

eccentric, and "unusable" in diplomacy or politics. "Kill Wilson!" he yelled to Lodge. Herbert Hoover he attacked as a "chief Bolshevik."

Perhaps Beringause takes too literally the thunderings of Adams, but what else could Beringause do? Adams was apparently a lonely, desperate man, homesick for the world of his father, Charles Francis, and grandfather, John Quincy Adams. Perhaps much that Adams said and wrote was uttered irresponsibly—when he was seriously challenged, for example, while advocating state socialism in the Massachusetts Constitutional Convention (1917) he backed down and spoke for retaining capitalism. And many of his savage writings are not the words of a truly revolutionary character prepared to act on them. They seem, rather, a strange lament for a lost imagined world—Arnold's "Dover Beach" reworked into fantastic "laws of society." The man sensing Adams' predicament most clearly was probably the Benedictine monk who wrote that Adams was "'groping blindly and longing pathetically for a *patria*'" (p. 386).

The chapter titles and sub-heads of this book may have a literary charm for some readers. They are a comment on Adams' life in themselves. But as guides to the materials of the book, the chapter titles are only confusing. The text is smoothly written with few mistakes. But surely Brooks Adams did not write: "*panim et circensis*" (p. 189) or attribute to Christ the words of the importunate father in Mark 9:24 (p. 360). And surely Henry Adams had taught Brooks enough medieval history to keep him from thinking that the medieval state "forced conformity on all ranks of society" (p. 374). But these are obvious mechanical flaws. The book has the merit of resting solidly on the previously inaccessible Adams Papers so that it now stands as the best available treatment of Brooks Adams.

Indiana University

Arthur R. Hogue

*Political Prairie Fire: The Nonpartisan League, 1915-1922.*

By Robert L. Morlan. (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1955, pp. x, 408. Illustrations, bibliography, and index. \$5.75.)

In 1918, an article concerning the Nonpartisan League entitled "A Prairie Fire" appeared in the *Country Gentleman*. It seems reasonable to surmise that this phrase suggested the title for the book under review. The bright orange and black binding seems designed to re-enforce the holo-

caustic impression created by the title. The chapter headings, almost sensational in some instances, contribute to the central motif. The author's lively style which carries the fast-moving action through sixteen fact-laden chapters adds the final pyrotechnic touch. After seeming to equate an objective account of a controversial issue with one that would give universal satisfaction, Professor Morlan states his purpose in the following sentence: "This study is . . . an effort to chronicle with fairness and accuracy the dramatic and swift-moving story of this unique political movement" (p. viii).

According to a sentence in the preface, "representative newspapers" were the principal source of data. Although no newspapers are listed in the bibliography, the abundant citations to newspapers in the footnotes, especially to the *Nonpartisan Leader*, confirm this statement. Of the rather small number of collections of papers and manuscripts that were used the collection of National Nonpartisan League Papers is the most important. A large group of pamphlets issued by the Nonpartisan League constitutes the other major portion of the bibliography. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the author has relied to a disproportionate degree upon official league publications and materials which must come logically under his own judgment that, "Virtually all writing pertaining to the League published during its ascendancy reflects extremely biased points of view" (p. viii). The reviewer finds it difficult to understand how a fair and accurate "chronicle" can be the product of excessive reliance upon data derived from writers on one side of a controversial issue. This is all the more difficult when much of the anti-league material was used by way of quotations from the opposition press that appeared in the columns of the *Nonpartisan Leader*. There are at least two illustrations of the basic principle that the student of history should go to the sources rather than rely upon secondary accounts. The reviewer cannot reconcile the data derived from the *Leader's* summary of an address made by John S. Williams, United States Comptroller of the Currency, before the Kentucky Banker's Association in 1915, with the statistical material contained in the annual report of the comptroller of the currency which was used as the basis of the address. At the least, the comptroller's figures do not clearly support the conclusion that "no less than two thirds (96) of the national banks in North Dakota were charging usurious rates" (p. 17). A careful reading of the speech of Congressman Patrick

D. Norton as it appears in the *Congressional Record* does not lead to the same conclusions that the author reached on the basis of the report contained in the *Leader*. The speech was prompted by an editorial contained in the *Des Moines Capital*, not by items contained in the *Indianapolis Star*, *New York Mail*, and *Buffalo Express*, and there is no explicit reference to the League, much less a vigorous defense of it.

