

*Gerald J. Boileau and the Progressive-Farmer-Labor Alliance: Politics of the New Deal*, by James J. Lorence. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1994. xx, 324 pp. Illustrations, maps, graphs, tables, notes, appendix, bibliography, index. \$44.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY HOWARD W. ALLEN, SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY-CARBONDALE

James Lorence's biography of Gerald J. Boileau is primarily a study of politics in Wisconsin and the United States House of Representatives during the 1930s. Boileau grew up in north central Wisconsin, served in the United States Army during World War I, and graduated from the law school at Marquette University. Soon after his graduation in 1923 he associated himself with the progressive faction of the Republican party under the leadership of the La Follette family. In 1930 he won election to the House from the Eighth Congressional District as a staunch opponent of prohibition and an outspoken progressive Republican, and he served until his defeat in the election of 1938.

Boileau began his tenure in the House during the administration of Herbert Hoover in the early days of the Great Depression. He identified with Wisconsin's progressive Republicans and Farmer-Laborites from Minnesota, and he soon became one of the most active members of that bloc. His was a strategy of working with "other liberals to provide a swing vote that would hold the Congress on a leftward course" (48).

After the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932, Boileau became an important player in the New Deal Congresses. Along with most members of the Progressive-Farmer-Labor bloc, Boileau supported most New Deal measures, including the Agricultural Adjustment Act, the Bankhead Cotton Control Act, the National Labor Relations Act, and the Works Progress Administration. He was especially active in efforts in 1937 and 1938 to increase annual appropriations for the WPA, and he played an important role in the passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938.

As a member of the House Agriculture Committee, Boileau was an aggressive defender of midwestern and especially Wisconsin agricultural interests. He clashed with southern Democrats, who he felt ignored the economic interests of the Wisconsin dairy industry, and he sustained a major but largely unsuccessful effort throughout his years in the House to prevent southern farmers from using land withdrawn from the production of cotton and tobacco to graze dairy cattle in competition with midwestern farmers. He endeavored to secure passage of legislation to bring financial relief to farmers faced with

mortgage foreclosures; he fought to protect small businessmen from the growing threat of chain stores; he favored legislation to strengthen farm organizations and cooperatives; and in defense of Wisconsin butter he struggled unsuccessfully to place a tax on oleomargarine.

In the early 1930s Boileau somewhat reluctantly followed Philip La Follette's lead in abandoning the Republican Party to run on the Progressive Party ticket. That was probably a tactical mistake, and in 1938 Boileau lost his seat to a Republican. The recession of 1937 had exacerbated economic problems in Boileau's district, and many voters there, as elsewhere in the Midwest, returned to the Republican fold. Moreover, in his support of progressive causes the Congressman had permitted his name to be associated with left-wing and Communist organizations. In 1938 he opposed the founding of the House Committee on Un-American Activities, and he signed a telegram supporting the Loyalist government in the Spanish Civil War. Boileau's Republican opponent used these issues effectively and won decisively in the fall election. Boileau again ran unsuccessfully for Congress in 1940, and in 1942 he won a seat on the circuit court, where he served until his retirement in 1969.

This is an impressive political biography. It combines an exhaustive examination of primary sources with a convincing analysis of election and congressional roll call data to show how economic and cultural issues in Boileau's district in Wisconsin related to the role he played on the national stage. The result is a useful examination of the part played by Wisconsin progressive Republicans and the Minnesota Farmer-Labor bloc in Congress in the 1930s. It is a significant addition to the literature on midwestern politics.

*Solidarity and Survival: An Oral History of Iowa Labor in the Twentieth Century*, by Shelton Stromquist. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1993. xii, 346 pp. Illustrations, appendix, index. \$39.95 cloth, \$14.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY ROGER HOROWITZ, HAGLEY MUSEUM AND LIBRARY

In the 1980s the Iowa Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO (IFL) funded an extraordinary oral history project on Iowa labor history. Now Shelton Stromquist, an adviser on the project and professor of history at the University of Iowa, has prepared a fine selection of these interviews. To provide context for the oral interview extracts, he has organized them into topical chapters and provided introductory commentary.

Stromquist faced a daunting task. The IFL project includes more than one thousand interviews from every corner of the state, and with

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