radical tradition left little permanent mark on American culture in general, on the American labor movement, or on later manifestations of radicalism in the United States.

Partisans and Progressives: Private Interest and Public Policy in Illinois, 1870–1922, by Thomas R. Pegram. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992. xiv, 297 pp. Notes, bibliography, index. $42.50 cloth.

REVIEWED BY JOHN DAVID BUENKER, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-PARKSIDE

Partisans and Progressives should be read and pondered by every serious student of twentieth-century American political history and by every citizen who has ever wondered why "the modern American polity inhibits thoroughgoing solutions to the problems of an advanced industrial society and fails to provide equal access to power and preferment" (xi–xii). On one level, it is simply the best study to date of the origins, nature, development, failure, decline, and legacy of Progressive Era reform in a single midwestern state. On another, it is an important landmark in the evolution of the "new policy history," a cogent case study of "the formation of public power in the Progressive Era and its influence on modern American politics and governance" (ix). On either level, *Partisans and Progressives* is a rare blending of careful scholarship and unconventional wisdom.

In brief, Thomas R. Pegram examines the question of how a state that produced such renowned progressive thinkers and activists as Raymond Robins, Ernst Freund, Charles Merriam, Jane Addams, John Dewey, Graham Taylor, Clarence Darrow, and John Peter Altgeld—people passionately devoted to the supremacy of "the public interest"—could end by engendering "partisan reform" and "marketplace pluralism." His answer is at once sophisticated and persuasive, and is equal to the complexity and subtlety of the subject matter.

For one thing, this coalition of intellectuals, professionals, settlement house workers, and civic organizers grossly undervalued the tenacious hold that ethnic, racial, religious, class, and geographical loyalties had on the state's fragmented, contentious, and discontented masses. Appeals to the public interest had little impact on those who experienced life daily as a ferocious struggle among disadvantaged groups competing for scarce resources. For another, Pegram's reformers seriously underestimated the pervasive power

that could be wielded by corporate and other special interests on behalf of their own privileged positions, power that could turn the progressives' arguments on their heads, redefine the public interest in their own image, and secure for them the support of many Illinoisans who surely would have benefited from reform.

By the same token, Illinois progressives failed to reckon with the adaptability and savvy of the state's professional politicians, who cannily transformed the nonpartisan ideal of the reformers into a new brand of partisanship centered in the executive branch. As the latter expanded exponentially in response to progressive demands for increased state regulation, administration, and planning, a series of governors constructed personalized, streamlined partisan organizations that acquired a virtual stranglehold over both state government and the electoral process. Eschewing the broad-based, ethnocultural, partisan appeals of late nineteenth-century politics, aspiring officeholders built personal organizations, urged voters to choose "the man" and not "the party," and crafted policy packages designed to gain the support and financial backing of a coalition of organized interest groups. Having no practical access to the new centers of power in either government or party, the unorganized dropped out of the process in escalating numbers.

Most damaging of all, according to Pegram, was the inability of the reformers themselves to resolve the dilemma between efficiency and democracy and to recognize the biases inherent in their conception of the public interest. Imbued with the tenets of the emerging professions and social sciences, they were unconsciously oriented toward doing things "for" others, rather than "empowering" the disadvantaged. The ideal, as Charles McCarthy phrased it in his influential *The Wisconsin Idea,* was to make the state the "efficiency expert" that would disinterestedly and scientifically dispense social justice and represent the powerless many against the powerful few. To the modern ear, McCarthy's assurance that it was safe to entrust such administrative power to appointed experts so long as the electorate retained control of the policy makers in the legislature and the executive seems naive at best.

In the long run, as Pegram argues astutely and persuasively, the reformers' reliance upon "administrative reform" not only failed to promote the public interest, but "damaged hopes for democracy and solidified the control of partisan leaders over the machinery of the state" (xiii). By turning politics into a contest between well-heeled and tightly organized interest groups and political action committees that the author dubs "marketplace pluralism," Illinois progressives unwittingly guaranteed that the public interest would

remain merely an abstract ideal, not a measure of reality, and that the unorganized and disadvantaged would have little or no stake in political outcomes. "In their optimistic pursuit of the public interest," Pegram concludes, "progressives miscalculated the willingness of people to forfeit their personal interest for the sake of community progress, exaggerated the probity and effectiveness of government institutions, and overlooked the extent to which progressive nonpartisanship was itself an expression of a discrete agenda" (222–23).

Whether Pegram has produced an analysis with anything like universal explanatory power will, of course, require intensive studies of other states along the lines that he has prescribed for Illinois, with due allowance for the unique political culture of each entity. In neighboring Wisconsin, for example, the forces of reform were much more powerful and better organized, dominated state politics for a decade and a half, faced far less formidable opposition, and achieved far more in the direction of making state government, in conjunction with the university, the arbiter and defender of the public interest. In the longer run, however, the outcome of the Wisconsin idea was not nearly as different from that in Illinois as its exponents and celebrants like to believe. Ominously, even McCarthy was forced to acknowledge that the only effective democratic checks on administrative reform were "a fearless, honest and capable legislature" and "a half-dozen concrete vital elements—the accountant, the statistician, the actuary, the chemist, red blood and a big stick" (*The Wisconsin Idea* [1912], 193). As Pegram observes of Illinois progressives, these "did not succeed" (xi).

Gender on the Line: Women, the Telephone, and Community Life, by Lana F. Rakow. Illinois Studies in Communications. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992. xiii, 165 pp. Notes, bibliography, index. $24.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY MARJORIE LEVINE, UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

Of the few scholarly studies that explore the intersection of gender, the telephone, and small towns, most have focused on manual switchboard operators—overwhelmingly female—and their important role in the information networks of communities. As telephone *users* women have traditionally been represented as gossips. In *Gender on the Line,* Lana F. Rakow undermines the notions that women's productive telephone work ended with the era of manual operators, and that women's talk on the telephone is nonproductive and

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