

hoping to force consideration of such radical policy alternatives as the subtreasury plan and the free coinage of silver.

The People's party was virtually doomed to failure because the political power of an aggrieved population is severely limited in a "winner-takes-all" electoral system. Thus the shift to apolitical strategy was naive. Moreover, the subtreasury plan and the demand for the free and unlimited coinage of silver were also naive because, regardless of their alleged inherent virtues, they threatened the well-being of various powerful interest groups who were bound to react negatively. Between 1892 and 1896 the subtreasury idea faded because it was too radical for many politicians, bankers, and commodity speculators, while the Democratic party, with the connivance of Populist fusionists more interested in electoral success than their own organization overtook the free coinage plan. The movement declined rapidly after 1896 because of internal organizational and philosophical conflict coupled with intense external pressures from the established political parties.

Barnes's claim that sociological theory uncovers heretofore invisible key issues is not substantiated in her work. Her book, although it is interesting, adds little to the body of knowledge concerning the Farmers' Alliance and the Peoples' party in Texas which historians using more traditional methods have already compiled. This is not to say, however, that the body of knowledge is complete; many gaps remain. Further research in county and local records, for example, might produce a clearer picture of those who joined the protest movement along with their changing attitudes and motivations during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. This study, which relies almost entirely upon newspapers and secondary sources, offers nothing of that sort. The best that can be said for it is that by calling attention to the shortcomings in the work of several historians (even though failing to adequately redress them) it re-emphasizes that the farmers' revolt is still a fruitful area for historical research.

MIDWESTERN STATE UNIVERSITY

KENNETH E. HENDRICKSON, JR.

The Wool-Hat Boys: Georgia's Populist Party, by Barton C. Shaw. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1984. 237 pp. Map, bibliography, index. \$22.50 cloth.

The Wool-Hat Boys is a well-written and crisp narrative of Georgia populism from the 1880s until its tortured demise around 1910. It attempts to fill a serious void in our political history. Not since C. Vann Woodward's *Tom Watson: Agrarian Rebel* (1938) has there been such a complete overview of this troubled period in Georgia politics. Barton

Shaw correctly observes that historians have hardly arrived at any sort of consensus about the nature of this widespread movement. The origins, motivations, and goals of Populists have baffled historians for decades. Why this agrarian revolt emerged so strongly in Kansas and Georgia, for example, and yet failed so miserably in Iowa, is not entirely clear. Shaw's examination of a single state like Georgia seeks to illuminate the movement's primary purposes.

We can attribute the origins of discontent in Georgia to an inadequate political response to a deteriorating economy. By the 1880s internal rivalries wracked the dominant Democratic party just when it was trying to cope with the increasing troubles in the agricultural community. Unlike some historians, Shaw contends the economic downturn was more responsible for political innovation than any inherent cultural clash between farmers and urban industrial interests. In Georgia there were even three distinct factions among the farmers. The first, led by William J. Northen, advocated scientific agriculture and a comity of interests with the railroad and industrial sectors of the economy. A second faction originated in the Farmers' Alliance and stressed the subtreasury scheme. Farmers' cooperatives supported by substantial federal financial assistance would eliminate greedy middlemen, cut costs, and raise product prices. The third group with its spokesman Thomas E. Watson was also a product of the Farmers' Alliance experience. This view held that the enemies of the "wool-hat boys" were more threatening and pervasive. Survival of small farmers depended on the adoption of the subtreasury, government ownership of the railroads, and more strident and independent politics.

During the late 1880s and early 1890s it became increasingly clear that the leaders of the Georgia Democratic party were unable to unwillingly to incorporate the demands of the Farmers' Alliance into their program. The result was a variety of political responses. Some Alliancemen, such as Congressman Leonidas F. Livingston, refused to abandon their traditional party affiliations. Others, especially the Watson faction, proceeded to organize the Populist party. The first real test of the nascent political movement was the presidential and state elections of 1892. While the returns were very disappointing, genuine interest in populism emerged again a year later when the United States plunged into a devastating depression. The subsequent gallant efforts of Watson, William L. Peek, and James K. Hines in the 1894 and 1896 elections garnered more farmer and some middle-class support, but not enough to overthrow the Democratic party in Georgia. After 1896 frustration and despair presided over the party remnants until their final disappearance a decade later.

