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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 deplors 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.

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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.

Socialism in the Heartland is a collection of eight essays which weave unusually common threads as they challenge traditional views marking the decline of socialism in America following World War I. The common assumptions have been that government oppression during World War I (David Shannon, *The Socialist Party of America*), the desertion of Bill Haywood and the IWW in 1912 (Ira Kipnis, *The American Socialist Movement, 1897-1912*), and the split between the radical foreign-language federations and the more moderate nativist elements in 1919 (James Weinstein, *The Decline of Socialism in America, 1912-1925*) battered the socialists into virtual oblivion by the mid-1920s. The essays in *Socialism in the Heartland* support Weinstein's contention that socialist movements weathered the hysteria and oppression of World War I. As John Laslett insists in his essay, "Socialism and Illinois District 12, UMW," radicalism persisted well into the 1920s. Several of the authors suggest that the sudden demise of midwestern as well as national socialism resulted from the return of prosperity after the recession of 1920 and from growing intolerance of radicals fostered by right-wing groups such as the American Legion and the more ominous Ku Klux Klan, which often found support among native, Protestant workers. Other factors contributing to the erosion of socialist strength were capitalist cultural values deeply rooted among American workers, the failure of radicals to win the middle class, and the success of the two major parties in launching programs that included reform.

John T. Walker's essay, "The Dayton Socialists and World War I: Surviving the White Terror," further demolishes the view that wartime persecution wounded the SPA beyond repair. Dayton socialists were able to protest wartime violations of civil liberties and criticize government policies without actually violating the hated Espionage and Sedition Acts. In choosing accommodation over confrontation, Dayton socialists resorted to the courts for injunctions protecting free speech and assembly. Led by Joseph W. Sharts, the enterprising editor of the *Miami Valley Socialist*, they were able to forge opposition to policies without engaging in rhetoric that might have resulted in jail and persecution. A long history of pragmatic politics in Dayton had built a reservoir of good will that helped restrain the super-patriots. What decimated Dayton socialists were the postwar problems of unemployment, the antiunion stance of Dayton businessmen, auto prosperity, and the mounting strength of the Klan.

Like Walker, Errol Wayne Stevens, in his examination of Marion, Ohio, socialists, sees the return of prosperity and the antiradical atmosphere of the era as major factors depleting socialist strength. Stevens

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also stresses that although their platforms were similar, Marion socialists were more than a left-wing version of the Progressives. Socialist candidates for political office, unlike Progressive candidates, were workers. Gas and sewer services, less available in working-class than in middle-class wards, thus became a viable political issue.

Richard W. Judd, in discussing the failure of Flint, Michigan, socialists after 1912 finds that while the socialists could attract urban workers they could not win over the middle class. He concludes that the 1912 socialist victory in Flint came too early. Had the victories come more slowly, the party might have prepared the groundwork to withstand the assault of the middle class. Citizen tickets came to the fore and were able to offer similar benefits as well as threatening to relocate factories.

James R. Simmons's examination of socialism in Indiana, 1900–1925, sees the party as lacking in appeal for farmers and middle-class voters without whose support it could not enact its program. Increased urbanization after 1920 might have brought a more favorable environment for socialist growth, but now cities once within the socialist belt endorsed reactionary movements. This, notes Simmons, is evidenced by the lack of organized resistance to rightist tendencies in areas where “the left was once deemed a serious political threat” (65).

Socialists were hampered by forces beyond their control. In her essay, “Casting a Wide Net: The Milwaukee Movement to 1920,” Sally Miller suggests that Milwaukee socialists were hard pressed to move beyond gradual reform because of the lack of municipal autonomy necessary to enact a full-scale socialist program. Furthermore, socialists were restrained by the belief that socialism could not be implemented in one city. While Milwaukee socialists were a major force in city politics for a half-century, 1916 marks the only election victory of the party in Minneapolis. David Paul Nord explains in his article, “Hot-house Socialism: Minneapolis 1910–1925,” that radicalism and reform take on meaning in the “social and economic context, and that these meanings vary according to local environment” (160). Thus even the moderate reforms of Minneapolis socialists appeared radical.

This small volume stresses the considerable success of socialists in municipal politics and the persistence of socialist activity well into the 1920s. The fact that, as Donald Critchlow notes, some thirty-three American communities elected socialist mayors or administrations during the “golden age of socialism” cannot be ignored. It is surprising how the Klan filled gaps left by the socialists after their downfall, and still to be answered is why the sudden demise occurred during a decade that was less prosperous than it appeared on the surface. Laslett perhaps comes close when he suggests that the socialists fulfilled “their

goals within the framework of their own cultural political traditions" (206).

