

bibliographical essay further strengthen this book's claim for serious attention by all those interested in the black urban experience.

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*Eugene V. Debs*. By Harold W. Currie. (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1976. Pp. 157. Notes and references, selected bibliography, index. \$7.95.)

Based primarily on Debs' published writings, *Eugene V. Debs* is a contribution to *Twayne's United States Authors* series. Harold W. Currie disclaims any attempt at producing another full dress biography of the Socialist leader. His purpose is "to provide for the reader a brief but comprehensive discussion of Debs's ideas, both major and minor, with emphasis on those ideas and attitudes that are most significant in understanding the man and his thought" (p. 10). Currie points out that Debs was not only a great orator but also a prolific writer. Despite the extent of his writings, however, he neither sought nor earned a reputation as a party intellectual or theoretician. His essays were, as Currie phrases it, "colorful, direct, uncomplicated, aimed at the common man rather than at the scholar" (p. 7). With the possible exception of Julius A. Wayland, editor of the *Appeal to Reason*, Debs probably did more to popularize socialism among American workers than any man who ever lived. What he wrote, however much it lacked intellectual depth, therefore remains of interest to students of the past.

*Eugene V. Debs* is organized topically—each chapter dealing with a particular aspect of the Socialist leader's thought or career. Chapter four, for example, entitled "The Debs Style," is subdivided into "The Orator," "Debs's Use of Language," "Debs's Sense of History," and "The Optimist." Chapter five, "Socialism and the Labor Movement," contains "Socialist Ideas," "Debs and Violence," and "Debs and the Labor Movement." There is nothing in the volume that could not have been learned from Ray Ginger's *The Bending Cross* (1949), but, in fairness, Currie does not claim otherwise. The book is well written, and its careful organization makes it a convenient guide to Debs' views on most of the important issues of his time.

The shortcoming of the book is that the author has tried to do too much in too few pages. This results in a superficial treatment of everything. Too often Currie presents Debs' views without attempting to explain, in any depth, why the Socialist leader held these views or why his position changed over a period of years. For example, in four short paragraphs Currie chronicles Debs' transition from a conservative trade unionist opposed to the use of the strike and boycott to a labor leader who conceded that such weapons were a necessary part of labor's arsenal (pp. 20-21). Yet Currie offers no insights as to why this important change took place in Debs' thinking. Surely readers could expect any addition to the mountain of published material on Debs to offer more than an uninspired repetition of well known facts. Currie's excuse is that it was not his intention "to assess the sources of Debs's ideas, for to do so would necessitate another book-length study" (p. 10). While this may be true, a simple cataloging of Debs' views seems pointless. It would have been better if Currie had selected a single theme (Debs and the labor movement, Debs and industrial unionism) and developed it at length.

Finally, Currie's assertion that the "fundamental principles behind Debsian Socialism and Americanism are the same, for both profess a belief in equality, individual freedom and democracy" (p. 9) defines both concepts so broadly as to rob them of all meaning.

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*Ambiguous Imperialism: American Foreign Policy and Domestic Politics at the Turn of the Century.* By Göran Rystad. (Stockholm, Sweden: Esselte Studium, 1975. Pp. 365. Tables, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. Paperbound, Sw. Crs 58:.)

In this volume Göran Rystad examines American politics from adoption of the peace treaty of 1899, which concluded the Spanish American War and in which the United States acquired a small colonial empire, through the presidential election of 1900, when imperialism occupied a prominent place in political rhetoric. He seeks to determine if foreign policy was the foremost issue in this election, what effect foreign affairs had on politics, and what impact politics