



Review

Reviewed Work(s): *The First New Deal* by Raymond Moley

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Source: *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (Jun., 1967), pp. 305-308

Published by: The New England Quarterly, Inc.

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/363786>

Accessed: 20-02-2022 18:15 UTC

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sequent dissolution. Governor Hinckley, it is suggested, actually welcomed the annexation to the Bay Colony, as did many other Plymouth people at the time.

There are a few points at which Langdon's handling of the evidence is open to challenge. On pages 165-166, when faced with conflicting evidence concerning the date of an occurrence, he cites two sources. The reader who is familiar with both may wonder why he prefers the one written years after the event to the one written on the very day in question by the person most likely to know the truth of the matter. Langdon's direct quotations from primary sources appear to be literal even to the use of raised letters and diacritical marks. Yet on page 178, in quoting directly from a letter in the Cotton Papers at the Boston Public Library, he is less than exact. Fortunately, these relatively minor lapses are not characteristic. Indeed, the most notable defect is the lack of an annotated bibliography, for which the author's footnotes are only a partial substitute. An up-to-date bibliography would have been extremely useful as a conclusion to this important topic about which Langdon has written so well.

DOUGLAS EDWARD LEACH.

The First New Deal. By Raymond Moley, with the assistance of Elliot Rosen. Foreword by Frank Freidel. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc. 1966. Pp. xxiii, 577. \$12.50.)

Of all the men around Roosevelt in the 1932 campaign and the first months of the New Deal, none was more important than Raymond Moley. While Flynn, Farley, and Howe demonstrated superb political management, Moley and his Brains Trust guided the candidate through the complex issues that bewildered a frightened nation. In the long interregnum when the country's banking structure crashed in ruins and the Hoover Administration appeared to be seized by a strange paralysis, Moley was a valuable aide in sifting ideas for a president-elect who really didn't know what he was going to do. Through the last hours of the Hoover Administration and the first of the New Deal, Moley was one of an unselfish group whose only thought was to avert panic and begin the long struggle for the restoration of confidence. Until his resignation six months after the inauguration, Moley as Assistant Secretary of State was very close to Roosevelt and exerted a salutary influence

upon most of the measures that launched the first New Deal. These facts, well known for more than three decades, are enough to justify Moley's second major critique of the administration in which for a time he was second only to the President himself.

This book is the fruition of Moley's long-standing desire to write a history of the first New Deal as he saw it. Ten years ago, he enlisted the services of a young historian, Elliot A. Rosen, for basic research. How much of the present volume is Rosen, how much is Moley? The integration is so skillful that the reader can only guess. Even with Rosen's 500-page manuscript at hand, Moley found it necessary to do much additional research. His own papers obviously were of prime importance. As Frank Freidel states in an excellent foreword: "His is a rich, indeed indispensable collection of manuscripts, on some points more informative on the planning of the New Deal than even the Roosevelt papers at Hyde Park."

Disclaiming any intention of writing a comprehensive history of the first New Deal, Moley insists that his is a story, a part of a seamless fabric. He begins with an incisive evaluation of "The President," follows with an "Autobiographical Note," and then gets into his story with by far the best existing account of the Hoover-Roosevelt sparring during the interregnum. Negotiations with Hoover, recruiting the cabinet, and preparation of the inaugural address were all matters in which Moley was a key figure. The story of the banking holiday has been told again and again, but Moley's version in "The Struggle for Solvency" supersedes all others. In his accounts of the origins of AAA, NRA, WPA, TVA, and other agencies, Moley is careful to deny responsibility for the many things of which he disapproved. The first Securities Act was none of his doing, but he had much to do with the later SEC and appointment of Joseph Kennedy.

In assessing the famous Hundred Days, Moley corrects much of the mythology that has accumulated. There was no overall plan; most measures originated outside of the White House; the Seventy-third Congress, "rich in talent and experience," was no rubber stamp; there was no revolution; some measures were forced upon Roosevelt; most of the legislation was drastically revised later; and the emphasis was not on reform. None of these conclusions is at all startling to students of the period.

