

Industrialization and Southern Society, 1877-1984

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was worse. If racism in turn needs explanation, that is a subject for another book.

In the South, historical change seemed painfully slow. Mechanization was slower in coming, urbanization and industrialization were more gradual, and every type of adjustment to changing circumstances took longer. Even the boll weevil took forty years to advance from west to east. Although the author gives all of the relevant details on climate, prices, costs, rural electrification, poor roads, and on and on, none of these conditions or events seems to explain the long-term and lamentable condition of southern agriculture. Fite reveals this, but softly and sometimes obliquely. Nevertheless, he does point to the source of the trouble: only the pervasive and expensive efforts to keep blacks in an inferior status can explain the languishing history of southern farming.

The story ends optimistically, however. The South has largely overcome its heritage. The baleful results of racism should give no comfort to readers in other regions. People in every section and every state have their own particular mean streaks, with or without racism. Readers of this book may ponder on their own region as they learn about the history of southern farming.

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

JOHN T. SCHLEBECKER

Industrialization and Southern Society, 1877-1984, by James C. Cobb. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1984. xii, 185 pp. Bibliographic note, index, \$19.00 cloth.

Industrialization and Southern Society, as its author readily acknowledges, is largely synthetic. It draws together much of the literature on the industrialization of the South and fashions it into an informative but sometimes sketchy narrative. James C. Cobb examines the South's potential for industrial growth, the efforts of southerners to translate that potential into reality, and the social, political, and environmental consequences of industrialization. He concedes that economic growth and diversification have altered the character of southern life but contends that "industrialization has not obliterated the socioeconomic and structural differences that have traditionally represented the fundamental basis of southern distinctiveness" (163). He believes that the region "avoided a rapid social and political metamorphosis" because its attitudes and traditions were generally compatible with the development of the type of primary, minimally skilled, labor-intensive industries characteristic of the South's economic growth during the late nineteenth century and much of the twentieth (1).

Cobb's book is weak in its analysis of southern industrial develop-

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ment in the antebellum and immediate post-Reconstruction eras but considerably better in its treatment of the accelerating changes occurring in the twentieth century. Cobb is at his best when describing the varied and sometimes shortsighted efforts of state and community leaders to entice industrialists to locate manufacturing operations in their vicinities. Economic historians may fault the volume for a lack of sophistication; nevertheless, Cobb's book provides a useful introduction to the complex story of the South's industrial evolution.

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

ROBERT F. MARTIN

Southern Progressivism: The Reconciliation of Progress and Tradition, by Dewey W. Grantham. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1983. xxii, 468 pp. Introduction, bibliographic essay, index. \$34.95 cloth, \$16.95 paper.

In *Southern Progressivism*, Dewey W. Grantham provides a much-needed comprehensive overview of progressive reform in the southern states. He contends that economic growth and diversification, urbanization, increased social differentiation and class rigidity, political changes occurring around the turn of the present century, and a rising tide of humanitarianism and self-criticism constituted the matrix out of which regional progressivism evolved. Believing that "state politics provided the basic arena for social reform in the early twentieth century," the author devotes considerable attention to political developments in each of the southern states (36). He then examines in some detail the various causes with which southern progressives were concerned and concludes that reform in Dixie was an essentially conservative phenomenon. In his opinion southern progressives were sincerely committed to improving the quality of life in their section and were responsible for much constructive change. Their desire to reconcile progress and tradition, however, meant that their efforts were fraught with contradictions and limited in scope.

This book offers no fundamentally new interpretation of progressivism, but it is important because it elucidates the way in which the reform impulse developed in the South. It suggests that the movement there differed in degree but not in kind from that in other parts of the nation. Grantham has done an admirable job of synthesizing a mass of primary and secondary material into an occasionally dry but always comprehensible and plausible analysis of a complex and amorphous reform phenomenon.

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

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