

current crisis, but lessons might be learned from the mechanics of recovery (246). The major lesson is "consciousness raising." Farmers must resist the siren call of speculation and return to the old virtues.

Friedberger relied on an extraordinary variety of sources: interviews, personal observations, county land and court records, tract indexes of title abstracting firms, census lists, Iowa Agricultural Experiment Stations bulletins, federal documents, newspapers, and secondary works. To weave such diverse sources into a coherent narrative is a noteworthy accomplishment. However, the research data is stronger for the Iowa story than for California, because Friedberger has spent fifteen years in Iowa courthouse records and archives, compared to a year or so in California collections.

In its approach, this book most resembles John Shover's *First Majority-Last Minority: The Transformation of Rural Life in America* (1976). But Friedberger's focus on familism is narrower and his prognosis for the future of the family farm is more sanguine. Shover wrote in the context of the Club of Rome's *Limits of Growth* report and used published sources, while Friedberger absorbed at first hand the dogged optimism of American farm families in the more positive Reagan era. Gilbert Fite's *American Farmers-The New Minority* (1981) also explores the decline of family farming since 1981, but Fite concentrates on economic and political aspects. In short, Friedberger's social history of modern agriculture and his analysis of the troubles of the eighties offers the first scholarly treatment of family farming. It took courage to venture into this complex subject. Friedberger's case study method has its limitations, but overall he succeeds in explaining how and why family farmers have survived the repeated shocks of an increasingly complex world.

The Iowa Precinct Caucuses: The Making of a Media Event, by Hugh Winebrenner. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1987. x, 173 pp. Tables, illustrations, references, index. \$15.95 cloth.

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Two events catapulted Iowa to national attention during the 1980s: the farm crisis and the state's presidential precinct caucuses. Recent improvements in farmland prices, in farm income, and in the debt-to-asset ratio of Iowa farmers appear to signal an end to the agricultural depression of the 1980s. Although many contend that the farm crisis is far from over, by 1987 and early 1988 the national media no longer regarded the economic condition of either Iowa or American farmers as worthy of attention. The 1988 Iowa precinct caucuses, on the other

hand, attracted even more national media attention than those of 1976, 1980, or 1984.

The Iowa Precinct Caucuses is the first monographic study of Iowa's presidential precinct caucuses. Its subtitle, *The Making of a Media Event*, indicates the thrust of its argument. After discussing "The Media and American Politics," Hugh Winebrenner, a professor of political science at Drake University, maintains that "The media have obscured the basic local functions of the caucuses—selecting delegates to county conventions, generating issues for party platforms, and providing the grass-roots party connections to the citizens—by attributing a meaning to the caucuses that does not exist. . . . [M]edia exploitation of the Iowa caucus process (1) disrupts the normal functioning of the local political process, (2) may give a false image of the national political appeal of the candidates involved, and (3) subjects the national electoral process to the influence of a contrived event" (8). Whether or not one accepts this indictment of the relationship between the media and the Iowa precinct caucuses, the 1988 experience confirmed the close relationship between the media and this aspect of Iowa presidential politics. If the state continues its current "first in the nation" status, there is little reason to believe that future Iowa precinct caucuses will be any less "media events" than those of the past sixteen years.

By publishing the book less than four months before the 1988 caucuses, Winebrenner and Iowa State University Press were able to take advantage of the intense level of national interest in the Iowa precinct caucuses. The study was timely in more ways than one. In addition to appearing just as the candidates for the 1988 Democratic and Republican presidential nominations were intensifying their Iowa campaigns, the book was also one of the first salvos in a growing criticism of Iowa's preeminent role in the presidential selection process. Only historical research can determine whether there is any relationship between Winebrenner's criticisms of the caucuses in October 1987 and the rising chorus of similar judgments in the succeeding months, but his criticisms were certainly fashionable at a time when many others, from candidates to journalists, complained that the media were concentrating too much attention on the first stages of the delegate-selection process in a small midwestern state often described as unrepresentative of the nation.

