

of living on the Marquette Iron Range: how mining work stoppages and, later, closures impacted the fortunes of almost every family in town. The undergarment factory was one of the few employers that could guarantee a steady income for women and help them bring stability to their home lives. The Gossard Girls also helped to stabilize the local economy by using a portion of their paychecks to patronize the shops in downtown Ishpeming and Gwinn.

The ability to provide secondary support to their families or, in the case of single and widowed women, to make a comfortable living for themselves, gave them confidence to last a lifetime. Working

at the factory also served to expand their social networks. Those ties were strained only once, during the 1940s, when outside organizers identified garment manufacturers, including Gossard, to unionize. A four-month strike pitted friend against friend. Wong's chapter on this subject, which includes an account of a car accident that injured nine picketers, expertly connects the Gossard story to the larger union struggle that was (literally) being fought in the automotive centers of Flint and Detroit almost five hundred miles away, and in the nation at large.

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### *Powering American Farms: The Overlooked Origins of Rural Electrification*

By Richard F. Hirsh

(Baltimore, Md.: John Hopkins University Press, 2022. Pp. vii, 358. Notes, index. \$60.00.)

The process of rural electrification in the United States has long been presented, and broadly accepted, as a rather simple story: until President Franklin D. Roosevelt created the Rural Electrification Administration (REA) in 1935, American farmers had to endure the cold and the darkness because private utilities refused

to electrify rural communities. In *Powering American Farms*, Richard Hirsh aims to rewrite that tale. Although he builds on the history of technology and social movements, revising the standard narrative is his core task. His book seeks to craft a new chronicle of rural electrification: private utilities poured the foundation

for the REA, and REA devotees' claims that the federal government's work alone granted American farms electrical modernization are "severely exaggerated" ahistorical perspectives rooted in emotion and ideology (p. 3). On the whole Hirsh's work achieves its goal, but at times it succumbs to some of the same deficiencies he criticizes in accounts sympathetic to the New Deal.

Across thirteen chapters that primarily span the interwar years, Hirsh's study convincingly shows that, before the New Deal, private utilities did not wholly ignore farms, and in fact forged at least part of the path toward rural electrification. He readily grants that only about one-tenth of American farms enjoyed central-station electrical service by 1935, and that a major obstacle to broader success was—understandably for firms answerable to shareholders—financial. Other early impediments included utility executives' condescending attitudes toward rural people and, as he details in an excellent chapter on isolated generating plants, toward farmers' efforts to seek electrification on their own. The primary factor that pushed utilities into considering rural markets in the early 1920s, he rightly claims, was a vigorous movement for public power that electric company managers saw as a significant threat. In response, as Hirsh explains in the six chapters that form the heart of his argument, power companies organized national

committees, engaged with universities, and worked with farmers' associations to study and pursue rural electrification in the decade before the New Deal. These actions, he claims, marked "the industry's commitment to pursue electrification of farms through research and demonstration" (p. 133).

Hirsh's seeming acceptance of the success and sincerity of that commitment, though, somewhat mars his narrative's persuasiveness. Like the traditional rural electrification story he criticizes—even to the point, somewhat shockingly, of comparing it to the Lost Cause and the Stab in the Back myths—Hirsh's own account often takes interwar utility promoters at their word and conveys the tale they wanted to tell. Operating as an oft-cited stand-in for the entire industry, Wisconsin power company leader Grover Neff appears as a hero who "pursued [rural electrification] so ardently" and "appeared to harbor pure motives" (pp. 133, 243). In a similar vein, the author makes frequent use of value-laden terms like "genuine efforts," "impressive gains," and "enthusiasm for farm electrification," to cite but a few examples, which derive from utility-commissioned academic studies and trade association publications (pp. 32, 185, 205). Moreover, Hirsh's appraisal of public power's push for rural electrification occasionally mimics that of private utilities. The REA and its forebears

are castigated for having made “intrusions into the power industry,” and for having “destroyed the prospect” of privately administered farm modernization (pp. 130, 243).

Hirsh is not uncritical of the private utility industry in the inter-war years. He exposes underhanded tactics and self-serving rhetoric and discloses that utilities devoted only paltry sums to rural electrification before 1935. Nor does he detract

from the REA’s accomplishments. While the book contains little information directly useful for the history of Indiana, it makes important historiographical points and provides students of rural electrification with a far more comprehensive and complex story than previously available.

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### *Horace M. Kallen in the Heartland: The Midwestern Roots of American Pluralism*

By Michael C. Steiner

(Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2020. Pp. ix, 240. Notes, index. \$37.50.)

Born in Germany, educated at Harvard, and a founding faculty member of the New School for Social Research, Jewish-American pragmatist and Zionist philosopher Horace Meyer Kallen (1882–1974) is credited with coining the term “cultural pluralism,” the precursor to modern multiculturalism. Kallen first used the words “cultural pluralism” in print in 1924, but claims to have come up with the phrase while a graduate student at Harvard and Oxford, in conversation with his student and then friend Alain Locke, sometime around 1906–1908. Locke, the first Black Rhodes Scholar, would go on to become a leading figure in

the Harlem Renaissance, as well as a philosophy professor at Howard University. Kallen also pointed to his Harvard mentor William James, fellow pragmatist John Dewey, and rabbi and scholar Solomon Schechter as other inspirations for the concept of cultural pluralism.

In the excellent monograph *Horace M. Kallen in the Heartland: The Midwestern Roots of American Pluralism*, Michael C. Steiner points to a different influence. Between 1911 and 1918, Kallen taught at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. Those seven years, according to Steiner, proved crucial to Kallen’s