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Book Reviews

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Defender of the Faith, William Jennings Bryan: The Last Decade, 1915-1925. By Lawrence W. Levine. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965. ix, 386 pp. Illustration, bibliographic note, index. \$7.50.)

As an act of conscience William Jennings Bryan resigned as Woodrow Wilson's Secretary of State in the summer of 1915; as an act of conscience a decade later Bryan likewise undertook the harrowing confrontation with Clarence Darrow in the symbolic and sensational Scopes Trial. Professor Levine's study derived primarily from the Bryan papers and of necessity, therefore, a review of the man's public career, skillfully concentrates on the essential consistency of one of the country's most beloved and most caricatured sectional leaders through the last ten years of his life, a period, according to Levine, during which subsequent images of Bryan tended to become fixed. Never divorced in these years from a political milieu, Bryan retained deep emotional, although they were hardly deep intellectual, commitments to a gamut of traditional American causes. He continued the ardent championing of pacifism, prohibition, majority rule, Christian morality, and the virtues, indeed, the primacy of the so-called rural way of life.

Yet involved as he was, his career withered and grew anomalous precisely because, as Levine suggests, he kept faith with a segment of America which during the first quarter of this century began to appear increasingly defensive, parochial, moralistic, and dysfunctional. One of the "old Americans" but scarcely much of an inner-directed one, Bryan was satisfied to represent rather than to lead. Preeminently democratic, he was quite consciously the captive of his narrowing environment, too much so to be able either to plumb the main currents of change or to grasp the alternatives or perspectives which it posed. Bryan and his rural constituencies worked for the expansion of an America that was pacific, dry, progressive, and godly in a century in which events appear to have made a mockery of each; for many, in fact, the century seemingly mocks the very state of mind that produced each of these social phenomena. The Pentagon, a pervasive wetness, the smugness and complacency of the social scene through the fifties and early sixties, the ready expediency of Mr. Johnson's peculiarly American style of politics, or the billboard moralisms disfiguring highways might all partially suffice as modern counter-

points to Bryanism at its best. At its worst Bryanism was mawkish, superficial, sententious, intolerant, and, as Levine has shown, it was not devoid of ordinary political expediency. Somehow, as the author suggests, Bryan failed properly to gauge the thrust of new forces or new standards, many of which were so transparent between 1915 and 1925. Change which affronted him he simplistically classified as mere aberration or as the machination of venal interests or petty cliques. Bryan's provincial world, shaped in the relative homogeneity of rural towns and their immediate settings, suffered from the attrition of its old critique and was left to substitute slogans and devils for complexities. For the "luxury of his faith," Levine feels that Bryan paid a very high price; by sticking to his principles the standard-bearer of '96 risked becoming irrelevant, a nuisance, or a clown; he risked cavorting in a world redrawn to suit his self-deceptions. Had Bryan and his followers carried a presidential election one wonders what price the country might have paid for rural and sectional leadership feeding on simplicities, moralisms, and delusions, stamped by Bryan's peculiar combination of reform and reaction, and yet obliged to lead a plural community.

Conceived principally as a biographical account, Mr. Levine's study far more capably confirms this reviewer's impressions of Bryan than it contributes much that is strikingly new; the confirmation, however, is extremely useful. In his minor excursions aimed at unraveling some of the enigmas of South and West in the years after 1918, Mr. Levine, still scholarly and engaging, is perhaps less successful. Overall the book is a fine summary statement of Bryan's career.

C. K. YEARLEY, JR.

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F. D. R. and the South. By Frank Freidel. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965. x, 102 pp. Preface. \$3.25.)

One of the anomalies of southern politics was the immense popularity of the liberal Yankee, Franklin D. Roosevelt. Yet the South's role in the New Deal and in twentieth century liberalism has drawn only passing attention. Frank Freidel provides more

material for such a study in his 1964 Walter L. Fleming lectures at Louisiana State University. Published as *F. D. R. and the South*, Freidel applies his wealth of research and careful writing to a southern agrarian setting.

Freidel's interpretive study maintains that President Roosevelt drew from the South almost as much as he gave her. His initial affection for Warm Springs, Georgia, deepened during the 1930s. He saw the ugliness of despair and depression first hand in his "cracker" neighbors. The recognition that the economic plight of people denied them education, culture, and a better life was driven home during his trips south. Even the Tennessee Valley Authority resulted partly from Roosevelt's concern about Georgia's outrageous utility rates. As president, F.D.R. chose to work through southern congressional committee chairmen, and from them he learned that politics is an art and that procedure and decorum sometimes count for much.

Roosevelt's affection was returned in kind. Something of his rugged determination to overcome a seemingly hopeless obstacle, and his quick humor and simple tastes won most Southerners. To Roosevelt, poor folks were more than an abstraction, and he conversed with uneducated "crackers" and made them feel important. Only the Negro divided the president from the whole South, and F. D. R. breached the problem by largely ignoring white supremacy in order to eliminate the poverty which plagued both races.

The most ironic and contemporary theme of this short volume depicts a South, loyal to its old traditions, but caught in economic stagnation and desperately desiring federal help. To join the nation economically meant abandoning her treasured shibboleths, and Roosevelt made this momentous transition as painless as possible for the South. It is in examining this confounding dilemma that Freidel makes his greatest contribution, and if the author spends almost all his time on Georgia, it hardly lessens the impact of the book.

WAYNE FLYNT

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Mr. Crump of Memphis. By William D. Miller. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1964. xiii, 373 pp. Illustrations, critical essay on authorities, index. \$6.75.)

This is an insightful biography of the man who "bossed" Memphis and Shelby County with astonishing effectiveness for over a generation; it is also a running history of Memphis and of state politics, because for a time Crump's lop-sided majorities in Shelby County made and unmade Tennessee governors, as Tom Watson had once made and unmade Georgia governors.

