

Harry Hopkins: Sudden Hero, Brash Reformer

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deals with methods (how environmental history is "done"); parts two, three, and four present writings grouped into successive historical periods. Nice, neat, and clean. But this organization does not explain why Sherow chose these particular essays and not others. Most of them do not clearly exemplify or develop Sherow's purported overarching theme—"a sense of the American West."

In his introduction, Sherow writes eloquently about a notion that environmental historians have only recently begun to adopt, namely, that the human-nature relationship is intimately interdependent, as opposed to the more classical Euro-American view that humans have controlled, or at least attempted to control, nature. Environmental history, Sherow argues, must transcend the mere chronicling of human conquest of, or adaptation to, the environment as espoused by the Turner-Spencer schools. It must be not only multidisciplinary, applying life and physical sciences; it must also be based on a more holistic awareness that the human environment (or the relationship between humans and nature) may actually transcend the elemental physical connectedness, and include emotional and spiritual aspects as well. Dan Flores thoughtfully develops this idea in his essay, "Spirit of Place and the Value of Nature in the American West."

Despite this book's failure to develop an important theme, it is a collection of thought-provoking, mostly well-written pieces (all of which have been published previously in journals and magazines) that suggest different approaches to environmental history in different areas of the West.

Harry Hopkins: Sudden Hero, Brash Reformer, by June Hopkins. The Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute Series on Diplomatic and Economic History. New York: St. Martin's Press. 1999. x, 271 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY ALAN JONES, GRINNELL COLLEGE

June Hopkins is Harry Hopkins's granddaughter, and her book gains strength from this family connection. It also profits from serious archival research, especially in the Georgetown University Special Collections, where many of Harry Hopkins's papers are preserved. The book concludes in the mid-1930s at the climax of Hopkins's achievement as director of the New Deal's Works Progress Administration (WPA) and as one of the managers of the Social Security Act of 1935. For a complete account of Hopkins's service to his country (especially during

World War II) one should rely on George McJimsey's biography, *Harry Hopkins: Ally of the Poor and Defender of Democracy* (1987).

Harry Hopkins grew up in Iowa, and after graduating from Grinnell College in 1912 went east to New York City for a career in social work. Except for his attachment to the college, his affection for things midwestern diminished as his love for New York developed. June Hopkins writes sensitively about Harry's early years. Harry did not accept his mother's Methodism or his father's cynicism, but he did absorb the idealism of the Social Gospel, which marked the ethos of Grinnell College at the turn of the century. Harry was a secular humanist whose first wife, Ethel (June's grandmother), said that for Harry "service to others was the most important way" to manifest religion (16).

Harry did not become a "sudden hero" upon arriving in New York City in 1912, but his life quickly changed. He worked with immigrant boys at the Christodora settlement house. The poverty of the Lower East Side tenements dismayed him, but he found the ethnic mix of those neighborhoods new and exciting. Within a year he married Ethel Gross, a Hungarian Jewish immigrant and suffragist. He soon took a job at the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor (AICP). By 1915 (when he was 25) he had joined an influential group of New York urban reformers and social workers dealing with issues of unemployment, relief, widow's pensions, and child welfare—issues he would encounter again in the 1930s. June Hopkins handles these early experiences in detail because she believes they were formative for Harry's later beliefs that poverty was less an individual moral failing than a structural defect in capitalist society and that government must take an active role in providing for public welfare.

Hopkins's rapid progress in the field of scientific and professional social work owed much to his nonbureaucratic administrative style and to attractive personal qualities that commanded the loyalty of co-workers. These became clear in his four-year experience in the South working for the American Red Cross during and after World War I. In 1922 he became president of the new American Association of Social Work and returned to the AICP. He then became executive director of the New York Tuberculosis Association, and in the depths of the Great Depression in 1931 Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed him executive director of the state's Temporary Emergency Relief Administration. Hopkins, who viewed unemployment as a national problem, did not believe in Hoover's "trickle-down" solutions. He accepted the free enterprise system, but he also thought that "predatory business" refused to take "responsibility along with privilege" (157).

After Roosevelt's inauguration in 1933, Hopkins advocated federal legislation emphasizing "work" relief. Congress passed such legislation, and Roosevelt appointed Hopkins director of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration in May 1933. By October, with winter coming on, unemployment was still over 20 percent, and Hopkins pressed for greater funding. He became head of the Civil Works Administration, which, by the spring of 1934, had created 200,000 work relief projects for 4 million unemployed. Hopkins and the New Dealers looked for more permanent solutions to problems of economic and social security, especially after the landslide Democratic victories in the fall of 1934. In 1935 Hopkins became director of the WPA, and in the next few years spent \$10.7 billion on work projects that created 3 million jobs. But the WPA faded away in 1939 as Roosevelt and Hopkins and the nation turned to problems of war and diplomacy.

June Hopkins says that her grandfather was not a "political radical" (176). He certainly was not the "Red" hated by conservative Republicans (whom Hopkins spoke of rather brashly). The Social Security Act of 1935—with its old-age pensions, widow's pensions, aid to dependent children, and unemployment compensation—did begin an American welfare system. But the Act was a compromise that did not contain the federal employment guarantee that Hopkins sought or the national health system he desired. His ideal welfare state has never been realized.

Iowa Women in the WPA, by Louise Rosenfield Noun. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1999. xii, 140 pp. Illustrations, tables, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$24.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY CAROL A. WEISENBERGER, UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

Franklin D. Roosevelt created the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in 1935 to provide work relief for millions of Americans who were still unemployed six years after the Great Crash triggered the Great Depression. Unlike the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the Public Works Administration (PWA), both established in 1933, the WPA was to address the needs of unemployed women as well as men. In *Iowa Women in the WPA*, Louise Rosenfield Noun briefly describes how the WPA, in existence from 1935 to 1943, provided opportunities for Iowa women to survive the greatest economic crisis of our country's history. As the first state study of women's experiences in the WPA, Noun's study is a contribution to local and state New Deal historiography.

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