Before examining the caucuses and the role of the media in Iowa politics, Winebrenner presents "A Political and Demographic Profile" of the state. This chapter could have provided valuable background information, but Winebrenner relies too heavily on Harlan H. Hahn's *Urban-Rural Conflict: The Politics of Change* (1971). Winebrenner, like

Hahn, interprets Iowa politics almost entirely in terms of urban-rural conflict, describing rural Iowa as basically Republican and conservative, and urban voters as much more Democratic and moderate, even liberal.

In his attempt to establish this bifurcation of Iowa politics, Winebrenner notes that "Within the state, particularly in rural areas, politics can be very conservative (as in Butler and Grundy counties, for example), but they are balanced by the moderate, and occasionally liberal, politics of urban areas, which include a majority of the state's population" (15). He fails to note that Butler and Grundy counties are not only rural but are also among the most Republican counties in the state. The votes in recent elections in equally rural counties such as Audubon and Davis indicate that there is no necessary correlation between rural and conservative, or between rural and Republican, in Iowa. If the residents of Butler and Grundy counties are more conservative than many other Iowans, that ideological position is more closely related to their Republican party preference than to their rural residence. The 1988 Republican precinct caucuses, in which Pat Robertson finished first in such urban counties as Dubuque, Des Moines, Clinton, and Lee, and came within two votes of winning in Woodbury, should also caution against any facile equating of conservative with rural and of moderate, or liberal, with urban. Conservative candidate Robertson finished third, behind George Bush and Robert Dole, in both Butler and Grundy counties.

Winebrenner also contends that "Since [legislative] reapportionment . . . the urban-rural conflict is even more pronounced" than it was previously (15). Yet analysis of the composition and voting record of the General Assembly during the past decade indicates that party affiliation has been more important than the demographic characteristics of legislative districts. On many of the most important legislative votes during the past decade, Democrats representing rural constituencies have joined forces with those from urban districts to oppose a coalition of rural and urban Republicans. Increased Democratic success in rural legislative districts since the mid-1970s has reduced the degree of urban-rural conflict in the General Assembly, as legislators in each party differ less from those in the opposing party, in terms of the demographic characteristics of their districts, than in earlier decades. Winebrenner is not alone in interpreting Iowa politics largely in terms of urban-rural conflict, but more careful analysis might have produced more fruitful insights.

In the five chapters (three through seven) which are the heart of the book, Winebrenner summarizes the history of the caucuses from "the decades of obscurity" through 1984. This is valuable material, as

much so for those who regard themselves as knowledgeable about Iowa history and politics as for admitted neophytes. Fifteen tables, most of which summarize the caucus results of 1972-1984, add considerably to the value of those chapters; the tables are the best way to convey the quantitative data they contain. Eleven cartoons from the *Des Moines Register* by Frank Miller and Brian Duffy also enhance the volume, many of them combining with Winebrenner's text to remind those who have followed Iowa politics during the 1970s and 1980s, particularly readers of "the newspaper Iowa depends upon," of various developments and moments related to the Iowa precinct caucuses of 1972-1984. Unfortunately, perhaps due to a rush to meet a timely publication date, the book contains many stylistic flaws, including frequent inadequate punctuation, occasional unfortunate word choices, and some sentences that cry out for clarification.

Regardless of how one evaluates the Iowa precinct caucuses, they have been one of the most important events in the presidential nomination process in each of the past five presidential elections. As the first scholarly study of the phenomenon, Winebrenner's volume is a valuable addition to the literature on the candidate selection process and on the state's history and politics.

The New History and the Old: Critical Essays and Reappraisals, by Gertrude Himmelfarb. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987. 209 pp. Notes, index. \$20.00 cloth.

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The past twenty-five years have witnessed the most revolutionary, far-reaching changes in historical writing and scholarship since the origins of professional, academic history. The terms "new history" or "new social history" are often used as labels for the most important new developments. Actually, there have been at least three major, different, but related aspects of this historical revolution: a more critical political and ideological perspective, the emergence of New Left history; a dramatic methodological change with the emergence of social science techniques and theories; and new subject matter, the panoply of women's, minority, ethnic, working-class, and everyday life topics that have become popular staples. Collectively, the topics, approaches, and ideologies of the new history have touched off voluminous, often bitter debates among historians. Gertrude Himmelfarb's *The New History and the Old* is a significant recent contribution.

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