

Unfortunately, this ambitious thesis rests on a weak foundation. Gibbs has researched local newspapers, the files of the Missouri Council of Defense and other wartime organizations, and several letter collections, but the documentation is quite limited in scope, frequently anecdotal, and occasionally suggests a contradictory interpretation. Do reports of suicides, self-mutilations, and hastily arranged marriages support the view that Missourians had an unusual proclivity for avoiding military service when Gibbs's own statistics indicate that they volunteered at a rate more than seven percent above the national average while their requests for deferments were within national norms? His account of widespread nonparticipation in bond drives is also less than convincing.

One of the most intriguing statements in the book comes in the introduction, where Gibbs reports that "limited research" he conducted in the eight states bordering Missouri indicates "that Missourians were not alone in their opposition and refusal to participate" (viii). Although he makes no specific reference to Iowa, there are some superficial impressions that he may be correct. During the months before the 1916 gubernatorial contest between Republican William Lloyd Harding and Democrat Edwin T. Meredith, Iowans engaged in a lively debate over the respective merits of bureaucratic centralism (modernization?) and local democracy (traditionalism?). At the center of this conflict were two organizations, the Greater Iowa Association and the United Taxpayers League. Whether the Iowa experience—seemingly a conflict between those who wanted greater efficiency and others alarmed by the loss of local autonomy—parallels events in Missouri remains unclear, but after 1917 American involvement in the war certainly accelerated the process of economic and political centralization. It would be worthwhile, therefore, to look at Iowa during the war and determine whether Gibbs's thesis has wider implications. By challenging historians to reexamine old assumptions, Gibbs has written an important book. Even if additional research fails to substantiate his views, all of us who are interested in the response of midwesterners to World War I are in his debt.

*The Mild Reservationists and the League of Nations Controversy in the Senate*, by Herbert F. Margulies. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1989. ix, 300 pp. Tables, bibliography, index. \$39.00 cloth.

REVIEWED BY FREDERICK C. ADAMS, DRAKE UNIVERSITY

Professor Margulies is convinced that if the United States had joined the League of Nations, "the process by which Americans adjusted to

twentieth-century international realities probably would have been significantly accelerated" (273). Thus he is drawn to the Senate debate over the Versailles Treaty in large part to try to figure out what went awry. Since others have studied the actions of President Woodrow Wilson, the Democrats, and the Irreconcilables (the Republican senators who opposed American participation in any type of international organization), he concentrates on those senators who were known as the Mild Reservationists. The latter consisted of moderate Republicans who, though favoring American participation in the League, had concerns about some aspects of the covenant. Because formal amendments would have prolonged the overall ratification process, Mild Reservationists proposed several "interpretations" of those clauses that caused them the greatest uneasiness. They believed that this approach would both allow the League of Nations to begin operations in a timely fashion and protect American interests.

As Margulies admits, the Mild Reservationists faced an uphill battle. One problem involved the size of the bloc: the group consisted of only ten individuals. Since the Senate was nearly evenly divided (forty-nine Republicans and forty-seven Democrats), they could not by themselves provide the Democrats with the required two-thirds majority needed for ratification. To be successful, they would have to bring along several Republican fence-sitters (two of whom were from Iowa: Albert Cummins and William Kenyon). But to do this, the Mild Reservationists would have to insist on more rigid interpretations, ones that the Democratic leadership likely would oppose. A second problem was that they were caught in a contradictory situation. Their hopes for ratification inclined them to work with the Democrats. But their even stronger desire for a Republican victory in the 1920 presidential election made it difficult for them to break party ranks. A third problem was that Senate Majority Leader Henry Cabot Lodge was very skillful at keeping the party unified behind a program that he was confident Wilson would reject. Finally, Wilson and the Democratic leadership were unwilling to deal at a time when a compromise seemed possible. Therefore, the Mild Reservationists did not have much maneuvering room. They could not dictate the terms of the debate, and their ability to influence events depended on the existence of conditions over which they had no control.

For the most part, Margulies is sympathetic to these well-intentioned senators, believing that they "played reasonably well the hand that was dealt them" (xiii). Unquestionably, he is correct to insist that they were not responsible for the League's defeat. Whether the topic needs a book-length study is another matter. There is an awful lot of tedious detail and repetition that adds little to the main argu-

ment. Also, Margulies does not explain how the volatile domestic setting created a highly charged partisan environment in which moderate and conservative Republicans were determined to defeat Wilson. As Arno J. Mayer indicated more than twenty years ago, these groups worried more about the progressive domestic implications of a Wilson treaty victory than they did about American participation in the League itself. Ultimately, class and partisan concerns triumphed, as is evidenced by the Mild Reservationists' loyalty to Lodge.

*Zig-Zag-and-Swirl: Alfred W. Lawson's Quest for Greatness*, by Lyell D. Henry, Jr. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1991. xix, 336 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$29.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY H. ROGER GRANT, UNIVERSITY OF AKRON

Few Americans now remember the versatile career of Alfred W. Lawson (1869-1954), although more might recall him had he exploited several opportunities for greatness. Born in England but raised in Detroit, Lawson left home as a teenager and soon entered the burgeoning world of professional baseball. He failed to establish himself as a player in the major leagues, but he achieved modest fame as manager of minor-league teams and early organizer of barnstorming trips to Cuba.

Lawson next turned to journalism and aviation. In 1904 he wrote a utopian novel, *Born Again*, in which he glorified the wonders of a technologically advanced society. But rather than launch a perfect society, Lawson became infatuated with the commercial possibilities of aviation. He started two trade journals and after World War I built an airplane for carrying large numbers of passengers. Even though his test craft performed well, the endeavor collapsed financially. Lawson seemingly possessed the knack for failing when success might have been within reach. By the time of Lawson's aviation phase, those who knew him realized that he was a talented albeit odd individual. One associate aptly called him a "cross between a crackpot and a genius."

Lawson's crackpot inclinations became apparent during the 1930s. Concerned about the plight of victims of the Great Depression, Lawson was one of the first to see the need for a crusade to uplift the troubled. This he did with his Direct Credits Society, based in Detroit and centered mostly in the Midwest. Lawson's blueprint for a better America involved his "perfect economic plan"; he wanted abolition of the gold standard and a cheap-money monetary policy. At the heart of his scheme was the idea of interest-free loans from the federal government. Even though thousands of hard-pressed Americans gravi-

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