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Book Review: Railroads in Alabama Politics, 1875-1914

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Railroads in Alabama Politics, 1875-1914. By James F. Doster. *University of Alabama Studies*, No. 12. (Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Press, 1957. 231 pp. Maps, bibliography and index. \$4.00 paper, \$5.00 cloth.)

This work is primarily concerned with the political relations between the railroads of Alabama and the state governments of Alabama from 1877 to 1914. The work centers upon the period after 1906, when the state government, under the governorship of Braxton Bragg Comer, attempted to bring the various railroads of the state of Alabama under the control of the state. The crux of this attempt to place the railroads under state control was the state adoption of laws to reduce local railroad rates. That the attempt was somewhat unsuccessful was due to two men - Milton Hannibal Smith and a Judge Thomas Goode Jones. Smith was the president of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad Company and "a dauntless railroad champion." Jones was a judge of the federal court at Montgomery, Alabama, and granted to railroads injunctions to restrain the enforcement of the state laws enacted after 1906. The struggle between the state and the railroads ostensibly ended in 1914 with the defeat of Comer in the gubernatorial contest of that year. However, Comer and Smith continued their "bitter feud" until Smith's death in 1921, and, in the author's words, "Comer's assault on the railroad corporations was by no means futile, for it aroused the public and resulted in constructive legislation."

Although the author is somewhat categorical in several places in the work, the book is recommended to the reader interested in Southern history from the Reconstruction period to World War I. Whether the reader be interested in political history or in economic development in the South the work will prove of value. In addition, the bibliographical data is voluminous and should be particularly useful for those who will want to utilize sources in Alabama history as well as secondary materials. There are also nine maps of railroad systems in the South which will enable the reader to understand better and keep up with the text.

This work is further recommended to those readers interested in Florida history. Conceding that the work is concerned with Alabama history and bears no direct relation to the history of Florida, this reviewer does think that what occurs in one state

will affect neighboring states as well. An understanding of the history of Alabama during the period 1875 to 1914, especially the development of railroads within the state after the Civil War, should help to make Florida history more intelligible.

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