in its portrayal of the place of Canada in French geopolitical thinking. Although Hugh F. Rankin's choice of generals in his essay on "Washington's Lieutenants and the American Victory" is open to argument (surely, Steuben should have been included, even if doing so had required excluding Knox), the biographical sketches are good, and both Charles Lee and Gates receive more balanced treatment than traditionally has been the case.

It must be emphasized that an inventory of defects gives a false overall impression of this book. To be fair, the anthology was not intended as a source for details (although that does not excuse the details being incorrect). Rather, it identifies causal relationships, traces forces and trends, and examines the several topics within the pertinent social, political, and economic context. Notwithstanding the instances of questionable evidence and factual error, the reasoning followed and the conclusions reached are convincing, and as a whole constitute a valuable contribution to understanding one of the major formative episodes in American history.

John B.B. Trussell, *United States Army, Retired*