

THE ANNALS OF IOWA

Uncle Sam at Home: Civilian Mobilization, Wartime Federalism, and the Council of National Defense, 1917-1919, by William J. Breen. Contributions in American Studies 70. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1984. xvii, 279 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliographical essay, index. \$29.95 cloth.

In conventional accounts of mobilization during World War I, the Council of National Defense (CND) is depicted primarily as the spawning ground for the specialized, functionally oriented agencies that established and administered the war controls. But predating the emergence of these agencies was an effort to mobilize resources through state and local councils; and although this effort failed to achieve its initial goal, the institutional output constitutes an aspect of mobilization that deserves more attention than it has hitherto received. By war's end more than 180,000 county, municipal, and community councils were linked through state councils to a branch of the CND and were engaged in a variety of war-related projects. They stood as an institutional manifestation of the wartime search for alternatives to centralized bureaucratic governance. A fuller understanding of them, William Breen shows, can not only correct mistaken notions about centralized authority and the work done by state defense councils but also contribute to our knowledge and understanding of progressivism, administrative state building, women at war, and the 1920s.

Breen, who teaches history at LaTrobe University in Australia, has mined the records of the CND State Councils Section and a variety of collateral collections to provide both an account of the council system's origins and workings and an interpretation linking it to such larger phenomena as bureaucratization, voluntarist ideology, and the drives for increased efficiency, community organization, and women's rights. The work is divided into ten chapters: three deal with the beginnings and the work of the CND Section; three with state councils that illustrate regional variations; two with the involvement of women through councils organized by the CND Woman's Committee; and two with the results of undertakings intended to promote Americanization, community organization, local coordination of war programs, and post-Armistice economic reconstruction. Breen advances and documents several interpretive points: he stresses the activism of states and local elites in mobilization efforts, the diversity that existed within the system, and the capacity of the councils to secure the kind of participation unattainable through bureaucratic means; he calls attention to the links with prewar and postwar developments; and he emphasizes the innovation of those who developed organizations combining federal, local, and private attributes.

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Iowa's state council was not one of the nine that Breen chose to study in detail; and his work contains only passing references to it, mostly references that confirm its reputation for partisanship and anti-German excesses. Breen did, however, study other councils in the Midwest, notably those in Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio, and he credits the region with being "fertile soil" (71) for council development and with eventually having the nation's greatest concentration of "outstanding" councils. In comparison with other regions, the Midwest's organizational effort tended to be stronger and better financed, more responsive to requests from Washington, more prone to vest its creations with coercive power, and more sophisticated in the use of publicity. Midwestern councils also tended to become more concerned with the loyalty issue, and they were disproportionately involved in high-handed vigilantism, a development Breen deplores but also sees as having unfortunately overshadowed many positive contributions.

Breen's work could be improved by more explicit thematic development, fuller recognition of the council structures organized by other war agencies, and more skepticism about the claim of corporatively structured organizations (organizations in which group representatives interact with elite directors and specialists) to be "people's" bodies. But on balance *Uncle Sam at Home* is an excellent book. It is thoroughly and solidly researched, intelligently written, interpretively connected to the larger context of its subject, persuasive in its arguments, and eminently successful in substantiating its claims concerning the benefits to be derived from a fuller knowledge and understanding of a hitherto neglected aspect of the mobilization of 1917-1918.

UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

ELLIS W. HAWLEY

Socialism in the Heartland: The Midwestern Experience, 1900-1925, edited by Donald T. Critchlow. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986. vii, 221 pp. Notes, tables, index. \$21.95 cloth.

Closing the Frontier: Radical Response in Oklahoma, 1889-1923, by John Thompson. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986. xiii, 262 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$18.95 cloth.

These two recent contributions to the increasing number of studies on American radicalism are innovative and controversial. They will stimulate debate concerning the decline of American radicalism in the years following World War I and the Bolshevik Revolution. Their regional emphasis should make them particularly interesting to midwesterners.

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