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Review of *The North Dakota Political Tradition* Edited by Thomas W. Howard

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The North Dakota Political Tradition. Edited by Thomas W. Howard. North Dakota Centennial Series. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1981. Illustrations, bibliographical essay, index. x + 220 pp. \$12.50.

This volume is primarily designed to help North Dakotans understand their political institutions and traditions. Seven chapters by as many historians are readable summaries on basic themes of the state's history.

Robert Wilkins's study of Alexander McKenzie, reputedly the political boss of Dakota Territory and North Dakota, is the most thorough summation available. Wilkins points out that McKenzie's power was not absolute. In a desire to achieve fairness, Wilkins at times leans toward the position that ends justify means. However, McKenzie's record is provided in detail.

Charles Glaab definitively describes the career of John Burke, the Democratic governor whose 1906 election signaled the dethronement of McKenzie and the coming of the La Follette Progressive movement to North Dakota. Progressives such as George Winship, Martin Johnson, Edwin Ladd, and Charles Fisk receive appropriate credit.

Larry Remele's chapter on the Nonpartisan League and D. Jerome Tweeton's on its nemesis, the Independent Voters' Association, complement one another, providing a vivid picture of the most distinctive and turbulent phase of the state's political history. The irony that conservative use of NPL and Progressive reforms destroyed the effectiveness of the NPL could have been noted.

Glenn Smith's balanced account provides a record of William Langer's political defeats and triumphs. There is one oversight. In the 1940 Republican senatorial primary, Langer won with only 40 percent of the vote, avoiding a defeat that probably would have ended his political career. It was the candidacy of Thomas Whelan, a popular American Legion leader and state senator from incumbent Lynn Frazier's home county, that divided the anti-Langer vote.

Dan Rylance's excellent study of the Republican Organizing Committee as exemplified in

the life of Fred Aandahl describes the manner in which the ROC, although never capturing Langer's Senate seat, seized control of the state government. He explains how Aandahl's withdrawal from the 1942 legislative race, because of farm management problems, made him the ROC leader who was constitutionally qualified for the 1944 gubernatorial race, the others having voted for an increase in the governor's salary. He does not mention the torrential rain on primary election day, which had the effect of protecting Aandahl's margin of 9,356 votes and giving the ROC the breakthrough necessary to become a factor in the state's political life.

Bill G. Reid's study of Elizabeth Anderson is pioneering work in an area of social reform that has received sketchy treatment by historians. He describes Anderson's influence in the temperance and woman suffrage movements and stresses the temperance role of Scandinavian Lutherans, especially the Norwegians.

Why Progressives were not able to select a successor to Burke instead of permitting the election of a conservative whose leadership provoked the rise of the NPL is one question that could have been addressed more fully. However, the merits of this volume should be emphasized. Although there are no footnotes, the bibliographical essays are complete and helpful. The book is well designed and written in a manner that should ensure wide reading. This first publication in the North Dakota Centennial Heritage Series sets a high standard for those that will follow.

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