

Hope Restored: How the New Deal Worked in Town and Country

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Her memoir provides interesting first-hand discussions of an important (and understudied) aspect of women's history—the development of women's partisanship and the entry of women into the political parties. As a prominent suffragist, Blair was courted by both political parties. She discusses the evolution of her own understanding of partisanship, her flirtation with both parties (as well as with nonpartisanship), and her eventual decision, after initially turning down their invitations, to identify with the Democrats. Blair was subsequently elected Missouri's Democratic National Committeewoman in 1921, and was named vice-chair of the DNC in 1922. In that capacity she became the chief organizer of Democratic women, establishing hundreds of Democratic women's clubs across the country.

Although she lived until 1951, Blair ended her autobiography in the 1930s. In a useful introduction, editor Virginia Laas fills in some of Blair's later years. In addition to background on Blair, Laas discusses her method in preparing Blair's drafts for publication. She also places Blair's text within the genre of women's autobiography. Finally, Laas's meticulously researched footnotes supplement Blair's text with background on individuals, events, and places mentioned by the author. More context and analysis from the editor would have been helpful in placing Blair within the history of women and politics. In general, however, Laas has performed an admirable service in bringing the manuscript to press and making available to the public this welcome addition to the literature on American women's political history.

Hope Restored: How the New Deal Worked in Town and Country, edited by Bernard Sternsher. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1999. 247 pp. Tables, notes, bibliography. \$14.95 paper.

Barbara Berglund, reviewer, is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Michigan. Her dissertation is a multicultural cultural history of nineteenth-century San Francisco.

The articles in *Hope Restored* explore the effects of New Deal policies in 14 different localities around the nation from 1932 to 1941. These years, according to Bernard Sternsher, marked "an era of hope restored," in contrast to the period from 1929 to 1932, which, in an earlier anthology, he characterized as "an era of hope lost" (1).

Taken together, the insights of these local histories add depth and nuance to evaluations of the New Deal, which have frequently focused on broad, national analyses. Douglas Fleming's catalog of New Deal policies in Atlanta; Billy Hinson's article about the experiences of men in the Civilian Conservation Corps in Mobile County, Alabama; Roger

Hardaway's assessment of projects undertaken by the Civil Works Administration in Forks County, North Dakota; and Garry Boulard's work on the Federal Emergency Relief Administration's role in revitalizing the economy of Key West, Florida, all testify to the New Deal's positive physical and economic impact in these very different areas. David Davies's article about relief policies in Providence, Rhode Island; William Chafe's article about Flint, Michigan; and Charles Lowry's piece on Tampa, Florida, explore the complex relationships among businessmen, local officials, and federal agencies that New Deal policies generated. In a similar vein, Raymond Koch focuses on the way work relief programs emerged as critical issues among members of the left, right, and center in Minneapolis politics.

Three articles look at the way the rate of change or the kinds of changes precipitated by the New Deal in particular localities diverged from national trends. Merwin Swanson shows that businessmen in Pocatello, Idaho, like other businessmen nationally, opposed the growing power of the federal government but supported measures with clear benefits to their city. In part this was because the New Deal was not the turning point in politics and labor relations in Pocatello that it was nationally. Roger Biles demonstrates that in Memphis, Tennessee, the New Deal brought some cosmetic changes but left the social demographics of the city as well as its economic, political, and racial systems largely unaltered. Similarly, Jerold Simmons's article about the response of Dawson County, Nebraska, to the New Deal reveals that longtime Republicans voted for Democratic policies during hard times but returned to the Republican fold by 1940, despite the substantial benefits the New Deal brought to the region.

Three articles focus specifically on issues of race and gender. Randy Sparks shows that including the experience of blacks in Houston's history changes the image of the Depression-era city from "heavenly Houston" to "hellish Houston" (183). John Salmond delineates the class tensions as well as the racism of Anglos toward Latinos that surfaced when the National Youth Administration located one of its camps in Hermosa Beach, California. James Francis Tidd Jr. reveals both the presence and absence of cross-racial solidarity among Latina, black, and white women employed in Works Progress Administration sewing rooms in Hillsborough County, Florida.

The stated goals in compiling these articles were to create an anthology suitable for classroom use that had geographic breadth, represented "race relations, the plight of women, and aid to youth" (4), and showed the ways responses to the New Deal varied in different communities. The selections chosen clearly have substantive breadth. However, while

their geographic scope is also considerable, they are regionally unbalanced, as the South predominates. In addition, the articles are rather uneven in quality. Many do an excellent job situating their studies in a national context, yet others leave undeveloped the larger significance of the local histories they reveal.

For classroom use, I would prefer a collection that showcased more recent scholarship. The dates of original publication of the articles range from 1968 to 1992, with half of the articles from the 1980s. A bibliography is provided as a guide to further study, but even here several important, relatively recent works are conspicuous by their absence. An introductory essay that outlined the key policies of the New Deal and offered a framework for how to think about the articles synthetically would also have strengthened this collection. Moreover, I would also have appreciated a greater number of articles exploring the ways Americans of diverse racial, ethnic, and gender identities experienced the New Deal and the Great Depression.

Judging Jehovah's Witnesses: Religious Persecution and the Dawn of the Rights Revolution, by Shawn Francis Peters. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2000. x, 342 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$34.95 cloth.

Reviewer Bill Douglas lives in Des Moines. The author of articles in *Minnesota History* and the *Annals of Iowa*, he is engaged in a study of pacifism and non-resistance in Iowa in the 1940s.

Wars and Supreme Court decisions have increased violations of civil liberties in this country; Dred Scott would likely argue for the paramount importance of the latter. Shawn Francis Peters also makes that case in his book on the persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses in the United States during the World War II era, *Judging Jehovah's Witnesses*.

When the Gobitas children in a mining town in Pennsylvania followed their sect's admonition and in 1938 refused to pledge allegiance to a secular power, their expulsion from school resulted in a 1940 U.S. Supreme Court decision that stigmatized Witnesses in many local communities. The remarkable reversal of *Gobitis* [sic] only two years later came too late to stem a wave of persecution against Jehovah's Witnesses, religious violence on a scale not seen since that against Mormons a century earlier. The persecution subsided but persisted even after the war.

One of the book's best chapters describes the legal battles Witnesses fought with the decentralized Selective Service System. As non-pacifists—they believe in self-defense and plan to fight in the Battle

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