

a poor manager of Congress and the party and a bad judge of character. His actions divided the GOP, and in failing to revise the tariff he set the stage for a more serious crisis.

The portrait of William Howard Taft is perceptive and sympathetic. Deftly outlining the many causes of animosity between Taft and the progressives, the author explains the president's view of his role: administrator, quiet negotiator, and party leader. This approach, in the face of the rising expectations and antipartisan sentiment of the progressives, made him appear obstructive and forced him to rely on conservatives. Ultimately, Gould blames Roosevelt for the 1912 split. His presidency had fostered conflict, and his subsequent activities, more for personal than policy reasons, divided the party and devastated its progressive wing.

Gould presents Woodrow Wilson as an effective leader and flexible thinker. During Wilson's first term, according to Gould, modern politics finally emerged, as many interest groups sought federal assistance. The Wilsonian coalition disintegrated, but big-government advocates remained dominant among Democrats and subordinate in the GOP. Gould is here exaggerating precedent into transition, but he is correct on a very important point: the nature of politics had changed.

*Purdue University, West Lafayette*

Philip R. VanderMeer

*The Department of State on the Eve of the First World War.* By Rachel West. (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1978. Pp. 183. Notes, essay on sources, index. \$11.50.)

This compact monograph offers historians a fascinating "photograph" of the agency and individuals who conducted American diplomacy in 1913-1914. The result is not flattering to the Department of State or to the administration of President Woodrow Wilson.

In 1914 the department was small. There were 213 officers, clerks, and messengers in Washington; another 450 served abroad. West indicates that a traditional emphasis on Latin American and Far Eastern relations led to understaffing in the bureaus responsible for European affairs.

Along with organizational shortcomings, there were other serious problems. "The sheer amateurism of the department, the blindness of the highest officials—these stand out" (p. 3). Diplomats stationed abroad corresponded with Washington on routine matters—visas and commercial listings—but hesitated to communicate on more significant matters, fearing their

words would be lost in a bureaucratic pigeonhole or even rebuked. For instance, in July, 1914, Frank Mallett, vice-consul in Budapest, became the first United States diplomat to recognize the inevitability of war between Austria and Serbia. He sent this important dispatch to Washington by ordinary mail, not by cable. His warning exceeded the length expected of cables, and Mallett did not want to violate a regulation.

In the summer of 1914 West shows that the department was unprepared for war and unconcerned about a threat to world peace. Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan talked domestic politics at work and devoted weekends to earning additional income with speeches on peace, temperance, and the good life. Inexperienced officials handled department business while Counselor Robert Lansing vacationed in New York and Second Assistant Secretary Alvey Adee bicycled in Europe.

Abroad the United States was not well staffed to protect national interests or promote peaceful solutions to disputes. Major diplomatic posts went to large political contributors, and there were inexperienced political appointees in all significant European capitals except Paris. In Berlin, Ambassador James Gerard, who gained his appointment with the backing of Tammany Hall, lacked the president's confidence. Nor was he prescient. Gerard watched German military maneuvers with the kaiser and in July pronounced Berlin "as quiet as a grave" (p. 131). In St. Petersburg, where the Wilson administration needed an experienced diplomatic hand, there was no ambassador until after the war began.

This book, although narrow in scope, is thorough and professional, based as it is on extensive research in primary sources and English-language materials. The conclusions reinforce earlier interpretations but add significant detail that will benefit historians desiring anecdotes for classroom lectures. There is a minor weakness. The index contains only proper names and is not a useful guide to the volume's rich contents.

*The Ohio State University,*  
*Columbus*

Alfred E. Eckes, Jr.

*George W. Norris: The Triumph of a Progressive, 1933-1944.* By Richard Lowitt. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978. Pp. xiii, 493. Notes, illustrations, bibliographical essay, index. \$20.00.)

Richard Lowitt can now relax. After two decades of research and writing he has finished his magisterial trilogy on