Why did Georgia populism fail? In answering this question Shaw's

narrative cries out for a more sophisticated analysis and a deeper understanding of the Populist voters. Despite the title, which refers to the small independent and tenant farmers who supported populism, Shaw's work is political history in the old style with an emphasis on the leaders rather than the masses. The author handles the activities of the Populist chieftains and their campaign strategies competently. We nevertheless need to know more about who the Populist banner attracted and why. Shaw provides only incomplete answers to why relatively few farmers joined the new political movement. Blacks did not flock to the Populists in disproportionate numbers although the evidence Shaw provides is qualitative. As noted before, not all members of the Farmers' Alliance went to this political extreme either. Examination of the Tenth Congressional District, which included Watson's home county, led Shaw to conclude that "economics is only a partial explanation of the nativity of Georgia Populism" (164). But when economic discontent was linked with a long tradition of anti-Democratic behavior, populism flourished. That particular district had an antebellum tradition of supporting the Whig and other parties against the Democracy. This heritage, the author contends, persisted into the late nineteenth century and fostered an independent political movement. The Whigs had enjoyed widespread success in Georgia, but Shaw does not explain why other sections of the state were not hotbeds of populism, unfortunately. Some statistical analysis of this issue (as well as black voting behavior) would have been enlightening.

Mass support was limited and the nature of the Populist appeal compounded the problem. "The ultimate failure of Populism in Georgia," Shaw argues, was that "there were in fact few differences between Georgia Democrats and Populists" (118). Populists could therefore never inspire additional voters to their cause. That the people perceived the two parties as being nearly identical in that time of crisis would seem to belie the emotional intensity exhibited during the campaigns. Shaw notes, however, that both sides vigorously exploited the race issue and the southern version of the bloody shirt for their own political advantage. In the legislature Populists demanded electoral and economic reform, but so did a number of Democrats. "The real legislative battles were usually between reformers and Bourbons rather than Democrats and Populists," Shaw concludes (139). In the absence of substantive political differences Georgia voters were apparently influenced by the personalities of the candidates rather than issues, and neither party had monopolies on charisma, rhetorical ability, or honesty. Unable to overcome the traditional party loyalties, Georgia populism withered after 1896.

What one could extrapolate about the Iowa or midwestern experi-

Book Reviews

ence with populism is problematic given the incomplete nature of Shaw's analysis. One gets the sense that to some extent populism represented the politics of frustration in Georgia. With two healthy parties in Iowa, discontent could have been better contained; but more work is needed. Although Shaw sketches well the outlines of Georgia populism, the most penetrating insights of C. Vann Woodward will still remain central to our understanding of this political phenomenon. Populism still awaits its historian to synthesize a broad interpretation encompassing the South and Midwest.

CORNELL COLLEGE

M. PHILIP LUCAS

Plowshares to Printouts: Farm Management as Viewed through 75 Years of the Northwest Farm Managers Association, by Hiram M. Drache. Danville, Ill.: Interstate Printers & Publishers, 1985. xii, 261 pp. Notes, illustrations, bibliography, index. \$14.95 cloth.

Author of several books on American agriculture, and professor of history at Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota, Hiram M. Drache has spent much of his life working on farms as well as writing about them. His combination of practical experience and library research contributes to the strengths of this history of the Northwest Farm Managers Association. Organized in the years before World War I, the association brought together professional farm managers of the Red River Valley in North Dakota and northwestern Minnesota. Responding to the spread of agricultural technology on bonanza farms and to problems unique to the region and to large-scale farming, the association provided a forum for sharing ideas and solving problems, principally through annual meetings and summer tours. Much of the association's success derived from the energetic devotion of its long-time executive secretary, Cap E. Miller.

Drache's book provides insights into the changing technology and problems of large-scale farming, which were particularly evident in subjects discussed at annual meetings: farm recordkeeping, diversification, rural electrification, tractor power versus horse power, and the merits of chemicals. Only the reader already knowledgeable about twentieth-century agriculture will derive much value from Drache's account, however. Rather than analysis or meaningful content he piles detail on detail, largely in the form of chronological reporting of annual meetings and summer tours. Moreover, he hints at significant subjects and themes but inadequately develops them. Drache fails to explain, for example, why this association remained so apolitical (or so it appears from his account) when so many farmers in the Midwest

Copyright of Annals of Iowa is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.