

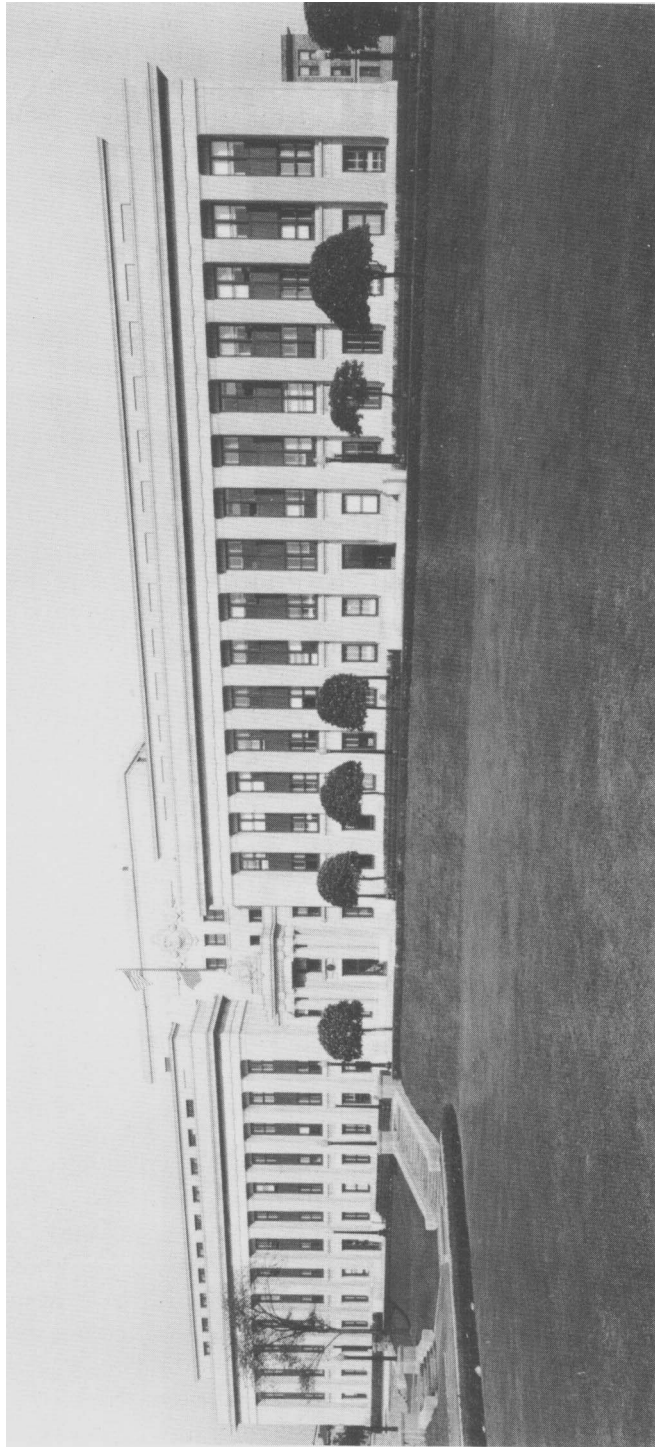
unity. Mennonites did not lose their identity, he says, but maintained a "peoplehood" based on the Bible, on the example of the apostolic church, and on the radical Anabaptist vision of the sixteenth century. The abuse of Mennonite conscientious objectors during World War I heightened their consciousness as a nonresistant people. Mennonitism is a marvelous mosaic, he says, but all its parts taken together produce a family likeness which is plain.

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For God & Country: The American Legion, 1919-1941. By William Pencak. (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1989. Pp. xviii, 411. Illustrations, notes, tables, bibliographical essay, index. \$40.00.)

Historians of modern America have devoted relatively little attention to groups and movements that have attempted to promote right-wing causes, conservative ideals, or "traditional values." Workers, women, ethnic minorities, political and intellectual radicals, and the poor—at one time or another all victims of persecution at the hands of forces defending the status quo—understandably have elicited more sympathy and attention. Those works that have dealt with conservative and right-wing groups have generally focused on well-known leaders, their ideas, and the cultural climate in which they gained influence. The social histories of conservative and right-wing movements in twentieth-century America, therefore, remain largely unwritten, and questions about the reasons for their movements' continued popularity have been left without reliable answers.

William Pencak's *For God & Country: The American Legion, 1919-1941* joins a small group of recent books by K. Austin Kerr, Lynn Dumenil, and Robert Alan Goldberg which has begun to address this problem. Although the American Legion was born in the era of the Red Scare and became well-known for its super-patriotic obsession with communism, Pencak asserts that the Legion's popularity in the interwar years cannot be explained simply by reactionary antiradicalism. The book's general theme is that the Legion's main purpose was to promote "the belief that personal freedom requires responsibility to a community defined both morally and historically" (p. 5). Pencak explains in great detail how the Legion's devotion to this idea led, during the Red Scare in particular, to a rabid, sometimes violent fixation on the International Workers of the World and other radical groups that challenged American institutions and threatened communal harmony in the process. The same commitment to community, however, also led the Legion into campaigns on behalf of the average citizen. First



AMERICAN LEGION HEADQUARTERS, INDIANAPOLIS, 1948

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among these citizens, naturally, were veterans, and Pencak describes the important role the Legion played in promoting veterans' rights and benefits. Yet the Legion also showed considerable support for mainstream labor unions and demonstrated some willingness to stand behind nonwhite Protestant ethnic minorities who had joined its ranks. Pencak also emphasizes the Legion's involvement in individual communities and its support for activities and causes as well known as American Legion baseball and as wide-ranging as public construction projects, emergency relief, conservation, and child welfare.

The great strength of this book is its thorough use of the Legion's archives in Indianapolis as well as the American Civil Liberties Union archives and other manuscript collections. At the same time, however, this is also the book's great weakness. Given Pencak's emphasis on community, one wishes he had gone beyond describing local events and circumstances as they appeared in files at the national headquarters and made a more systematic effort to explain the role that the Legion actually played in different communities. Had he combined his general observations with a bit of local analysis, for example, Pencak might have been able to describe more precisely than he does the social characteristics of Legion members and what distinguished them from other veterans and other groups of citizens. He might have been able to offer some explanation for the Legion's great popularity in Indiana. He might also have been able to offer a more penetrating analysis of the competing interests and conflicts that seemed to influence Legion activities, making members appear to support community business elites in some instances (by attacking Wobblies in the lumber community of Centralia, Washington, for example) and making them oppose business leaders in other cases (as Minnesota Legion members did in their campaign to protect wilderness areas from development).

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The Old Traditional Way of Life: Essays in Honor of Warren E. Roberts. Edited by Robert E. Walls and George H. Schoemaker. (Bloomington: Trickster Press, Indiana University Folklore Institute, 1989. Pp. xvi, 393. Illustrations, notes, bibliographies, maps, figures, table. Paperbound, \$15.00.)

Viewpoints on Folklife: Looking at the Overlooked. By Warren E. Roberts. (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Research Press, 1988. Pp. xv, 315. Notes, bibliographies, illustrations, tables, maps, index. \$44.95.)