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Lex Renda. *Running on the Record: Civil War-Era Politics in New Hampshire.* Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997. x + 258 pp. $45.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8139-1722-1.

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Lex Renda has written an outstanding history of New Hampshire politics in the Civil War era. *Running on the Record* is a fitting companion to Donald B. Cole, *Jacksonian Democracy in New Hampshire, 1800-1851* (1970) and James Wright, *The Progressive Yankees: Republican Reformers in New Hampshire, 1906-1916* (1987). Each is a meticulous analysis from a behavioral perspective, sensitive to both the voters and the politicians. The strengths of Renda's book include a thorough discussion of every election campaign, insightful analysis of candidates and platforms, good summaries of newspaper editorials and extant private letters, and an excellent review of legislative accomplishments and failures. Using ecological regression analysis on town data, Renda analyzes voting behavior in the state in exhaustive fashion. He attends to social and economic factors, showing the rural base of the Democratic party.

Thanks to Isaac Hill and the Jacksonians, New Hampshire was long a Democratic stronghold. However, after the Compromise of 1850 that party, and its main opponents, the Whigs and Free Soilers, ran out of ideas and programs. The threat of slavery expansion represented by the Kansas Nebraska Act of 1854 angered many if not most citizens. The new "American" (or "Know Nothing") party emerged out of nowhere, based on a network of secret local chapters. New issues were afoot-- many citizens were worried about the dangers of poverty and crime in the cities (especially Manchester), and wanted to restrict Irish immigration. Others were alarmed that a clannish element controlled by priests (and perhaps by the Pope himself) threatened republican values. A riot in the summer of 1854 underscored the troubles. The Democratic party was increasingly dependent on these Irish votes, and at the same time was preaching democracy and local sovereignty, thereby rejecting the principle of free soil and facilitating the spread of slavery in the western territories. The American party artfully combined nativism and anti-slavery, and offered nominations to both Whig and Free Soil politicians. To this mix Renda adds a severe draught for farmers and a business downturn, both of which soured otherwise optimistic voters. The American party crusaded against dread evils--there was a plot

afoot to impose aristocratic and Catholic values, so secrecy was necessary. Three-fourths of the Whigs, and 90 percent of the Free Soilers, despairing of victory under their own tattered banners, joined the nativist crusade. The Democrats, unaccustomed to being on the defensive, did not defend Catholicism, slavery, or liquor, but instead dismissed the dangers as exaggerated. Opposing "Popery, Mormonism, Codfish Aristocracy, Socialism, White, Red and Black Slavery, intemperance, monopoly, cliques and demagogues," the American party rolled to a landslide victory as turnout billowed to 83 percent (51-55).

The new party passed its entire legislative program despite fierce Democratic objections (55-57). They lengthened the waiting period for citizenship, reformed the court system, expanded the number and power of banks, strengthened corporations, defeated a 10-hour law, reformed the tax system, enabled the creation of high schools, increased spending on schools, prohibited the sale of liquor, and denounced the expansion of slavery. In a nutshell the Know Nothings fought against traditionalism and promoted the more rapid modernization of New Hampshire. In the 1855 fall elections the Know Nothings again carried the state over both the Democrats (who focused on repeal of prohibition) and the small new Republican party. In 1856 the American party merged with the Republicans, carrying by a small margin the once solidly Democratic state.

Congregationalists, Unitarians, and Baptists now became core Republican voters, leaving the Democrats with the Catholics, the Free Will Baptists, and a slim majority of Methodists. Realignment had come to New Hampshire. In occupational terms, the more traditional farmers were still Democrats, but the more modern urban sector voted Republican, including both the mill workers and, especially, the business and professional men who comprised the urban middle class (196-201). Thus Renda estimates that in 1864 the farmers voted 55-38 Democratic (with the remainder not voting), factory workers were 40-23 Republican, and the urban middle class 72-13 Republican. The patterns resemble those of the Midwest at about the same time.

