

seek and test ways that society can deal with its problems, both urban and rural.

Better City Government is a very well-researched volume and the author provides us with a solid historical study of how political theory develops and how it is put to use. Unfortunately the book also shows that historians and political scientists are all too often not trained as writers. The author's style is turgid and typical of most doctoral dissertations; sometimes this detracts from the impact of the book's very important contribution to American urban history.

—James Ware
Louisiana State University
at Eunice

Agriculture in the Great Plains, 1876-1936. Edited by Thomas R. Wessel. Washington, D.C.: Agricultural History Society, 1976. pp. 263. \$8.00.

The Agricultural History Society began a series of symposiums on specialized topics in 1967. The third, on Midwestern agriculture, was held at Iowa State University and the resulting volume was reviewed in the *Annals* (43: 156). *Agriculture in the Great Plains, 1876-1936* prints the papers read at the sixth symposium, at Montana State University, Bozeman. The time span is limited to the period of white agricultural settlement and adaptation, not fully successful, to the semi-arid climate. Earlier Indian farming and the brief but romanticized open range livestock industry are therefore excluded. The area discussed stretches from Texas to the Canadian Prairie Provinces.

One contributor, political scientist Donald Hadwiger, teaches at Iowa State University and the editor, Thomas R. Wessel of the host institution, and several others are former Iowans. Several papers cite the work of Atlantic native M. L. Wilson and early Iowa State professor Charles Bessey. Much attention is paid to failures by early twentieth-century Great Plains agriculturists from the farms and cities of more humid states, presumably including Iowa. Editor Wessel properly wrote that not every subject can be covered but that a symposium should be "raising questions, exchanging information, and stimulating further research." Questions raised by this volume, from an Iowa perspective, include the reasons for leaving the humid region of usually adequate rainfall for crops and forage. Agricultural historians of particular regions overlook most farmers who move elsewhere or who leave agriculture altogether. How many young Iowans were unable or unwilling to establish themselves at home because of population growth, rising land prices, or increasing tenancy? What were the actual or perceived differences between buying or renting in Iowa and moving to newer states? Did migration routes change from nineteenth-century patterns? How effective was the promotion of new farms on the Plains? How many Iowa farmers moved instead to grow-

ing cities near and far? Iowa actually lost population in the first decade of this century, in part because of migration to the Great Plains, but historians have yet to measure and explain the outmigration, in contrast to the stream from Oklahoma to California in the Depression. What became of the earlier farmers and villagers driven out by drought and low prices—did some later return to Iowa? State and federal manuscript censuses, county records (where preserved), and published reminiscences may provide some data for Iowa and for the Plains.

The twenty papers together constitute excellent work on the institutions, techniques, and economics of American Great Plains and Canadian Prairie Provinces agriculture for most of the past century. No one can understand the region without an awareness of the topics discussed at the Bozeman symposium, from dry farming to irrigation and from the application of the homestead law to recent political movements. The book has no map, but the publisher usefully keeps footnotes at the bottom of the pages and provides an adequate index.

—Earl M. Rogers
The University of Iowa

Harvey Ingham & Gardner Cowles, Sr.: Things Don't Just Happen, by George Mills. Edited by Joan Bunke. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1977. pp. x, 165. \$7.95.

"What? You've never heard of George Mills?" old-time readers of the *Des Moines Register* ask in some dismay when this and other once-familiar public names draw a blank stare from young men and women. Through two generations the "George Mills" by-line appeared almost daily on the front page of the *Register* whenever the Iowa Legislature was in session. It was a name Iowa politicians, especially, knew and respected.

The Iowa State House was Mills' beat for twenty-eight years. While the careers of big and little politicians waxed and waned Mills was the one person who provided a continuity, who interpreted and told the citizens what was going on and who, because of his own personal integrity, ultimately became a sort of watch-dog over the morals of the State House. It's safe to say as time went on no action was ever contemplated in that place without a thought as to what George Mills would be writing in the *Register*.

His stories won Iowa Associated Press awards three times. When the Legislature was not in session Mills was the *Register's* "star reporter" most likely to be sent when big stories needed to be covered in depth.

Since retiring in 1971 Mills hasn't been able to keep his fingers off his typewriter, specializing in historical articles and books. In 1976 he was lured into the new field of electronic journalism as legislative reporter and political analyst for Station WHO-TV. So the name, and now the face, is becoming

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