Moley's account of "International Frustrations," centering on the London Economic Conference, is a major contribution to un-

derstanding what really went on in the American delegation. His bitterness toward Roosevelt's "bombshell message" is clear, and the London fiasco made it easier for him to carry out his intention, announced much earlier, to sever official relations with Roosevelt. At the time, however, he concluded a message to Roosevelt by saying: "I consider your message splendid." This, he confesses in a footnote, was "pure sycophancy."

After Seven Years and *The First New Deal* should be read together, although each stands well enough alone. There is more measured judgment, more tolerance, more rich detail in this second memoir. Many of the actors are dead and can in no way be injured by freely expressed opinions. The reader must be impressed by the complete lack of personal rancor. Moley can be devastatingly critical of a man's ideas, of policies, of actions, without in any way attacking the man himself. Indeed, his evaluations of contemporaries are invaluable. Dern, Roper, Cummings, Glass, and Ogden Mills are among those who receive high praise. Frankfurter was a busybody whose Harvard disciples infiltrated the administration much to Moley's annoyance. Ickes is revealed as a monumental egotist whose "incredible *Secret Diary*" can never again be accepted as a reliable memoir by the serious researcher.

The political scientist does not hesitate to pronounce sweeping historical judgments, to make provocative statements as though still lecturing to his classes. Roosevelt he calls a great administrator of a campaign, but "As an executive, he was one of the most imprecise, not to say inefficient, administrators who ever held the office of President." Moley's opinion of cabinet members in general is low. Usually mediocrities who are "prisoners of their own bureaucracies," their honor is transitory and their influence insignificant. While excoriating the bankers who simply didn't know what to do in a crisis, Moley assures us that "The greatest reservoir of practical judgment and administrative talent in the United States is the business community." Himself a professor, Moley reveals far more regard for New York lawyers—unless they happened to be internationalists—than for the law professors of Harvard. He could, and certainly often did, disagree with Rex Tugwell and still regard him as a friend. Moley is entitled to these judgments; indeed, they add the touch of life to his history, however much they may arouse disagreement.

On many occasions Moley makes clear the nature of his con-

servative monetary views. Reform was one thing; but playing fast and loose with sacred monetary formulas was something else. Such "money wizards" as Professor Warren of Cornell, a leading agricultural economist, receive a sound verbal thrashing, and the drift into unsound fiscal policies was especially distressing to the Columbia Professor of Political Science. As more "radical" advisers grew closer to Roosevelt, Moley's ardor cooled. Although he resigned in September, 1933, he continued to advise the President and, as he says, "until June 1936, there was scarcely a message or major speech by Roosevelt in the preparation of which I did not participate." By that time Roosevelt, urged by Edward J. Flynn, had completed his transition from his agrarian-oriented strategy to an urban-oriented one to woo the millions with "radical programs of social and economic reform." There were other influences: personal attacks by conservative Democrats, needling by Hopkins and other intimates, a growing egotism, weariness of ideological battles, apprehension of radical gains, the need for new gimmicks, entry of the CIO into politics, and Supreme Court recalcitrance.

These changes left Moley no choice but to become a Republican since the Democratic Party, as he liked to say, had left him. In reality, no party label is adequate for Moley. He is a moderate Progressive; a blend of the New Nationalism and the New Freedom can be seen in his writings. The mild reforms of the first New Deal were a delayed completion of pre-World War I objectives. Moley was for "sound" money, conservative banking, limited use of the police power, and free enterprise. The farm problem, he confesses, "was a mystery." But whatever was done to solve the mystery must avoid Populist monetary heresy. This, too, marks the urban Progressive to whom the farm problem has always been a mystery.

Memoirs rightly enjoy a very high place among historical sources, especially when written, as this one is, by a man of unimpeachable integrity in full possession of intellectual powers of a high order. Even the best of memoirs must be limited in scope, but Moley has broadened his base by so much historical research that this book is both memoir and history. *After Seven Years* is better reading; but *The First New Deal*, far more significant, takes its place among the three or four best books on the Age of Roosevelt.

HARRIS GAYLORD WARREN.