

of the Indian office was that, as Henry Schoolcraft, agent in Michigan, put it, the Indians were "politically a nonentity . . . the whole Indian race is not, in the political scales, worth one white man's vote" (p. 200). Thus, as Satz effectively argues, Indian affairs rarely gained attention, and what concern they engendered too often reflected the avaricious zeal of opportunistic politicians.

Against this unsavory background Satz pits those recommendations, such as the Stokes Commission of 1834, for an Indian territory with autonomous self rule. Such proposals made little headway, however, as the Office of Indian Affairs consolidated its control of Indian matters and the patronage powers that went with it. By the 1840s and the administration of Polk the Indians were once again posed as the obstacle to American expansion toward the Pacific. Jackson's removal program, Satz concludes, represented merely a charade never achieving its announced goal of "civilizing" the Indians, or consonance between its reality and rhetoric. Instead control and management were the watchwords, and once again Indian tribes "would continue to relinquish their land at approximately the same rate that whites demanded it" (p. 2).

Satz' study stands as an able contribution to the growing scholarly literature on American Indian history. There is room to differ with specific points in this well written book, but such is to be expected in an area as controversial as this one. His presentation throughout is full and even handed and provides readers with a rich and thorough study of Indian-white relations in this crucial era.

Brown University, Providence

Walter H. Conser, Jr.

Alternative to Extinction: Federal Indian Policy and the Beginnings of the Reservation System, 1846-51. By Robert A. Trennert, Jr. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1975. Pp. ix, 263. Notes, bibliography, index. \$15.00.)

The Mexican War greatly complicated the problem of Indian-white relations. Vast new territories lay open for American settlement, and the makers of federal Indian policy faced the task of dealing with new and different native groups. As Robert A. Trennert, Jr., sees it, between 1846 and 1851 the federal government abandoned the notion of an Indian barrier that stemmed from the removal policy of the 1820s and 1830s and developed the conceptual basis for the

creation of the reservation system. The inspiration for this change in policy was the same mixture of altruism, self interest, and ethnocentrism that had generated past policies and would continue to serve the white man in later years. Policy makers showed a genuine desire to aid the native peoples but not at the expense of the expansion of white settlement. They could never grant to native culture the legitimacy they attached to their own way of life. Reservations would clear the path west, remove the Indians from the destructive influences of the white man's world, and provide time for the slow workings of the civilizing process. The more life changed in America, the more it remained the same.

Trennert describes the efforts at reform initiated by William Medill during the Polk administration and the abandonment of that policy by the Whigs, who were reputed to be more friendly to the Indians. He traces the consequences of war and the operations of federal policy in Texas and New Mexico between 1846 and 1852. And finally he treats the penetration of the western emigrants into the domain of the border and plains tribes and the consequences of this movement for the native societies.

Although Trennert writes about policy, he seems to know well that policy is neither formed nor executed in a vacuum. He is sensitive to the effects of the white man's ways on native culture, and he is dispassionate in discussing the motivations of policy makers. Yet one might ask for greater clarity in the examination of the white man's attitudes. Racism is not the same as ethnocentrism. Though the division between white and Indian has been in some broad sense racial, this did not define the prevailing attitude toward the natives—at least it did not in the early nineteenth century. Furthermore, Trennert's discussion fails to clarify how the reservation policy arose from the white man's conceptions of the Indians' situation. A generation before, the same attitudes had led to the creation of the Indian barrier. Why should they now bring forth reservations? More likely the ideas remained static and the circumstances changed. There simply was not enough room any longer for the Indian barrier. Trennert's discussion does not exclude this interpretation. A fuller analysis of the problem might have embraced it.

Trennert's book is a solid and important examination of a short but critical period in the history of Indian-white relations.