

as an alternative. A copy of Clemenceau's letter reached Washington where Secretary of War Newton D. Baker discussed it with the Director of Training Camp Activities, Raymond B. Fosdick. "For God's sake, Raymond," Baker exclaimed after reading it twice, "don't show this to the President or he'll stop the war" (p. 133). It was indeed "the war to end all wars."

University of Connecticut, Storrs

John Garry Clifford

American Railroad Politics, 1914-1920: Rates, Wages, and Efficiency.

By K. Austin Kerr. ([Pittsburgh]: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1968. Pp. viii, 250. Notes, bibliographical note, index. \$7.95.)

The proposition of this book is that historians have loosely tended to regard the First World War as "a 'watershed' dividing the Progressive Era (in which the 'people' reigned supreme) from the pro-business 'conservative' decade which followed" (p. 4). This dictum, the author believes, must be modified on the evidence of the history of railroad politics between 1914 and 1920, a history he explores with a sense of the scene familiar in group theories of politics, centering as he does on the group structure of the railroad industry, and the play among its parts. His study of a large amount of first rate original material leads him to the conclusion that wartime federal operation of the railroads led to no lasting break with the prewar regulatory style (with the Interstate Commerce Commission presumably protecting shippers) despite efforts after the war to establish more managerial modes of control, like that of the Plumb Plan. Thus there was continuity between the prewar and postwar periods, between the Progressive Era "system of deciding railroad policy and the regulatory system refined by the Transportation Act of 1920" (p. 4).

Even if one accepted, provisionally, the author's statement that the act of 1920 was merely a refinement of the prewar style of regulation, it might still be possible to maintain the proposition that the war *was* a "watershed" between a reformist and a conservative period because the only evidence he adduces that it was *not* a watershed is the act of 1920, without consideration of any of the events in the decade that followed. The act in fact more than "restored the federal regulatory system developed during the Progressive Era" (p. 225) by departing from the prewar idea that the principal role of government was to enforce competition among the roads since it contemplated the consolidation of all the roads into a few great systems within which the revenues of the stronger roads would be shared with the weaker ones. Because of conservative resistance, both official and private, these goals of regulation were never reached—the recapture

provision was repealed in 1933, a grand consolidation plan finally produced by the ICC in 1929 had negligible results, and the Transportation Act of 1940 made no reference to such a plan.

The real continuity between the prewar and postwar periods was the paramount influence of railroad managers in the making of transportation policy. Long before 1914 and long after 1920 an invincible characteristic of railroad regulation has been the inability of the managers to subordinate their competitive interests or to yield to weakening impulses of reticence, self-denial, generosity, or patriotic confusion. The author himself shows that the managers refused to acknowledge the existence of a crisis when the railroads were paralyzed in 1917 (p. 67), that they accepted federal operation only when they were guaranteed a high corporate return, and that a corporate elite dominated the United States Railroad Administration from the beginning. After federal operation under these circumstances, the only interest to be significantly stronger than it was before (except management) was railroad labor, whose awakening had occurred before the crisis that led to federal operation.

The strength of the book is the smoothness of the narrative, which will certainly be of interest and use to students of one important aspect of twentieth century economic history. The discussion of the passage of the Transportation Act of 1920, for example, is a lucid exposition of the formal procedure in Congress although political scientists might want a somewhat more analytical treatment of the structure of the committees, the activities of lobbies, and patterns of voting. A weakness of the book is the assumption that the single experience of one (albeit basic) industry will support the generalization that "we can reasonably reject prevailing historical explanations about the total impact of the mobilization experience upon American industrial society" (p. 228). Especially when the book ends where the demonstration should begin.

The work concludes with an excellent bibliographical statement.

Amherst College, Amherst

Earl Latham