The general attitude of the author of *Political Prairie Fire* toward the Nonpartisan League may be described as sympathetic. This is apparent not only in the selection of materials, but also in the explanations that are given for the failure of some of the business projects of the league, such as the Consumers' United Stores Company and the Home Building Association, and the different treatment accorded to similar acts depending upon whether they were performed by the friends or the foes of the league. Thus the opposition "screamed" its sentiments, whereas the *Leader* "expressed its hopes," "carefully and repeatedly warned," or "set the matter straight" as the occasion required. There are several examples of the author's resort to heavy irony in describing the arguments of the opposition. The "tirade" of an overzealous local official is referred to as "the reasoned view of a dispassionate and unprejudiced law enforcement official" (p. 168) and the *Wall Street Journal*, *Manchester Guardian*, and *National Geographic* are included in a list of "flaming radical publications."

The book presents in considerable detail the political history of the Nonpartisan League with the emphasis quite naturally upon the states of North Dakota and Minnesota. It is entirely reasonable that Arthur C. Townley should be the central figure, but some will question the degree to which attention is focused upon him to the almost complete exclusion of other prominent leaders of the movement. The principal result of this emphasis is to leave the reader with quite a clear impression of Townley, but only a slight acquaintanceship with the other men. The description of the techniques employed by Townley should be of special value to those who have a particular interest in group dynamics, especially the organizations and direction of grass-roots political movements of the protesting variety. The rather detailed description of the Minnesota phases of the "red-baiting" and "witch-hunting" activities that characterized the closing years of the second Wilson administration has value quite apart from its relation to the central theme of the book. The same may be said for the delineation of the origins of political co-operation

between farming and laboring groups. The inadequate attention given by American historians to the role of the urban community is illustrated in this volume by the superficial analysis of the dominance by the business interests of the Twin Cities of the economic life of North Dakota. At the least Mildred Hartsough's *The Development of the Twin Cities (Minneapolis and St. Paul) as a Metropolitan Market* (1925) is worthy of mention in the bibliography.

Beginning with brief discussions of several factors which produced in North Dakota fertile soil for an agrarian protest movement, the author describes the political successes of the league in North Dakota, the implementation of its program, the attempt to become a national party, the development of factions within the league, and, finally, the factors which led to its decline. Abuses in the grain-marketing process, high freight rates, and usurious interest rates are listed among the developments which led to the formation of the league. The involvement of the United States in World War I, the inability to shake off the Socialist label, the eclipse of Townley as the leader, the enactment of a portion of its program, and the growing tendency to look to the federal government for help instead of to the state capital are proposed as some of the causes which led to the decline of the movement. The greatest value of the book lies in its detailed treatment of a significant political movement. Both value and attractiveness are enhanced by several illustrations which are the product of the distaff side of the author's household.

University of Kansas

George L. Anderson

*Fond Recollection, Sketches of Old Louisville.* By Melville O. Briney. (Louisville: *Louisville Times*, 1955, pp. 146. Illustrations and index. \$2.00.)

Melville Otter Briney is an experienced writer. She was born in Louisville and educated at Vassar and Columbia University School of Journalism. As Melville Otter she joined the staff of the *Courier-Journal* in 1925. The following year she married Russell Briney and for the next two decades confined her activities to family, social, and civic affairs. In 1948 she re-entered the field of journalism, contributing a weekly article on "Old Louisville" to the editorial page of the *Louisville Times*. These informal sketches proved of such interest to the public and contained matter of such value to succeeding generations that Barry Bingham, owner of the