

The Public Lands in Jacksonian Politics, by Daniel Feller. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984. xvi, 264 pp. Notes, bibliography, index. \$29.50 cloth.

In *The Public Lands in Jacksonian Politics*, Daniel Feller has made an important contribution to our understanding of the sectional and partisan controversies over the public lands and, in the process, has deepened our knowledge of the second American party system. His impressive analysis, packed into fewer than two hundred pages, shows how the new intersectional parties defused potentially divisive sectional issues, not the least of which was land policy.

In his first two chapters, Feller provides an informed but cursory survey of federal land policy through the Land Act of 1820, which ended the credit system and established a price of \$1.25 an acre. He also demonstrates the increasing importance of the land issue and relates it to the growth of the new West, whose insistent demands for terms that would encourage rapid settlement encountered resistance in other sections. From there he moves to the involvement of the land question with the issue of internal improvements, again stressing the interplay of sectional influences. During the administration of John Quincy Adams, while sectional attitudes predominated in votes on land, internal improvements, and tariff issues, partisanship first became an operative factor as well. For a brief period during 1830 and 1831, with the attitude of the Jackson partisans as yet undefined, there were efforts to forge an alliance of the South and the West behind a lowered tariff and cheap lands. This alignment, as Feller argues persuasively, was short-lived because of the inherently opposed interests of the two regions. By 1833, with the adjustment of the tariff controversy; with the strong commitment of Clay and his adherents to a plan to distribute the proceeds of land sales to the states; and with Jackson's endorsement of Thomas Hart Benton's scheme to "graduate," or reduce, the price of unsold lands, partisanship was replacing sectionalism as the main determinant of land-policy alignments. Thereafter, with the Whigs favoring distribution and the Democrats rallying behind graduation, a virtual stalemate ensued. Neither party was able to enact its program. Consequently, except for the passage of several preemption acts, which enabled squatters to purchase lands after they were opened to settlement, the government made no significant changes in land policy.

Most interesting in Feller's study is the manner in which the establishment of political parties altered the framework for handling such sectionally divisive issues as land policy, internal improvements, and the tariff. Ingenious political leaders in both parties devised stands on these volatile questions that would enable the parties to hold

together nationally without alienating any of their sectional constituencies. What made this feat possible, of course, was localists' willingness to subordinate their demands to the higher goal of party unity. From another perspective, we observe the national government's inability to formulate and implement any genuine policies, for reasons at which Feller hints, but does not explore adequately.

Daniel Feller has done for the land issue what other scholars have done in recent years for the tariff and the bank: he has related it admirably to the swirling politics of the Jacksonian Era. His work is based on prodigious research in national and state sources, and it stands as the authoritative treatment of the subject.

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY

RICHARD P. MCCORMICK

The Triumph of Sectionalism: The Transformation of Ohio Politics, 1844-1856, by Stephen E. Maizlish. Kent: Kent State University Press, 1983. xiv, 310 pp. Notes, bibliography, index. \$25.00 cloth.

Stephen Maizlish correctly believes that the interaction between national political trends and events in a single state helps illuminate the full range and complexity of the American past. In *The Triumph of Sectionalism: The Transformation of Ohio Politics, 1844-1856*, he microscopically examines the antebellum political transformation in Ohio as the Jacksonian party system gave way to North-South confrontation. His argument is direct and unambiguous. In Ohio, the issues that defined Jacksonian politics—largely economic (with banking policy as the most prominent)—lost their relevance in the mid-1840s. In consequence, political warfare became arid, the parties' meaning faded, bitter factionalism grew, and political chaos resulted. Sectional tensions became strong enough to reshape and refocus politics along a new fault line. It was a linear procession beginning with conflict over Texas expansion. "By November, 1844, the pattern of change was unmistakable" (27). By 1849, sectionalism had "come to dominate" Ohio politics (70). In 1854-1855, the Kansas-Nebraska controversy capped what had been a decade-long sectionalizing process.

In his examination of Ohio's particular response to these forces, Maizlish has mounted a powerful historiographic counterrevolution: the return to historical center of the traditional perspective about the dominance of sectionalism and the coming of the Civil War.¹ Clearly,

1. See Joel H. Silbey, "The Civil War Synthesis in American Political History" in Silbey, *The Partisan Imperative: The Dynamics of American Politics Before The Civil War* (New York, 1985), 3-12.

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