

servation movement in the 1850's when the use of charcoal threatened the timber resources of certain eastern states.

But a more basic question needs to be raised. This concerns the validity of literary, forensic, and journalistic expressions of ideas as indicators of "American" sentiments. Even granting the superb accomplishment of the author in fulfilling his purpose, for whom were the relatively small group of persons speaking? Judging from the index entries Franklin, Emerson, Jefferson, Lincoln, Whitman, Wilson, Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt, and Kennedy were among the most articulate transmitters of American ideas. Even if this list were expanded tenfold, would it be representative and extensive enough to form the foundation for valid generalizations? For one thing there is an assumption of broad circulation of the ideas and general literacy on the part of the public.

The inclusion of an errata list is of dubious value. It suggests that eight errors are all that appear in the book. This is not quite the case. The metamorphosis of John O'Sullivan into John L. Sullivan is not listed, and it is not quite accurate to say that the Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments placed "these rights" (the referent of these is not entirely clear) immediately "under national jurisdiction." But even ten instances of misspelling or slight errors of fact do not lessen the value of the book as an excellent source of information for the general reader, a stimulating piece of collateral reading in a general course, or perchance the principal basis for a more specialized venture into the history of American ideas.

*University of Kansas*

George L. Anderson

*Labor and Liberty: The La Follette Committee and the New Deal.*

By Jerold S. Auerbach. (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1966. Pp. xi, 246. Notes, bibliography, index. \$6.50.)

Auerbach's monograph is a study of the so-called La Follette Civil Liberties Committee (1936-1940). Despite its name, the focus of the committee's investigations was upon employer interference with the right of workers to organize and bargain collectively. Several inter-related factors were responsible for this emphasis. The inspiration for the establishment of the committee came from National Labor Relations Board officials, who found their hands tied by court challenges to the constitutionality of the Wagner Act and hoped that the exposure of employer anti-union activities would rally public opinion behind the NLRB. The pro-union bias of the committee's staff—many of whom were Communist party members or sympathizers—was reflected in the committee's acceptance, and propagandizing, of the class warfare theme. And the coincidence in time of the most active phase of the committee's work with the CIO's bid to organize the mass production industries resulted in the committee's becoming an adjunct of the CIO's organizing drive.

Auerbach reviews in detail the evidence uncovered by the committee of employer union-busting activities: the use of labor spies, strike-breakers, company police, and munitions. He concludes that despite

its lack of substantive legislative achievements, the committee exerted significant influence. It helped to create a climate of opinion favorable to the Wagner Act and the NLRB. It materially assisted the CIO in its drive to organize the steel, coal, and automobile industries. Most importantly, it played a crucial role in the transformation of the civil libertarian credo. Before the New Deal, Auerbach writes, "Civil libertarians remained inveterate worshipers at the shrine of Thomas Jefferson and adhered to a tradition that measured individual liberty by government abstinence" (p. 24). At the same time most had a deep commitment to labor unionism. Thus they were faced with a dilemma when the federal government stepped in as the protector of labor's right to organize. Thanks in large part to the La Follette Committee, the author contends, civil libertarians abandoned their traditional antipathy to federal power. "The La Follette Committee's findings foreshadowed a new civil libertarian formula: Federal power, so long the source of libertarian fears, might be needed to counteract local, and private, power, which in fact . . . often acted as the final arbiter of the Bill of Rights" (p. 138).

Auerbach has done thorough research in manuscript collections, government documents, and contemporary newspaper and magazine accounts. The footnotes are where they should be—at the bottom of the page. His prose is fluent, though not scintillating. At times, the reader suspects padding; the heart of his argument was set forth in his article in the December, 1964, issue of the *Journal of American History*.

Although not uncritical of some aspects of the committee's activities Auerbach is on the whole sympathetic. Too much so, this reader would suggest. Thus he excuses the committee's failure to deal with the intimidation of nonunion employees by union members and strikers on the ground of labor's underdog position. The moral dilemma implicit in this argument disturbed a minority in the American Civil Liberties Union at the time, and their strictures against such a double standard is no less pertinent today. Second, the La Follette Committee represented a major step in the transformation of congressional investigations into fishing expeditions for publicity. Not suprisingly, the Dies Un-American Activities Committee was the conservative reaction. Even more dangerous—to this reader's thinking at least—was the abandonment by too many libertarians of their suspicion of the too powerful state. Recent evidence abounds that the welfare state is not an unmixed blessing so far as individual rights and liberties are concerned.

University of Nebraska

John Braeman

*The American Legion Story.* By Raymond Moley, Jr. Foreward by J. Edgar Hoover. (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1966. Pp. xv, 443. Illustrations, appendix, index. \$6.95.)

In this history of the American Legion, Raymond Moley, Jr., has made a considerable effort at doing the impossible. This is a kind of history difficult to do well. In the first place it is easy for a history of an organization to become tedious and dull. More important is the