

### Book Notices

*The Short Ballot in Iowa*, by George Mather. Occasional Research Papers 6. Iowa City: Division of Continuing Education, The University of Iowa, 1987. viii, 47 pp. Chronology, sample ballot, notes. \$3.00 paper.

In this brief historical monograph George Mather traces changes in voting procedures that have altered the length of the ballot in Iowa. Some of the changes documented by Mather led to a longer ballot, but most of the ballot revisions removed public officials from the electoral rolls.

The monograph is divided into six parts and a conclusion. The introductory section acquaints the reader with the origin of the short ballot movement in America, tracing it through Woodrow Wilson and the progressive era of the early twentieth century. Mather's emphasis, however, is on the short ballot movement in Iowa, which was not as organized as in some states, but was a subject of ongoing concern in the state.

The strongest part of Mather's work is the twenty-page section in which he documents and discusses the many primary and general election changes for national, state, and local offices that have shortened the ballot in Iowa. Demonstrating meticulous research, Mather shows that ballot reform efforts in Iowa have always met strong opposition, making progress slow and intermittent.

Two very brief sections, "Elections by Districts or At Large" and "Did Short Ballot Reforms Make a Difference," are so superficial as to be of little value. They should have been more comprehensive or else eliminated. In the final two sections Mather examines possible future ballot changes and provides some models of short ballots. He raises a number of issues associated with ballot length that have been or should be considered by lawmakers in Iowa, including the central question of how many offices should be on the ballot in any election.

Mather has two distracting stylistic habits: at times he does not define his terminology—*vive voce*, blowers and strikers, and fence viewers are examples—and he uses the words of others to make his points rather than to support his positions, which leads to a proliferation of long, laborious quotes. The monograph is timely, however, and it is a very good source for those seeking information on electoral reform in Iowa.

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