

much familiarity with the competition among European powers for empire in North America, the intramural rivalry between Jesuit and Recollect missionaries, the history of New France under Jean Talon and Louis de Buade de Frontenac, and the structure and operation of the Roman Catholic Church and the Jesuit Order. Although judicious English translations accompany literal transcriptions of the original French and Latin, knowledge of seventeenth century French is desirable since textual analysis is the warp and weft of Hamilton's intricate scholarly tapestry. This reviewer's only substantive criticism is the perhaps inevitable elevation by implication of Marquette to coequal status with Jolliet when the fur trader was undoubtedly the prime mover of the pioneering enterprise. Be that as it may, it is fitting that this impressive volume along with the recent biography of the missionary-explorer by Father Joseph P. Donnelly assures Marquette of his rightful place in the annals of history as the tercentenary of the French discovery of the Father of Waters approaches.

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Free Soil: The Election of 1848. By Joseph G. Rayback. (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1970. Pp. ix, 326. End maps, notes, tables, note on sources, index. \$12.50.)

Joseph G. Rayback's *Free Soil* provides an excellent account of the presidential politics leading up to the election of 1848, but it is much less successful in explaining the politics of the free soil issue itself. Drawing upon a multiplicity of newspaper sources to trace the development of the various careers of presidential candidates, Rayback is especially good in describing the ebb and flow of their political fortunes and showing how even the most ephemeral of occurrences can raise or dash political prospects. In the early summer of 1846 a chance sentence in General Winfield Scott's correspondence with James K. Polk's secretary of war apparently destroyed his candidacy. More significantly, the book makes clear that it was Zachary Taylor's victory at Buena Vista and the wild popular enthusiasm which it engendered, more than any political consideration, that made him the Whig candidate in 1848.

Rayback seems much less at home with the politics of the Democratic party, which was intimately concerned with the issue of slavery in the territories in the period from 1846 to 1848. At one point he confesses to being puzzled as to "why northern Democrats delayed so long in revealing their [antislavery] attitude" (p. 60). Whatever their moral concern, politicians infrequently take up an issue which

cannot be made to serve their political interests, and in the 1840s the political interests of virtually all politicians, Whig and Democrat alike, depended upon the maintenance of a party unity which the slavery issue directly threatened. The issue emerged when an important faction of the Democratic party developed interests which overrode its commitment to national party unity. Essentially it was the Barnburners' determination to use the slavery issue to advance their political fortunes, coupled with the response which this evoked from John C. Calhoun and his southern Democratic supporters, which precipitated the struggle over free soil.

Rayback treats the Barnburners' advocacy of the Wilmot Proviso as essentially an idealistic enterprise. He maintains that "there was no evidence of an ulterior motive" and goes on to say: "The Barnburners' acceptance of the Proviso was actually a logical result of their long-standing championship of the principles of freedom and equality" (p. 298). The aim of their third party movement was "the advancement of the principles of the Proviso" and not "the recovery of control of the party in New York" which "had become secondary" (p. 298). Regaining control of the party in New York never became secondary to Martin Van Buren, as a careful reading of his correspondence shows. This is not to say that Van Buren was not genuinely interested in free soil or that he was unprincipled. But Van Buren was a politician par excellence, and he expressed his principles as a politician does, by coordinating them with a drive for political power, in his case not his own but his son's and that of his other close political associates.

Rayback also misses the rhythm of the development of the free soil issue which flowed from the efforts of the Democratic factions to advance their political interests. The issue emerged slowly and then, after the Barnburners picked it up, developed as a series of dialectical exchanges between the various factions, with the party regulars constantly seeking a synthesis which could accommodate the different positions sufficiently to maintain party unity.

Rayback apparently did not consult Walter L. Ferree's dissertation, "The New York Democracy—Division and Reunion, 1847-1852," which skillfully traces the role of Preston King and his Barnburner friends in thrusting the Wilmot Proviso "firebrand" into politics. The author also mistakenly dates the appearance of the idea that slavery could not exist in the territories without a positive law introducing it as August, 1848. Actually this premise was as old as the Wilmot Proviso itself, having been advanced by John Quincy Adams on the same day that Wilmot introduced his amendment. It was specifically to require the Democratic party to disavow popular sovereignty and the "positive law" idea, as well as the Wilmot Pro-

viso, that William Lowndes Yancey introduced his Alabama Platform in February of 1848, not, as Rayback would have it, a year earlier when these doctrines were undeveloped and posed no danger to the South. In his final chapter Rayback describes the disintegration of the major parties which began in 1848, but one must look elsewhere than in *Free Soil* for a complete explanation of this process.

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The Debate over Slavery: Stanley Elkins and His Critics. Edited by Ann J. Lane. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971. Pp. vi, 378. Notes. Clothbound, \$8.95; paperbound, \$2.95.)

Stanley Elkins' *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life* (1959) without question extended the examination of slavery into new areas, and, as Charles Pinderhughes says, Elkins provided a "meaningful involvement of the reader in an intellectual and emotional process which has obviously carried many readers far beyond the content he makes explicit" (p. 104). But Elkins' view that slavery was a closed society, his use of the concentration camp as an analogy for understanding the effects of slavery on the personality of the enslaved, and his assertion that "Sambo" was peculiar to the United States have found several critics. Only Aileen Kraditor has challenged his attribution of an anti-institutional bias to the abolitionists.

The editor in her introduction adequately summarizes the major points Elkins made in his study and briefly states the positions taken by most of the authors included in this volume. She also draws attention to some works, not included, that would be helpful in assessing the total impact of Elkins' ideas. Eleven of the fourteen selections in this work have previously been published.

All the articles contain useful commentary and insight, but the volume contains little in direct support of Elkins. A number of the authors convincingly contend that slavery was a much more open society than Elkins states, some question the appropriateness of the concentration camp analogy, and others present quite different points of view on the Sambo personality. Eugene Genovese says the Sambo—or as he calls it, the slavish—personality existed wherever slavery did, while Earl E. Thorpe thinks the Sambo personality was not the real slave personality. There was much room, he says, for the development of a more complex, better rounded personality, and he feels Elkins gives no real consideration to the great differences that result from being born slave and being born free. Sterling Stuckey