

by the sources. For example, when McNall writes that there is "evidence that many of those men and women who came to Kansas did so with no actual farming experience at all" (70), his reference is only one settler's remarks. Then, too, McNall's grasp of the general facts and milieu of late nineteenth-century America is weak at times.

McNall's study should be judged mainly, however, for how effectively it fulfills its intent—not so much for how closely it adheres to the canons of professional historical scholarship. On this score, again the views may be differing, but on the whole McNall does basically succeed in examining Kansas Populism in terms of the structure of class formation. Thus, when McNall argues that the Populist party in Kansas fell into the hands of professional politicians who led it to its demise, his concern is not *that* these men gained control but *why* they could do so. The answer for McNall is found in the circumstances and events that kept Populist farmers in Kansas from creating a "class for itself" (6).

The Life of Herbert Hoover, volume 2, *The Humanitarian, 1914–1917*, by George H. Nash. New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1988. xii, 497 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$25.00 cloth.

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The Herbert Hoover I remember from my childhood during the Great Depression was a heartless conservative, insensitive to the sufferings and deprivations of common people. Even my recollection of his likeness, not all that different from the photograph on the front jacket of this volume, suggests a stuffed shirt with a touch of arrogance. Yet historians have long been aware that Hoover directed massive relief programs during and after the First World War, programs responsible for saving literally thousands of civilian lives. Although the enormous hoard of records concerning those relief programs has been accessible for some time at the Hoover Institution at Stanford, California, George Nash may well be the first historian to mine those records and analyze their contents in sufficient depth when preparing this, his second volume of the biography of Herbert Hoover.

Nash's life of Hoover will doubtless remain the definitive biography of America's thirty-first president, at least for this generation. Although the project was commissioned by the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library Association, Nash has carefully maintained his scholarly detachment when using the abundant documentation. Yet he leaves no doubt as to his sympathies toward Hoover. In the previous volume, Nash traced the early life of the Iowa native, who was

orphaned and transplanted to live with relatives in Oregon. The Hoover saga includes the story of a youth spent in poverty and loneliness. After obtaining a college education at the newly established Stanford University, Hoover quickly proceeded to a highly successful career as a mining engineer and business executive. In his multinational business experience, he accumulated vast wealth and lofty international prestige. His accomplishments seem all the more remarkable when one bears in mind that he acquired his great fortune before he reached the age of forty.

The coming of the European War in the summer of 1914 altered the direction of Hoover's life and career. From corporate manager in the private sector, he abruptly turned to public service, assuming a succession of administrative positions in war-related activities. Between 1914 and 1917, his reputation as administrator of relief for the Belgian nation soared. He showed a remarkable talent for recruiting highly competent staff personnel with sufficient motivation. Their record of efficiency and service to needy Europeans was truly remarkable. At the outset, Hoover realized the need for a high-powered public relations effort to ensure that the relief effort would receive sufficient support in the United States and necessary cooperation from the belligerent governments, notably the British, French, and German. Early on, Hoover learned the rudiments concerning the politics of relief, about how to contend with organizations that rivaled his Committee for Relief in Belgium (CRB). As he shuttled back and forth between his command posts for the CRB in London and Washington, he gained a vast knowledge about bureaucratic organization and public finance, but, most important, he quickly became acquainted with national leaders on both sides of the Atlantic. This is the main thrust of George Nash's second volume.

Hoover gained an awesome reputation as the Great Humanitarian. His successes in Belgian relief would soon lead him to take on additional responsibilities as chief of America's massive food relief program following the nation's military intervention in April 1917. Hoover's commitments to public service continued to the end of his long life in 1964. Some readers may feel that George Nash has told this early encounter with public service in too much detail. But a lesser account would do a serious injustice to this critical phase of Hoover's career. George Nash has written a masterful volume, and I am looking forward to the remaining volumes in what will predictably be a distinguished series.

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