

the Pendergast machine. After a brief introductory chapter in which the extent of Pendergast's control of Kansas City and Missouri before 1939 is outlined, Hartmann recounts meticulously the story of the fall, from a treasury department official's tip to Missouri governor Lloyd C. Stark concerning a massive bribe accepted by Pendergast, to the boss's indictment, conviction, and imprisonment.

Pendergast was not the only fallen power broker in this drama. One of the strengths of Hartmann's account is his intimate detailing of the role played by Thomas Pendergast's henchmen, from the killing of John Lazia, the boss's "right hand man" and "the dominant figure on the north side of Kansas City, chiefly populated by Italians" to Robert Emmett O'Malley, Pendergast's close friend and state superintendent of insurance, to Matthew S. Murray, the director of public works of Kansas City who was later named as Missouri's state administrator for the Works Progress Administration (pp. 17, 13).

This book relates the inner workings of a powerful political machine and adds to a discussion of the interplay among local, state, and national New Deal politics.

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*Fighting Bob La Follette: The Righteous Reformer.* By Nancy C. Unger. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000. Pp. xiii, 393. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$39.95.)

Wisconsin's Senator Bob La Follette, righteous reformer of the Progressive era, had feet of clay. La Follette's careers—debater, attorney, congressman, governor, senator, presidential candidate, and always a fighter on behalf of the "common people"—have generally earned him high marks from historians. In Nancy C. Unger's biography, however, the great spokesperson for democracy was a tyrant at home. The critic of political machines ran one of his own. A governor who resisted the influence of the Badger state's senior U.S. senator, attempted to manipulate Madison when he became a senator. La Follette was possessed of a "messianic self-perception" (p. 225) but low self-esteem (p. 149); he "perpetually believed those with whom he disagreed were incapable of honorable motives" (p. 101); he was prone to paranoia, vanity, exaggeration, and sanctimony. He habitually drove himself to the brink of collapse but used ill health—often contrived—as a "handy rationalization in the event that he los[t] an election" (p. 81). Unger relentlessly proves that La Follette's "personal needs repeatedly superseded political and practical expediency" (p. 235).

Unger's thoughtful scrutiny of La Follette's childhood explores his Hoosier mother's devastating charge that he embody the noble

ideals of his deceased father. This impossible command helped create the flawed crusader. His talented and politically savvy wife, Belle Case La Follette, is the focus of one excellent chapter but thereafter nearly disappears from the narrative. Unger weaves just enough of the children's lives throughout to present a nuanced view of La Follette, while reinforcing her case about the cruel weight of paternal expectations.

In the always interesting relationship between La Follette and Theodore Roosevelt, it is the latter who comes off sympathetically. The senator routinely cancelled meetings with President Roosevelt, wrote him "wheedling . . . condescending. . . and sometimes insulting" letters (p. 195), and took "solace in . . . perceiving Roosevelt as shallow, hypocritical, self-serving, and weak" (p. 149). Yet they did not always oppose each other. They believed that "the supreme issue . . . is the encroachment of the powerful few upon the rights of the many," (p. 103) and abhorred not the size of corporations but "their efforts to control prices, stifle competition, and create monopolies" (p. 121). Unger analyzes La Follette's devastating 1911 Philadelphia speech and delineates the baleful effects of the senator's supposed breakdown on his presidential campaign.

La Follette sought the presidency five times, beginning with the 1912 election. Unger condemns the attempts as hopeless and a waste of the senator's time and money. La Follette hungered for the highest office but never could stop seeing things in "black and white, not the innumerable shades that color the real world. He believed he was right. Nothing else, including the support of his party, mattered" (p. 225).

And yet, despite this all-too-humanizing look at "Fighting Bob," it is difficult not to admire him. His commitment to racial justice and women's suffrage, the rights of workers and the poor, diplomacy before bloodshed in 1914, and to doing right regardless of the consequences commands respect. Unger's readable and thoroughly researched biography deserves a broad readership.

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*Dying in the City of the Blues: Sickle Cell Anemia and the Politics of Race and Health.* By Keith Wailoo. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001. Pp. ix, 338. Illustrations, notes, index. Clothbound, \$34.95; paperbound, \$16.95.)

"The history of sickle cell," writes Keith Wailoo, "is presented here as a window on medicine, race, and American society" (p. 3). In this carefully contextualized study of a particular disease—sickle cell anemia—in a particular place, twentieth century Memphis, Keith