

swept the section and, according to Summers, provided Republicans with the central element for their political program. By advocating railroad aid Republicans sought the support of ex-Confederates, as well as Unionists and freedmen, in reestablishing a vigorous economy and creating a new South. In their appeals to white southerners, Summers claims, Republicans propounded “a myth of Progress as a redeemer of the Old South” (p. 14), a “Gospel of Prosperity” that they proclaimed with religious rhetoric and revivalistic zeal. Messianic in its implications, this message centered upon the doctrine that railroad aid would save the South.

Once in office, therefore, Republicans focused upon the procurement of state aid for railroad development. Obtaining public funding, however, posed problems—insurmountable ones. Rampant localism undermined the financial bases of the roads, blocked the growth of a regional rail system, and heightened the chances of corruption. Not that corruption needed enhancement, for it attended the railroad issue at every stage. Promoters won friends in the legislatures through bribery, while solons used the railroads for their own political advantage. Moreover, this blind allegiance to railroad aid caused Republicans to lose sight of their own mission, betray their commitment to human rights and the Union, and become a divided party. In short, the problems created by railroad aid led, ultimately, to the failure of the “Gospel of Prosperity” and of Republicanism itself.

Summers bases his account of this Republican tragedy upon sound research, and his use of documented evidence is particularly impressive. Unfortunately, however, the book tends to be plodding and pedantic, and one becomes confused in its labyrinth of details. Furthermore, it is disappointing that Summers does not explore more extensively the religious dimensions of the “Gospel of Prosperity,” for that intriguing phenomenon deserves more thorough treatment. Finally, though Summers admits that railroad aid was not the *only* element of the Republican calamity, one wonders if it was really as central and crucial to that party’s collapse as he suggests. One thing is certain: Summers’s work will no longer permit historians to ignore that aspect of Reconstruction, and that alone makes his book a significant contribution.

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The Rise of Industrial America: A People’s History of the Post-Reconstruction Era. By Page Smith. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1984. Pp. xvi, 965. End maps, illustrations, index. \$29.95.)

Page Smith, professor emeritus of the University of California at Santa Cruz, has reached 1901: five thousand pages down;

many more to go. As his past award-winning works predict, one finds sprightly writing in this volume. "I see my role rather as that of the doorman who announces to the guests . . . 'Mr. William James, and Ms. Jane Addams . . .'" (p. 908). The guests speak for themselves in Smith's "innumerable biographies." A rich cross section of American life, including particularly women, Indians, and blacks, is presented.

Few American historians would attempt so monumental a task in this age of specialization. Their timidity receives some reinforcement as Smith falters in this transitional postreconstruction period. In his concluding chapter, "Retrospections," he acknowledges thematic problems. "My intention is to stuff into this chapter themes and topics that I have dealt with in earlier volumes but that, for the most part, have not found a convenient lodging place in this one . . ." (p. 909). Reluctant to give up his old themes and uneasy with his new ones, "the rise of science and the war between capital and labor" (p. xiii), the reader is too often left querying, "Why these people, and where is this chapter heading?" "Retrospections" ends with a whimper. Having discussed whether or not Americans were "happy" in 1900, Smith concludes: "the question is stubbornly resistant to an answer" (p. 928).

No work of such size avoids errors. Pullman was in Hyde Park Township but was never named Hyde Park (p. 192). John Hay's novel, *The Bread-Winners* (1882) did have good sales but not "greater than any novel published since the Civil War" (p. 190). No work of such scope handles with equal skill all aspects of history. Smith's economics seem dated. Of the year 1877 he proclaims: "Wages and working conditions were, in general, worse than they had been forty years earlier" (p. 165). This traditional generalization was challenged in 1966 in Douglass C. North's *Growth and Welfare in the American Past*, and current writings buttress North.

These one thousand pages, as the past four thousand, have not one footnote. This volume, as the past five, has no bibliography. Perhaps half the quotations are of the kind: "Adams sadly holds in *The Education of Henry Adams* . . ." The rest give no clues. From George Bancroft to Daniel Boorstin all national historians have given their readers the chance to examine their sources. Even a "people's" history should meet such basic professional standards.

This volume is not recommended despite its vibrant text and occasional insights.

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