

Partisans and Progressives: Private Interest and Public Policy in Illinois, 1870–1922. By Thomas R. Pegram. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992. Pp. xiv, 297. Notes, bibliography, index. \$42.50.)

Thomas R. Pegram's *Partisans and Progressives* is an interesting, insightful, and complex analysis of the central elements of political life in Illinois between 1870 and 1922. In seeking to explain the relative failure of Illinois reformers, the book raises important questions about progressivism and reform throughout the Midwest and the nation.

Pegram does not try to profile the characteristics of progressive reformers, describing them simply as middle class people not insensitive to their localistic, religious, or political backgrounds. He concentrates instead on explaining their perspective: a dominating concern with identifying and furthering the public interest, which rested on an assumption of the underlying harmony of society and a belief in the compatibility of efficiency and democracy.

Rather than write a complete history of Illinois politics, government, or policy making, the author takes a case study approach. He argues that early efforts to protect consumers or factory laborers failed because of conflicts between different economic interests (large and small farmers, labor and business) and various agencies, levels, and branches of government. According to Pegram, an attempt to pass a "reform" charter for Chicago in 1905–1907 was defeated by opposition from ethnic groups. Similarly, progressives' efforts to reform schools and public transit in line with their notions of public interest were repulsed by a host of cultural, class, gender, and political rivalries.

While the array of cultural and economic factors ("marketplace pluralism") competed with progressive notions of the public interest, reformers considered partisanship the major obstacle to furthering the public interest and good government. Their ideal of nonpartisan reform by state government was thwarted by the successful efforts of governors, starting with John Peter Altgeld (1893–1897), to link some reform policies with partisanship, their own political fortunes, and the governorship. Furthermore, the reformers' focus on administrative reform and bureaucracy, especially after 1910, ignored the conflict between efficiency and democracy. Thus, progressives seriously misunderstood the strength and nature of partisanship and failed to distinguish between their interests and the public interest.

This study is not without weaknesses. It assumes that "reformers" were a coherent and consistent group and that perceptions of "public interest" remained constant. It never examines party organization, governmental (including legislative) structure and behavior, or the meaning of partisanship (as ideology or behavior, and by

whom), and it generally ignores change over time. However, given the significance of Pegram's analysis, these flaws are probably best viewed as challenges in the revitalized study of progressivism which this study so ably encourages.

PHILIP VANDERMEER is associate professor of history, Arizona State University, Tempe, and is currently working on a study of the legal profession in the Midwest from the 1820s to the 1920s.

Dr. George: An Account of the Life of a Country Doctor. By George T. Mitchell. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1994. Pp. xv, 359. Illustrations, index. Clothbound, \$39.95; paperbound, \$19.95.)

"I have attempted to paint a picture of my life with words," writes Dr. George T. Mitchell (1914–) near the end of this large book (p. 345). The only child of a country doctor and a nurse at Marshall, Illinois (a few miles west of Terre Haute), Mitchell earned a B.S. degree in mechanical engineering from Purdue and an M.D. from George Washington University School of Medicine. At the close of his internship at Methodist Hospital in Indianapolis in 1941 he married a nurse, Mildred Miller, then joined the medical corps of the Army Air Corps and spent most of World War II as an administrator in army hospitals in southern California.

More than two-thirds of the book is about Mitchell's medical education and life up to this point (including episodes with two legendary figures in Indiana medicine, Dr. Goethe Link and Dean Willis D. Gatch of the Indiana University School of Medicine). Although Mitchell's approach tends to be anecdotal, poignant details impel the reader forward.

After the war Mitchell wanted to become a resident in orthopedic surgery in an Indianapolis hospital to prepare himself for a career in that specialty in the same city. Circumstances carried the Mitchells back to Marshall where "Dr. George," as he is known, has been a country doctor ever since. That label differentiated him from other doctors and dentists named Mitchell and continues to bestow affection.

Chapters 15, 16, 17, and 21 document changing patterns of disease Mitchell has encountered during the past half century and the adaptations he has made in his medical practice. Geography, accidents, births, and deaths remained constants as did impossible hours for the doctor until the advent of a medical center in the community and emergency medical technicians. Through continuity and change Mitchell learned much "by just keeping my head, by observing, and by consulting with others more knowledgeable" (p. 255). His chief regret is that he did not spend more time with his family: "Our daughters tell me they didn't know me during their childhood" (p. 349).