In some ways Crump was closer to the church-business "respectables," so distasteful to Lincoln Steffens, than he was to the stereotype of the big-city boss. Crump was a moral absolutist and thundered the eternal verities like a prophet of old. He had a bookkeeper mentality, and he hated waste, disorder, and inefficiency as passionately as a John D. Rockefeller. Public officials were made to work as hard as employees in private industry and were forbidden to take any personal favors of value. There were no rake-offs, no kick-backs, no levies on vice. Crump's own highly successful insurance and brokerage firm did no business at all with the city or county government. Rowdy Memphis, of river-front and Beale Street fame, was "cleaned up," and the vagrants, beggars, and whores driven to cover. Crump was close with the taxpayer's dollar; the tax rate was kept low; mounting government costs were financed through bond issues. All of this was vastly pleasing to the church folks, local businessmen, and national business concerns seeking cheap power, low transportation costs, a "stabilized" labor market, and a "settled" political climate.

But there was another Crump, more in line with the big-city bosses who aligned themselves with the underprivileged. Crump entered politics in the Progressive era as the "red-snapper," doing battle with the privately-owned public utilities; and he never lost his suspicions of them. He built parks and playgrounds; widened health, educational, and other social services; insisted that the Negroes, on a segregated basis, be given their fair shares. Gambling and prostitution were quarantined but not suppressed, and Crump opposed Sunday blue laws. He also vigorously opposed prohibition and the Ku Klux Klan, and he championed Al Smith against the bigots. Despite the anguish of the cotton brokers of Front Street, Crump went down the line for the New Deal to the

very day of Roosevelt's death, and in its early stages he was probably the most effective advocate of TVA in Tennessee. Although local business was always Crump's most important support, he had effective tie-ins with the A. F. L. unions (but not the C. I. O.), the Baptists, the Catholics, the Jews, and the Negroes; and his concern for the interests of these various groups was concrete and sincere.

Like the traditional bosses, Crump put first emphasis on meticulous organization; he had a prodigious memory for names, faces, and detailed personal connections; he was absolutely loyal to his friends and ruthless to his enemies; and he made a great show of benevolence - although in his case he derived a boyish delight in the boat-rides, picnics, and junkets for his organization cronies and for the kiddies, the oldsters, and the poor.

Although Crump never lost his hold on Memphis and the county, and most residents could make no sense of the charges that he was a "dictator," his last years were frustrating. He was growing more conservative; his realism recoiled at federalized "racial equalitarianism"; his candidates for the governorship and the Senate lost state-wide in 1948; and his long-time co-worker, Senator Kenneth McKellar, was defeated for reelection in 1952. Accustomed to "getting even," Crump suddenly found his old-style, personalized, flamboyant statements and paid advertisements in the local and state press no match for the national press, which depicted him as a reactionary, a racist, and a despot. But now, in death, Crump has again had "the last say"; he has found in Professor Miller a fair, objective, perceptive, and on balance sympathetic biographer.

At the author's touch, Crump comes vividly to life - a combination of Old South courtliness and Redneck demagogue, of methodical practicality and swelling city pride, of iron will and sentimentality, of extroverted showmanship and introverted hypochondria.

WILLIAM G. CARLETON

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A *History of Georgia Agriculture, 1732-1860*. By James C. Bonner. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1964. xvii, 242 pp. Preface, notes, selected bibliography, index. \$6.00.)

The principal theme throughout this volume is man's age-long struggle to wrest a living from the soil. Instead of depicting the average Georgia farmer as either an affluent planter or a landless laborer, the author shows that a majority of the farmers were practical men striving to succeed.

In making this noteworthy contribution to the history of southern agriculture, Dr. Bonner has used a wide variety of sources, including official state records, archival materials, travel accounts, agricultural journals, plantation records, newspapers, and diaries. Most of the study came from widely scattered and unclassified sources, all of which appear in the footnotes. The author was perspective in his analyses, and by the proficient use of his materials he has produced a monograph which should interest the general public as well as the historian.

The contents of the book are arranged in a combination of the chronological and topical procedure. After describing the futile attempts of the Georgia Trustees to create a utopia in which slavery and large land grants were forbidden and the disappointing endeavors to cultivate silk and other exotic commodities, the author traces the introduction and disappearance of rice as a major crop along the Georgia coast. By 1830 the state's center of population, wealth, and political influence had shifted to middle Georgia, the heart of the upland cotton belt. Subsequently this area, with its counterpart in southwestern Georgia and in the valleys of north Georgia, provides the main setting for the story of Georgia agriculture. Soil exhaustion caused a heavy emigration to lands west of the state, partially counterbalanced by immigration from states north and east of Georgia. The search for knowledge about new crops and the striving for economic self-sufficiency by experimenting with agricultural diversification and soil conservation are subjects that are fully treated. The last chapters discuss the quest for grasses and improved livestock, the expansion of horticulture, architectural trends, and finally "Cotton, Corn, and Slavery."

The reviewer was impressed by the constant experiments of Georgians with many species of field crops, fruits, vines, and cattle to determine what plants and animals could be produced profitably in the climate and soils of the state. Efforts were made to secure improved tools and better methods of soil culture. In the late ante-bellum period, agricultural societies were formed and five farm journals were established.

The concluding pages contain a survey of plantation slavery in Georgia during the 1850s. Motivated by both economic and humane considerations, most of the slaveholders improved the working conditions and general welfare of their slaves. Even native-born Northerners, transplanted to farm life in Georgia, found much to commend in the practice of slavery in the waning years of its existence.

For one who desires knowledge concerning early agrarianism in the Southeast, *A History of Georgia Agriculture* is the book to read. Here a highly competent research scholar has separated the facts from traditional assumptions.

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