

BOOK REVIEWS

THE POLITICS OF UPHEAVAL (Part III of *The Age of Roosevelt*)

by Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr.

1960, HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY, BOSTON, MASS., PP. x, 714.

This book is the third volume of a series called "The Age of Roosevelt". The first two volumes were entitled "The Crisis of the Old Order" and "The Coming of the New Deal." The first book is devoted to the period between 1919-1933 and the second, to the years 1933-1934; this third volume takes us through the years 1935-1936. It is in many ways the most interesting of the three books; certainly it is more easily read than the second work. This is due mainly to the fact that instead of having to devote his time to describing the technical organization of the various New Deal agencies, the author can emphasize the personalities and issues that dominated these two exciting years.

The Politics of Upheaval is divided into four parts. The first part is entitled "The Theology of Ferment." Here the author is concerned with the various Jemagogues and theorists who advanced radical solutions of both a Right and Left Wing variety. The Depression brought to the political surface a vast array of interesting political specimens. Most of the leading personalities are described and their political views summarized. Among this fascinating group was Dr. Townsend with his scheme of giving a \$200.00 monthly pension to all citizens over 60. Also among the Rightists were dangerous personalities like Gerald K. Smith and Father Coughlin. It was Coughlin who demonstrated the effectiveness of radio as a means of political agitation. It was, however, Franklin Roosevelt himself who was ultimately to use the radio more effectively than any other politician of his time.

Undoubtedly the most dangerous of all the radicals of the Right was Senator Huey Long of Louisiana, or as he is called by Schlesinger, "The Messiah of the Rednecks." Long achieved total dominance in his own state through espousing a policy of taxing wealthy corporations in order to provide for the electorate. Without question, Long achieved a great deal for his state, but he achieved even more for himself. Long's slogan was "Every man a King", but as Schlesinger succinctly puts it "Every Man was a King, but only One wore a Crown." Long went on from his position as Governor of the state to become a United States Senator. There had already been formulated plans for his heading a third party movement in the 1936 Presidential election. Incredible as it may now seem, Prof. Schlesinger notes that Long was considered by many a very serious political threat.

The book also describes the various radicals of the Left. The author starts with relative moderates like Senators La Follette and Norris, going right through to the hard-core Communists. The Left, however, was far too divided to ever really present a serious political threat to the established Parties.

They were also hampered by the fact that Roosevelt had stolen a considerable amount of their political thunder.

Part 2 of the book is entitled "The Coming of the Second New Deal". It is in this part that Schlesinger advances his very interesting thesis that there were really two "New Deals". The early New Dealers considered the concentration of economic power as an irreversible fact of American economics. They attempted to bring the economy under increased federal control, by installing a system of economic planning. The second New Deal began to evolve about the beginning of 1935. Its philosophy was to de-emphasize planning in favour of a free economy closely regulated by Government, or to use Professor Schlesinger's own words, it was a "new effort to restore a competitive society within a framework of strict social ground rules and on the foundation of basic economic standards-accompanied, as time went on, by a readiness to use the fiscal pulmotor to keep the economy lively and expansive." (p.385)

With the coming of new ideas came new personalities into the Government. The leaders of the second New Deal were usually lawyers, men not so much devoted to theoretical long-term solutions but instead interested in the pragmatic solution of day-to-day problems. From the Harvard Law School came a large number of professors and law graduates who supplied the administration with much of its top talent. These lawyers were in turn joined by economists who believed in the economic theories of Lord Keynes. Men like Moley Tugwell, Berle and Johnson were replaced by lawyers like Frankfurter, Corcoran, Landis and William O. Douglas, to mention just a few. All of these men shared the view of Justice Brandeis of the need to maintain competition in the American economy. In tribute to these lawyers, Schlesinger states "The laws drawn by the First New Deal tended to perish before the Courts because of loose draftsmanship and emotional advocacy. The laws drawn by the Second New Deal were masterpieces of the lawyer's arts; and they survived." (p.395)

At the same time that ideological changes were taking place within the Administration, a political revolution was coming about in the Nation. The famous coalition of Labour, racial minorities and the big city bosses was being formed. Roosevelt stood increasingly as a link between his administration intellectuals and the emerging political power blocks throughout the Country.

Part three of this work centers around the role of the Court during these two difficult years. The Author describes the legal techniques used by the legal representatives of corporations to frustrate federal laws. During this time, lower court federal judges, most of them Republican appointees unsympathetic to the new administration, issued 1600 injunctions directed against the federal authorities. The battle raged, however, hottest at the top. The Supreme Court of the United States was dominated by men who firmly believed that Government should be kept from interfering with business activity. They seemed to forget the basic presumption of constitutional law, namely that a law is presumed valid unless there are very definite grounds for considering it unconstitutional. The majority of the Court's members saw very little virtue