

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.

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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

were among the nation's most political. Nor does he clarify the nature and extent of opposition to the Northwest Farm Managers Association, beyond very scant reference to the clue that many managers worked for large corporations based in the northeast. Indeed, Drache is curiously unhelpful in explaining the special needs and circumstances of professional farm managers in relation to their employers, tenants, other farmers, and agribusiness.

Plowshares to Printouts will provide some useful information for agricultural historians of the Midwest, but they will need to bring to it additional research and thought if this interesting part of the past is to have meaning. Perhaps the most challenging beginning Drache provides is his controversial assertion that "Weather, economic conditions, 'corporation farming,' and adversities, imagined or real, are often given as reasons for [farm] failure, but in almost all cases they are secondary causes to poor management" (x).

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Harvest of Grief: Grasshopper Plagues and Public Assistance in Minnesota, 1873-78, by Annette Atkins. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1984. 147 pp. Notes, illustrations, index. \$12.95 cloth.

Farming, as every Iowan knows, is risky business. The workings of the American and international economic systems supply most of the dangers. Weather contributes a substantial number, however, and at times, insects add greatly to the farmer's woes. Annette Atkins, an assistant professor of history at St. John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota, looks at one of those times and uses the episode as a case study of nineteenth-century responses to social crises. For American historians, particularly agricultural historians, her work has even larger meaning.

Written in a clear and lively manner, the book is impressively researched. Atkins has drawn upon private and public papers, government documents, newspapers, county histories, and novels. She has made use also of the writings of other scholars, especially Gilbert C. Fite, Daniel T. Rodgers, and Kai T. Erickson. Perhaps most important, the sources she tapped gave her access to the minds of farm people as well as government officials and politicians.

In some ways, this is only a small monograph. The text runs to but 127 pages. It focuses on less than a decade and on only one state. Grasshoppers plagued much of the Midwest in the 1870s, but Atkins limits her attention to one state, justifying the limitation with the argument that Minnesota was representative of the region and that concen-

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