

The Tariff, Politics, and American Foreign Policy, 1874-1901.
By Tom E. Terrill. *Contributions in American History*,
Number 31. (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1973.
Pp. x, 306. Notes, bibliographical essay, index. \$12.00.)

Historians, as Tom E. Terrill points out, have not done well by the tariff issue. Deterred by the volume of debate and the complexity of the schedules, they have either ignored or dismissed the issue, notwithstanding its enduring and at times commanding position on the American political stage. Terrill does not try to remedy all the neglect. He avoids an assessment of the economic claims made for and against the the protectionist policy. (When is the "new" economic history going to address this task?) Rather "the focus is on the political and economic effects that American leaders *thought* the tariff had" (p. 13). The period covered in the book is one in which tariff policy figured prominently in the platforms of both major political parties and most of the minor ones.

Terrill is impressively thorough in his coverage of the tariff debates of the 1880s and 1890s, and he sets his account in the context of the two most important recent developments in Gilded Age historiography: the "new" political history, with its stress on the behavioral dimensions of politics, and the "new" diplomatic history, with its stress on the economic dimensions of foreign affairs. Despite this conscientious approach the book will probably do little to change established ideas about the subject. Sectional and ethnic tensions and those unleashed by corporate growth and industrial unrest were more basic voter concerns than the tariff, Terrill concedes. Tariff controversy sprang from two sources—from business constituencies that had a vested interest in higher or lower duties and from party strategists who were trying to piece together coalitions that might overcome "political equipoise" (Terrill's term for the narrow partisan balance of the day) while avoiding the more explosive issues animating the electorate. Whether advanced as protectionism or reductionism the tariff was an issue to lull people. It communicated an artificial sense of control—that something could be done to manage the unnerving changes that industrialization and urbanization had loosed without touching off the passions that these processes had loosed also.

In a sense Terrill is telling the reader, reluctantly but commendably, that earlier historians were right after all to

neglect the tariff, and he is giving better reasons than one previously had to believe this. The same is true of the foreign policy angle. Democratic reductionism and Republican reciprocity treaties were, he argues persuasively, rival strategies both linked to the desire to remedy economic dislocation at home through trade expansion abroad, but neither strategy got anywhere. Extreme protectionists in each party undercut the reformers. The discussion of reciprocity ends on a characteristic note of anticlimax. Rebuffed by Congress after negotiating a precedent shattering reciprocity agreement with France, President William McKinley launched a new campaign for public support on the issue with an address at Buffalo in 1901. The next day McKinley was shot.

The book's most serious failure is literary. Terrill's prose is dull, stiff, and sometimes ungrammatical, whether he is at a point of high drama in his story, as on page 185—"The legislative history of the Wilson-Gorman Tariff has often been detailed, obviating the need of yet another elaborate narrative"—or at a low point, as on page 132—"Of course the Democrats opposed (as it [*sic*] had spurned the 1884 reciprocity with Spain for Cuba) protectionism, modified by a drawback system, for practical political reasons." Many specialists may welcome this comprehensive account of a major political debate, but this reviewer doubts that anyone will enjoy it.

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Political Reform in Wisconsin: A Historical Review of the Subjects of Primary Election, Taxation, and Railway Regulation. Written by Emanuel L. Philipp. Abridged and edited by Stanley P. Caine and Roger E. Wyman. (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1973. Pp. xxviii, 197. Notes. \$12.00.)

It is fair to ask why *Political Reform in Wisconsin* by Emanuel L. Philipp should be republished in this format at this time. The researcher is unlikely to be satisfied with an abridgment and will want to see the original, the general reader will be bewildered, and even dedicated specialists not directly at work on the Robert F. La Follette movement in