

Book Reviews

The First and Second United States Empires: Governors and Territorial Government, 1784-1912. By Jack Ericson Eblen. ([Pittsburgh]: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1968. Pp. viii, 344. Notes, tables, map, selected bibliography, index. \$8.95.)

Since 1896 scholarship on United States territorial government has been greatly handicapped by a tendency of writers to perform research on a small aspect of the subject and then impatiently gallop off in pursuit of comprehensive theories which explain the twin themes of colonialism and imperialism in American history. Eblen's book is one of these, and it is as far in advance of the data as most of its geopolitical predecessors.

The author divides the territorial regime into four successive empires. It is necessary to do this, you see, because imperialism explains almost everything. Imperialism was "a primary determinant or cardinal feature of United States history" from the start, so much so that Monroe "proclaimed an hegemony over the entire Western Hemisphere" in 1823; and today the Fourth Empire "encompasses much of the world" (pp. 1, 2, 9). All this by way of introducing rustic government on the American frontier.

The reviewer found himself recalling the original Hegemon of history, a literary man who made his name at parody.

The first two "Empires" (the word is always capitalized) are the primary subject of this book: all the territories from the Old Northwest to Oklahoma. Eblen's evaluation of the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 and its predecessors is interesting, but leaves the same old questions unanswered—although he does not think so. Most other aspects of the general subject are presented in summaries which can not be very "new" because they necessarily rest heavily on the publications of others. For that same reason a chronological imbalance ensues: the earliest period of territorial government is fairly well covered, from the administrative point of view at any rate, but later territories get only a widow's portion. As to the operational style of these many commonwealths, Eblen's conclusion that they were oligarchies seems to cover equally well every government on the globe since Adam. However, "oligarchy" is like "Empire"—an abstruse concept that only experts can hope to comprehend.

This is, in short, another enthusiastic book that should have soaked in the brine quite a while longer. One would never know from Eblen's description, for instance, that the United States had a Constitution during the formative age of territorial government. He cites the reviewer's doctoral study of territorial public law, but only casually, and relies instead on the deceitful work by Meyerholz written in 1908. Why? For statutory law he fearlessly employs Max Farrand's woefully inadequate summary of 1896, while admitting its shortcomings in the narrow fields which he has had cause to investigate personally. Again why? The temptation to get in first

with a "general" book on territorial government, one must suppose. Certainly there is need for a sound general book.

Wise buyers will therefore look at the second part of Eblen's title instead of the first. His analytical treatment of the governorship is fruitful, and so are the assessments of territorial local government and the suffrage. He knows a lot about all three.

Stanislaus State College, Turlock, Calif.

J. W. Smurr

Charles Ellet, Jr.: The Engineer as Individualist, 1810-1862. By Gene D. Lewis. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1968. Pp. viii, 220. Notes, illustrations, appendix, index. \$7.50.)

Charles Ellet, Jr., one of the outstanding civil engineers in antebellum America, typifies the growth of his profession in its formative years. This is true despite Ellet's extreme individualism and his contempt for the "organization man." Indeed, it is the fact that Ellet is so representative of the civil engineering profession (if not the civil engineer's character) that gives this book its merit. Ellet was intimately involved with major engineering projects during his lifetime, his work covering the entire spectrum of his profession—canals, railroads, bridges, river improvements, flood control, military engineering—and more. Ellet did pioneering work in the economics of transportation, and he enjoyed a secondary career as a "controversialist."

Ellet's chief claims to fame today rest upon his introduction of the wire suspension bridge to America, including the initial bridging of the chasm at Niagara, and his advocacy of the "steam ram" in naval warfare. Ellet's rams led the successful attack upon Memphis in 1862, a battle in which Ellet himself suffered the Union's only fatal wound. Professor Lewis also stresses the farsightedness of Ellet's comprehensive plan for the prevention of flooding through various methods, including the use of dams and upland reservoirs. Although ridiculed at the time, Ellet's ideas were eventually accepted, most notably in the Tennessee Valley Authority project.

This book is a welcome addition to the small but growing body of literature on America's early civil engineers and engineering. A remarkably thorough introduction to the internal improvements movement in the United States results from the study of Ellet's career; there emerges also a case study of the stresses associated with the growing professionalism of the engineer. This is not to say Ellet was the typical engineer; Lewis in fact properly emphasizes the singularity of Ellet's personality and talent, which led the ambitious, impetuous, often dictatorial engineer to oppose the institutionalization and bureaucratic procedures of corporate technology. The point remains, nonetheless, that in Ellet one finds the mobility, the versatility, and the variety of functions typical of the antebellum engineer.

Lewis has written a good biography, solid if not brilliant. It is based upon Ellet's numerous publications and the family letters preserved by a