

The Presidency of Franklin Delano Roosevelt

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generally underestimated or misinterpreted his historical significance, portraying him, at best, as a glorious failure to be admired for his "undaunted courage, unlimited perseverance, and enormous dedication" (3). In her view, he deserves to be celebrated as a "constructive statesman who strove for a more democratic social order," who was instrumental in most of the successful reform efforts of his own time, who prefigured many of the achievements of the New Deal and its putative successors, and whose "battle to more equitably redistribute the nation's power and wealth continues to be waged," often by people who acknowledge La Follette as one of their chief role models (3, 308-9).

Unger's *La Follette* is clearly a biography worthy of its subject. In Wisconsin, and lots of other places as well, there could be no higher praise.

The Presidency of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, by George McJimsey. American Presidency Series. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000. xvi, 355 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliographical essay, index. \$34.95 cloth.

Reviewer Michael J. Anderson is associate professor of history and chair of the department of history and political science at Clarke College. His research has focused on twentieth-century politics.

George McJimsey has taken on a difficult task: a one-volume study of the 12-year presidency of FDR. His effort, coming in at just 300 pages, succeeds in many respects. Although not everyone will agree with all of his arguments, McJimsey brings some interesting and challenging insights to bear in the long debate about Roosevelt and his legacy.

One of the engaging features of this work is that it has a clear thesis. McJimsey argues that the Roosevelt administration needs to be seen in the context of its time, which was characterized, according to the author, by the emergence of "pluralism," "an intellectual outlook . . . that informed approaches to organization and problem solving" (xii). McJimsey contends that pluralism, which had emerged in the twenties, rejected a fixed, hierarchical search for final solutions to social problems in favor of "a continuous process of decision and action, action and decision" (8).

McJimsey's study is organized topically, covering the New Deal, prewar foreign policy, and wartime policy. After a chapter on the first hundred days, prewar domestic policy is covered in chapters devoted to economic recovery, social recovery, and "resources for recovery," as well as chapters discussing FDR's political base, Eleanor Roosevelt and women, and the limits of the New Deal. These chapters, in many ways, constitute both the most challenging, and most interesting, part

of the book. McJimsey convincingly shows that although FDR did not "conceive of all or even most" of the New Deal, it was, nonetheless, "uniquely Roosevelt's creation" because it was influenced by his "social values," he "recruited people who were able to conceive it," and he "provided the political muscle to enact it" (288). Even if one is not entirely convinced by the author's thesis, his book makes a strong case for judging FDR's administration in the context of the complex policy challenges of those years.

This book, based on an extensive body of secondary literature, with a few references to published primary sources, has some weaknesses. At times it is difficult to see how FDR's pluralist approach differed, in practice, from earlier, Progressive Era approaches. The chapters dealing with foreign policy, although solid, are less convincing in terms of the author's thesis. Some might find that the treatments of women and Native Americans, prominently played up on the dust jacket, are not fully integrated into the work.

Overall, however, this work is a valuable and engaging contribution to the literature on Roosevelt and his legacy. It offers students of the period an excellent reminder of the complexity of those years. Its conclusions, in general, are evenhanded and judicious. While many, no doubt, will quarrel with the argument that the Roosevelt administration can be characterized as having a unified pluralist approach to decision making, this book has made a contribution to the debate on Roosevelt's legacy and his impact on the presidency.

American Dreamer: The Life and Times of Henry A. Wallace, by John C. Culver and John Hyde. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2000. xi, 608 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$35.00 cloth.

Reviewer David E. Hamilton is associate professor of history at the University of Kentucky. He is the author of *From New Day to New Deal: American Farm Policy from Hoover to Roosevelt, 1928-1933* (1991).

No twentieth-century Iowan was more influential or more controversial than Henry Agard Wallace. On the eve of the Great Depression, Wallace was the nation's most respected farm editor and a brilliant corn breeder who was introducing hybrid seed corn to the Midwest. After leaving Iowa in 1933 to become U.S. secretary of agriculture in Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, he presided over a vast expansion of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and became one of the New Deal's stars. In 1940 Roosevelt tapped Wallace as his vice-president. Wallace used his new post to appeal for the liberal agenda he made famous in his "The Century of the Common Man" address.

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