

brought higher prices for their produce, solving one of their most immediate problems. By the time the war ended, many of the farmers had gone back to their previous political loyalties, and the Ku Klux Klan units organized by hostile townsmen further encouraged them to reconsider their support of the socialist movement.

Burbank relied very heavily on newspapers, both pro- and anti-socialist, for his study of the period. He notes that few documents left by early socialist leaders were available to him. Because of this, the treatment of the subject on the whole is somewhat localized, and one wonders about the relationship between socialists in Oklahoma and those in other parts of the country at the same time. The appendixes contain a good selection of maps and tables showing voting patterns in the state during the period 1910-1924, but very little reference to this material is made in the text. Indeed, one feels that Burbank could have done a good deal more with voting statistics, surely a more objective source than many of the newspapers. Finally, Burbank has done little to make clear how socialism in Oklahoma fit into the larger picture of the farmer's attempt to adjust himself and his goals to rapidly changing economic conditions in the early twentieth century. Surely the socialists were not the only group to suggest farmers' cooperatives, for example, but one learns almost nothing about how possible competition or conflicts of interests with other farmers' organizations affected the success of the socialists.

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*Lucy Parsons: American Revolutionary.* By Carolyn Ashbaugh.  
(Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, for Illinois  
Labor History Society, 1976. Pp. 288. Illustrations, notes,  
index. Clothbound, \$10.00; paperbound, \$3.95.)

Lucy Parsons, widow of the Haymarket martyr Albert Parsons, was a radical activist who championed the cause of the poor, worked toward raising working class consciousness, and fought for the free speech movement. Her public career continued after her husband's death in 1887, and she worked long and hard in print and on the platform for most left wing causes in the United States until her death in 1942.

While Ashbaugh's study is a useful contribution to the history of American radicalism, it is not satisfying biography.

The author's enthusiastic partisanship for Lucy Parsons results in uncritical acclaim, and hagiography is a disservice to Parsons. Passion is best left to the victims of injustice whom Ashbaugh extensively quotes. The reader expects more development of character than simple repetitions of the description of the subject's mellifluous voice or her "piercing black eyes." Glimpses of the harsh personal cost paid by Parsons in her efforts are only suggested: the violence and disorder in her private life, her committal of her son to Illinois Northern Hospital for the Insane upon his enlistment in the Spanish American War, and the death of her young daughter. The author does not discuss what these tragedies reveal about her character nor how they affected her struggles with her adversaries.

Despite the handicap of the FBI's destruction of Parsons' papers and books after her death, the author has mined the collateral sources extensively. One half the book carries Lucy's life through her husband's execution in 1887. The second half narrates her efforts in the divided radical movements thereafter, including the tensions among and within the ranks of socialists, anarchists, syndicalists, the Industrial Workers of the World, and communists. The strongest sections of the book are those that focus on the intermingling of radical activists and causes. Ashbaugh uncritically takes Parsons' side in all the contests.

Although Parsons, unlike her antagonist Emma Goldman, was inconsistent in some of her positions, she offered a number of innovative ideas to the working class movement, including the "sit-down" so successfully used by a later generation of strikers in the mass production industries. Critics accused Parsons of joining any group with a revolutionary banner, but Ashbaugh shows that she always kept the goal of the working class struggle in sharp focus at the expense of ideological purity or party label.

The book raises questions that either Ashbaugh at some later date or another biographer should answer. How, for example, did Parsons survive in all those years of destitute poverty? Her wages as a seamstress were surely inadequate to cover her expenses in travel and publicity for her causes. And how was Lucy Parsons, a black woman, successful in rallying white male laborers at a time of racist division among reformers and hoi polloi alike?

The publisher is accountable for the careless proofing; for the sloppy printing job with double images in the paperbound edition; and for the thoughtless titling of chapters in the table

of contents and the book when end notes are grouped by number only. Despite her book's flaws, however, Ashbaugh has made a beginning toward examining the life of this fighter for social justice.

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*The Presidency of Warren G. Harding.* By Eugene P. Trani and David L. Wilson. (Lawrence: The Regents Press of Kansas, 1977. Pp. ix, 232. Frontispiece, notes, bibliographical essay, index. \$12.00.)

The aim of the *American Presidency Series*, according to its editors, is to bring together, synthesize, and draw conclusions from the best of the secondary literature on each presidential administration. In the case of the Warren G. Harding presidency the number of secondary accounts has grown enormously in recent years, reflecting both an increased availability of archival materials and new perceptions of the period's significance. The need for a synthesis has been great, and in this volume Eugene P. Trani and David L. Wilson go far toward providing one. Their command of the literature is impressive, their synthesis of it thoughtful and effectively presented, and their portrait of Harding's administration a balanced and generally convincing one.

On numerous matters Trani and Wilson accept the revisionism associated with Robert Murray, Andrew Sinclair, and Randolph Downes. They conclude, for example, that the famous "smoke-filled room" was more myth than reality, that Harding was a shrewd and effective politician, that he was not personally involved in the scandals perpetrated during his term in office, and that he did bring some highly capable men into his administration. They still conclude, however, that he and his administration were failures. He was, so it is argued, a weak leader of questionable morals at a time when the nation needed moral leadership. He had little understanding of the forces at work during the period or of how government could be used for constructive purposes. And the Harding administration's major achievements, depicted more as the work of Herbert Hoover, Charles G. Dawes, and Henry C. Wallace than of the president himself, were essentially stop gap actions. Despite the revisionism, the authors feel, Harding still deserves to rank near the bottom of presidential polls.