

The Two Faces of Liberalism: How the Hoover-Roosevelt Debate Shapes the 21st Century

Roger Biles
Illinois State University

ISSN 0003-4827

Copyright © 2007 State Historical Society of Iowa

Recommended Citation

Biles, Roger. "The Two Faces of Liberalism: How the Hoover-Roosevelt Debate Shapes the 21st Century." *The Annals of Iowa* 66 (2007), 220-221.

Available at: <http://ir.uiowa.edu/annals-of-iowa/vol66/iss2/20>

Hosted by [Iowa Research Online](#)

The Two Faces of Liberalism: How the Hoover-Roosevelt Debate Shapes the 21st Century, by Gordon Lloyd. Conflicts and Trends in Business Ethics series. Salem, MA: M & M Scrivener Press, 2006. x, 420 pp. Notes, index. \$39.95 cloth.

Reviewer Roger Biles is professor of history at Illinois State University. His books include *Crusading Liberal: Paul H. Douglas of Illinois* (2002) and *Illinois: A History of the Land and Its People* (2005).

Herbert Hoover and Franklin D. Roosevelt became acquainted during World War I, when the former served as U.S. Food Administrator and the latter as Assistant Secretary of the Navy. Although they never became good friends, Hoover and Roosevelt socialized occasionally and shared a progressive politics based on Wilsonian internationalism. Roosevelt wrote of Hoover in 1920: "He is certainly a wonder, and I wish we could make him President of the United States. There could not be a better one" (vi). Roosevelt worked unsuccessfully within the Democratic Party that year to draft Hoover, who subsequently ended the speculation about his political leanings by declaring a Republican affiliation. After Hoover's election to the presidency in 1928, the bond between the two politicians weakened and they became perennial rivals. The rift intensified when Roosevelt bested Hoover in the 1932 election, and the defeated Republican became an embittered critic of the Democratic administration that succeeded his own. The two men never spoke to each other after Roosevelt's inauguration on March 4, 1933, and Hoover relentlessly attacked the New Deal on philosophical and practical grounds for the remainder of the decade and after.

In *The Two Faces of Liberalism*, Gordon Lloyd argues that the spirited exchanges between the two men during the Great Depression not only addressed the key political, economic, and moral issues of that era but continue to frame the important policy decisions confronting the nation's leaders in our own time. Just as the growth of the administrative state and concern for the fate of democracy perplexed Americans in the 1930s, the author contends, so do policymakers grapple with the same concerns today. In an age of globalization and terrorism, questions concerning liberty versus equality, freedom versus regulation, and security versus individual rights resonate as powerfully as they did during the years of the Great Depression. The author's chronological presentation of 60 documents—speeches, inaugural addresses, annual messages to Congress, correspondence, Roosevelt's Fireside Chats, and U.S. Supreme Court decisions—compellingly illustrates the profound differences that characterized the political and economic visions of the two presidents.

Lloyd has skillfully juxtaposed important documents in a way that highlights the stark differences between Hoover and Roosevelt. Even historians who are wholly familiar with the public materials and private letters included in this volume will appreciate viewing them in one collection arranged in such a logical manner. Readers with little knowledge of these sources will profit especially from the author's efforts.

The book's introduction is disappointing, however, because frequent typos and other stylistic errors bespeak a poor job of copy editing. More importantly, an inadequate discussion of historiography in the introduction will disturb students of the New Deal. The author extensively considers the views of obscure texts while giving short shrift or ignoring altogether the interpretations of important recent scholarship on the 1930s. A better job of contextualizing the Roosevelt-Hoover debate would have significantly improved this otherwise thought-provoking book.

USS Iowa at War, by Kit and Carolyn Bonner. The AT WAR Series. St. Paul, MN: Zenith Press, 2007. 127 pp. Illustrations (many in color), index. \$19.95 paper.

Reviewer William M. Johnson is a curator with the State Historical Society of Iowa, where he specializes in the care and interpretation of objects related to natural history, military history, and the history of technology.

The *USS Iowa at War* is a well-illustrated text that falls short of telling the story of the *USS Iowa* (BB61). A sense of confusion begins with the first chapter, "History," when the author describes the current condition of the *Iowa* (BB61) and the origin of Japan's great Yamoto class and America's Montana class but fails to comment on the *Iowa's* lineage. The following chapters provide a variety of information, ranging from the rise of the Dreadnaughts to a chapter on the Soviet Kirov class cruisers. Regrettably, the few chapters concerned with the *USS Iowa's* service are brief and inadequate, with a third of the chapter on World War II dominated by the story of the destroyer *USS William D. Porter*.

A bright spot in the text is the coverage of the tragedy in turret number 2 on April 19, 1989. There the authors establish the history of such explosions and sensitively relate the events and following investigations.

The book is richly illustrated with informative cut lines. Although the depth of information on the *USS Iowa's* service may be lacking, the book is filled with information on other contemporary vessel classes.