

After Roosevelt's inauguration in 1933, Hopkins advocated federal legislation emphasizing "work" relief. Congress passed such legislation, and Roosevelt appointed Hopkins director of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration in May 1933. By October, with winter coming on, unemployment was still over 20 percent, and Hopkins pressed for greater funding. He became head of the Civil Works Administration, which, by the spring of 1934, had created 200,000 work relief projects for 4 million unemployed. Hopkins and the New Dealers looked for more permanent solutions to problems of economic and social security, especially after the landslide Democratic victories in the fall of 1934. In 1935 Hopkins became director of the WPA, and in the next few years spent \$10.7 billion on work projects that created 3 million jobs. But the WPA faded away in 1939 as Roosevelt and Hopkins and the nation turned to problems of war and diplomacy.

June Hopkins says that her grandfather was not a "political radical" (176). He certainly was not the "Red" hated by conservative Republicans (whom Hopkins spoke of rather brashly). The Social Security Act of 1935—with its old-age pensions, widow's pensions, aid to dependent children, and unemployment compensation—did begin an American welfare system. But the Act was a compromise that did not contain the federal employment guarantee that Hopkins sought or the national health system he desired. His ideal welfare state has never been realized.

Iowa Women in the WPA, by Louise Rosenfield Noun. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1999. xii, 140 pp. Illustrations, tables, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$24.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY CAROL A. WEISENBERGER, UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

Franklin D. Roosevelt created the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in 1935 to provide work relief for millions of Americans who were still unemployed six years after the Great Crash triggered the Great Depression. Unlike the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the Public Works Administration (PWA), both established in 1933, the WPA was to address the needs of unemployed women as well as men. In *Iowa Women in the WPA*, Louise Rosenfield Noun briefly describes how the WPA, in existence from 1935 to 1943, provided opportunities for Iowa women to survive the greatest economic crisis of our country's history. As the first state study of women's experiences in the WPA, Noun's study is a contribution to local and state New Deal historiography.

In chapter one, Noun discusses the goals initially established by Harry Hopkins, the first director of the WPA, and Ellen Woodward, the first head of the agency's Women's and Professional Division. Hopkins and Woodward sought to ensure that women would receive equal pay for equal work and that the WPA would provide them with new skills and work experience to enhance their employment opportunities in the future, but the procedures implemented ensured that those goals would not be achieved. Wages were based on a work classification system that placed the majority of women on lower-paying work projects classified as unskilled and reinforced the traditional labor roles of women. Noun notes that this retreat from the initial goals of the agency continued under Colonel Francis Harrington and Florence Kerr, who replaced Hopkins and Woodward in 1939. As Harrington moved the WPA toward more large-scale construction projects and war preparation, he also revised the wage scales. He divided the unskilled classification into *unskilled a* for outdoor projects and *unskilled b* for indoor ones, raising wages for the former and cutting those for the latter, the category under which most women's projects were listed. According to Noun, Harrington "robbed thousands of women classified as *unskilled* of their rightful wages" (15).

The following four chapters and appendix describe the projects that employed women. The vast majority of Iowa women in the WPA worked in sewing rooms, school cafeterias, and homes of welfare clients. By the time the WPA ended in 1943, Iowa women had sewn more than two million articles of clothing and linens for relief families, prepared almost four million hot meals for school children, and, as household aides, assisted more than five thousand indigent families. Other Iowa women worked on the WPA's professional projects. For example, the library project employed women to bind books and operate bookmobiles; the recreation project assigned women to supervise games and teach handicrafts; and the teaching project hired women to provide adult education and work in nursery schools. A small percentage of women worked on the WPA's Federal One, the collective term used for the agency's art, theater, music, and writing programs. Federal One programs employed women to manufacture toys, paint posters, teach music, perform plays, and prepare an Iowa guidebook. Although the WPA gave women wages and work experience, the agency developed few training programs. Those few prepared women to be household aides, maids, and nurses' assistants. Only its training program that offered women skills necessary in wartime industries broke with traditional labor stereotypes. As Noun concludes, "it is evident that the WPA did little, if anything, to enhance the status of

women; for the most part, it further entrenched them in the status quo" (94).

Noun has written a highly readable brief history of the WPA's role in helping Iowa women survive the Great Depression. The book includes more than 60 photographs that wonderfully complement the story Noun tells. Based primarily on the records of the Iowa WPA office, interviews with participants, articles from the *Des Moines Register* and the *Des Moines Tribune*, and selected secondary sources, Noun's account offers a detailed study of the agency's operation at the state level. She does not provide any new interpretation of the WPA's work. The book would have been enhanced if Noun had placed the story of the Iowa women in the WPA in a broader context, comparing the Iowa experience to other state programs in the Midwest or nationally. The use of a wider range of sources would have also been of value; for example, using newspapers of other major Iowa cities, such as Waterloo, would have provided more information on the WPA's impact on the lives of African American women. In addition, manuscript collections, such as the papers of Harry Hopkins and Ellen Woodward, as well as the records of the WPA in the National Archives in Washington, DC, would have provided Noun with a wealth of data to understand the complexities of establishing and maintaining the agency's policies and bureaucracy. For the general audience interested in Depression-era history, this work will be a very enjoyable book to read; for scholars, it will offer a stepping stone for a broader study of women in the WPA.

Noble Abstractions: American Liberal Intellectuals and World War II, by Frank A. Warren. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999. xxii, 330 pp. Notes, index. \$40.00 cloth.

REVIEWED BY BILL DOUGLAS, DES MOINES

In *Noble Abstractions* Frank Warren charts the dominant liberal intellectual responses to the challenges posed by World War II. He argues that American liberalism failed to distinguish between its *hopes* for a progressive future domestically and abroad to be brought about by a liberal president and by an "international civil war" between the forces of fascism and democracy, on the one hand, and the *reality* of a pragmatic politician in the White House and an alliance that included imperialists and that naturally put national interests above internationalist principles on the other. This failure distorted postwar possibilities by underestimating what was achievable in favor of trying to protect a wartime *status quo* consensus domestically, and would soon

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