

divisions of class, religion, and time of arrival within the German community. Like most recent students of mid-nineteenth century ethnic politics, she finds that voting rights for immigrants and other political dimensions of nativism were major issues, whereas slavery and European nationalism were not.

By any measure this book is a major contribution to American social history. It is characterized by thorough research, brilliant interpretation, and lucid writing. Conzen has set a new standard of excellence for urban and ethnic historians.

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*Robert M. La Follette and the Insurgent Spirit.* By David P. Thelen. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1976. Pp. ix, 211. Note on sources, index. \$7.50.)

There has long been a need for a one volume interpretative biography of "Fighting Bob" La Follette. David P. Thelen did not seek to fill this void, and it continues to exist. Like other books in the *Library of American Biography* series, this study focuses as much on the times as on the individual. The result, in this instance, is a provocative analysis of the "insurgent spirit" during the first quarter of the twentieth century with La Follette viewed as the chief representative of the "radical" reformers.

La Follette's service as a three term congressman from Wisconsin during the Gilded Age did not suggest the ardent progressive who emerged after 1897. As a governor and senator, "Fighting Bob" denounced corporate wealth and privilege and the inequities of the capitalistic system. When he opposed America's entry into World War I, he felt the wrath of those committed to "making the world safe for democracy." During the Harding-Coolidge years he kept the flame of reform burning in the midst of the darkness of corruption and economic repression. His courage won La Follette the respect of his enemies, and the Senate would later name him one of its five greatest members.

A determined and consummate politician, La Follette was not converted to progressivism as the result of a bribery attempt by a Stalwart, as he later alleged. Rather, he recog-

nized that the taxpayers and voters of Wisconsin demanded state and local governments that would equalize taxes and improve public and private services. When La Follette saw a change in emphasis by progressives toward concern for jobs and economic expansion, he accommodated this shift, but he continued to reflect the more "radical" aspects of progressivism. His efforts on behalf of the Seamen's Act combined concern for the welfare of American sailors with a desire to enhance the safety of passengers. Above all, La Follette kept abreast of the changing mood of the electorate in the Badger State and the Midwest.

Thelen's interpretation alternately challenges and frustrates. He writes of a "progressive movement" often divided between the "insurgents" and the "modernizers." His arguments are very similar to those made in his equally provocative book, *The New Citizenship* (1972). As Thelen places La Follette in the vanguard of those who wished to make government responsive to the problems of a nation being transformed by industrial capitalism, he attempts to make a distinction between the consumer/taxpayer "insurgents" and the job oriented "modernizers." In so doing, he tells the reader almost as much about the 1960s and 1970s as he does about the progressive era.

Undergraduates will find the book provoking and stimulating, and graduate students will be forced to come to grips with the theses. The general reader may long for more about La Follette and less of Thelen's analysis of "insurgency."

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*The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire: A History, 1916-1976.* By Hilda R. Carter and John R. Jenswold. (Eau Claire: University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire Foundation, Inc., 1976. Pp. xii, 162. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, appendixes, index. \$7.98.)

Alumni will find this sympathetic study of their school nostalgically rewarding. For others, it will constitute a case study of the virtual revolution in higher education of the recent past. Beginning as a noncollegiate normal school, the institution at Eau Claire progressed through the familiar