

The Third Electoral System, 1853-1892: Parties, Voters, and Political Cultures. By Paul Kleppner. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979. xxii + 424 pp. Maps, tables, notes, bibliography, and index. \$21.00.)

Extending his 1970 *Cross of Culture* back in time to the 1870s and 1880s and in space to the Middle Atlantic and New England states, supplementing data from homogeneous areas with more sophisticated techniques of linear regression and correlation analysis, treating the connections between religious beliefs and social actions subtly and in great depth, Paul Kleppner has produced perhaps the most impressive work of what he insists should not be called "the ethnocultural school." Apparently reacting to charges that what he prefers to term "the voting behavior studies" have ignored class factors, reflected their authors' supposed political conservatism, and represented a consensus version of American history, Kleppner has included headnotes from Marx, Engels, and Mao and a chapter on the Greenback and Populist parties, and painted party contests not as sham patronage battles involving unimportant issues, but as mirrors of "an irreconcilable conflict over the very nature of society." If his graceless prose style will repel many readers, his combination of "letristic" with quantitative evidence and his focus on ideology will attract traditional historians alienated by the exclusive stress on statistics and behavior that has sometimes characterized works of quantitative history. Indeed, the book strikes me as altogether too traditional, as insufficiently social-scientific.

Thus, despite the excellence of his discussion at many points—for example, his treatments of prohibition in Iowa, the Farmers' Alliance in Minnesota, or the suffrage battles in Rhode Island—Kleppner fails to formulate his chief theories in a testable fashion or to flesh out competing explanations, fails to integrate fully the issues of race and Reconstruction into his overall pattern, and refuses to present a great many of his quantitative results in a manner that would allow readers to evaluate them.

More specifically, he assumes that attitudes on Civil War loyalty, religion, liquor, cultural pluralism, and perhaps on race formed a single issue cluster dividing evangelical pietists from ritualists. Is the dichotomy between pietistic and "laissez faire" ethics an intellectual construct which he has imposed or a pervasive, unvarying late-nineteenth-century belief system? Kleppner could have examined this proposition directly by analyzing the connections between attitudes on two or more of these topics as indicated in the thirty-seven northern referenda on prohibition and public funding for parochial schools or in the numerous state legislative battles on these and other issues, but he does not.

While he does refer to tests of his view that ethnocultural cleavages, and not social class or systematic variations in interest group responses to tariff,

currency, and banking issues, lay at the heart of late-nineteenth-century politics, he never discusses the economic hypotheses or their proper operationalization in anything like the loving detail he devotes to religious controversies, never presents the results from more than a few states in a few elections, and instead buries most of "these negative findings" in order to "conserve space." Unlike many social scientific historians, in other words, Kleppner prefers description to hypothesis testing.

Implicitly denying the centrality of racial attitudes or consigning them to an inferior place within his pietist and ritualist ideational complexes, Kleppner reduces antislavery and pro-black civil rights agitation to "antisouthernism," which merits fourteen index entries. "Antislavery" is not listed. Reconstruction, he tells us, "symbolized in mass opinion a fruits-of-the-war syndrome." The racism of the postbellum Democratic party is barely mentioned; instead it is presented as the "personal liberty" party, one whose few essays into "moralism" represented "public regardingness," as opposed to the "Yankee-cultural imperialism" which tainted the Republicans. Other scholars will read white public opinion and what Kleppner refers to as the parties' "auras" differently.

As for his methodology, despite the harsh published criticism of estimates of group behavior based on homogeneous areas, Kleppner continues to rely heavily on such measures, often defining "homogeneous" areas peculiarly or failing to define them at all. And he never presents all the parameters or associated statistics of his regression equations, which makes it difficult to evaluate his findings, especially since he often varies the functional form of his equations.

Diligently researched, often well analyzed, certain to be read by students of American elections, Kleppner's book is flawed precisely because it is more "old" than "new political history."