John Thompson's *Closing the Frontier: Radical Response in Oklahoma, 1889-1923* covers the destructive features of corporate capitalism and the radical response it engendered on the last Great Frontier in America. The book portrays the oppressive nature of Oklahoma's developers and politicians and provides a slanted but accurate account of twentieth-century capitalism's impact on the Oklahoma frontier. Thompson raises the question: why would Oklahoma farmers be receptive to radicalism?

In order to understand the dynamics of the Oklahoma frontier, Thompson dissects the state into two distinct regions, the cotton-producing southern and eastern section ("Little Dixie") and the more prosperous northern and western counties where wheat farming predominated. The social and economic dynamics of the regions determined the militant or more reformist nature of the radicalism of each section. Although Thompson does not contradict James Green's *Grass Roots Socialism*, he is more daring in analyzing the Oklahoma radicals and their commitment to and understanding of Marxist ideas. Oklahoma radicals may have lacked sophistication and theoretical comprehension, but they were willing to turn to Marxist ideas in order to obtain basic democratic and human rights. They merged their socialism with "nondenominational fundamentalist Christian millennialism"; socialism was thus seen as the vehicle by which the sinful capitalist system could be replaced. Socialist views were further nourished by the party's talented leaders.

The most productive period for Oklahoma socialists was 1912-1916, but the success of the movement was limited by World War I and the Green Rebellion, which many Oklahomans felt gave the state an image of disloyalty. Of course, Oklahoma radicalism had undergone an earlier populist phase, and during the 1920s radical forces proved resilient enough to elect Jack Walton as governor. Walton's subsequent failure and disavowal of socialist support helped erode socialist prestige and even encouraged a surge of the radical right.

Thompson asserts that Oklahoma capitalists, both inside and outside the state, exploited economic and human resources in an oppressive and indifferent manner. This spawned a frontier socialism, a cooperative communal, humanistic ideology, which resented the waste and callousness of the established system. The last of the frontiers "produced the strongest Socialist movement because the dynamics of frontier capitalism was clear in Oklahoma" (225). Ultimately, Oklahomans became more concerned with their image, the radical political move-

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ments diminished, and the populists, socialists, and neopopulists were crushed and forgotten.

Closing the Frontier depicts the ruthlessness of those who developed the last of the Great Frontiers. It indicates that radicalism had considerable appeal for an exploited agrarian class and that Oklahoma socialists were more committed than previous studies have demonstrated. Thompson utilizes oral interviews, radical newspapers, and letters to the editors of farm journals, as well as the basic historical monographs. The comparative analysis of major works on Oklahoma history is also valuable. While the overall prose and organization are occasionally disjointed, the book is a significant contribution in understanding the evolution and impact of radical movements in a frontier state where the concentration of socialists as well as the percentage of tenant farmers was greater than in any other state.

BUENA VISTA COLLEGE

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Democratic Vistas: Post Offices and Public Art in the New Deal, by Marlene Park and Gerald E. Markowitz. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984. xx, 247 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, appendix, index. \$37.95 cloth.

When most people think of public murals they think of those done by amateurs on the sides of buildings, a momentary bright spot in a decaying neighborhood. This wasn't the case fifty years ago when murals were considered a significant and instructional form of art. For instance, plans for the 1939-40 New York World's Fair did not include a building devoted to contemporary art. When the fair's president, Grover Whalen, responded to the uproar from artists, critics, and the general public, he did so by explaining that it was the fair's desire to surround visitors with art, in the form of murals, rather than to store it away in a building. The greatest period of public murals and the greatest patron of them was the U.S. government during the depression, particularly the longest-running New Deal agency sponsoring art, the Treasury Department's Section of Painting and Sculpture (later called the Section of Fine Arts), which is the focus of *Democratic Vistas*.

As with many New Deal programs, the purpose was not simply to put people to work (though this aspect was not to be overlooked: more than ten thousand artists were employed between 1933 and 1943), but also to bring art to people who, for the most part, had no other firsthand experience of it. The goal in placing art in federal buildings, and more specifically in local post offices, was to reach as many people as possible. Moreover, it was intended that the subject matter reflect the

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