The book is a distillation of Renda's Ph.D. thesis, directed in 1991 by Michael Holt at the University of Virginia, which ran over 1200 pages. Holt clearly gave very good advice on how to shorten a manuscript (even though his own recent book on the Whig party ran 1000 pages.) Doubtless anyone who wants even more detail on New Hampshire can go look it up in the dissertation. What disappoints me is not lack of detail but one sin of omission, and one of commission.

One omission is an explanatory model for how different ethnic and economic groups voted. Renda has plenty of material to support an ethnoreligious model of voting, as well as a modernization model. He does not take the opportunity to evaluate or test either of those models against his data sets. So we do learn that Methodists voted Republican and Baptists Democratic, but there is no examination of sermons or religious newspapers, nor an analysis of how liturgical and pietistic value systems, and local ministers, interacted with specific political issues, such as prohibition. Renda's narrative shows that in New Hampshire, as elsewhere, farmers were mostly Democrats and they resisted banks, tariffs, factories, canals, railroads, and the market revolution. The conflict raged throughout the period, especially in 1840-43 when Democratic radicals succeeded in blocking business expansion, and in imposing unlimited liability on corporations (p. 21). But Renda fails to draw any conclusion about traditionalists fighting modernization, or how well the modernization model fits his state. He does provide an enlightening analysis of how in 1860 Republican efforts to destroy infected cattle split that party and united the Democrats against the "pleura- pneumonia oligarchy" (89). (That reminds me of how traditionalistic farmers in the early 20th century resisted the

public health officials trying to destroy tubercular milk cows.)

The sin of commission is the unsupported assumption that voters always looked backward not forward: "If voters issued mandates to politicians, such directives were more akin to votes of confidence based on past achievements in the same or similar policy spheres than to stamps of ideological approval for prospective policy blueprints" (p. 180). But Renda offers no evidence for a backward- looking, rather than forward-looking, electorate. Most likely it was neither, but rather a predominantly party- loyal electorate that was committed long-term to one party, and which was well trained in how to explain away successes claimed by the other side or apparent failures on their own side. Every legislative session was different, with some successes for one part, some for the other, and often frustration. Yet the granite state moved steadily ahead, just as if the vast majority of the voters were lifetime loyalists. Try some "retrospective voting" yourself: if the deficit goes away in 2000, will you vote for Bush or Gore? When the USSR lost the Cold War did you vote for Bush or Dukakis? If the Union is restored and slavery abolished, would you vote for the Republicans, who won the war, or Democrats, who called it a "failure"? You might think the Republicans would have a terrific appeal for retrospective voters in 1868 but in the gubernatorial election the Democrats won a higher share of the potential electorate in 1868 than ever before or after in the era. Indeed, only a miniscule 1-3 percent of the electorate switched parties in the mid and late 1860s was well below the average for the period (194). People surely noticed the Civil War, but nothing that happened during the 1860s inspired much shifting between parties.

The retrospective voting model was developed to fit a late twentieth century regime of low partisan loyalty, low levels of interest, and high levels of abstention and switching. (Incidentally, a model that stresses prospective voting based on candidate promises does just about as well today.) Party loyalty in New Hampshire was far higher than today. Split tickets were rare. Turnout rose steadily from 75 percent in the 1840s to 87 percent in the 1870s. Renda estimates the year-to-year switching was always under twelve percent and usually under five percent, except for one year (1854-55) when it soared to 36 percent (194). In a word, Renda uses a model that might fit many voters today, but would fit well under a quarter during the Civil War era.

Today voters talk economics ("Are you better off than you were four years ago?"). Renda unfortunately does not provide economic indicators, such as wage rates, tax levels, or the prices of farm products, that voters might have used to gauge their economic situation. He downplays economic issues in favor of any number of other issues, such as the slave power, nationalism, secession, religion, Reconstruction, civil rights, business, banking, railroads, schools, taxes, liquor, women's rights, corruption, and cattle disease. But for none of the issues does Renda provide an explicit empirical test of what "retrospective voting" would look like and not look like. Instead he assumes his main conclusion, regardless of the evidence in his tables.

Renda's sins are venial, and can largely be ignored by the aficionado of a political tale well analyzed.

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