

The Age of Impeachment
American Constitutional Culture since 1960

By David E. Kyvig

(Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008. Pp. xiii, 482. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$34.95.)

Historian David Kyvig is the author of an award-winning book on federal constitutional amendments, *Explicit and Authentic Acts* (1996), which provides perhaps our best study of the general history of the amendments process and the amendments to the U.S. Constitution. In his new book, Kyvig notes that amendments are one "repair device" that was built into the Constitution to be used if the instrument failed to function as expected or desired (p. vii). The impeachment mechanism, he suggests, is another. And thus this study of impeachments is a follow-up of sorts to his earlier examination of amendments and a consideration of how our experience with these features of the Constitution have both realized and deviated from the purposes and expectations that led to their inclusion in the document in the first place.

The Age of Impeachment does not provide a comprehensive history of federal impeachments. Rather, Kyvig is concerned with the "impeachment culture" of American national politics since the mid-twentieth century. The book is framed as an attempt to answer the question of why federal impeachments have become more common since 1961 than they were earlier in American history. The Senate tried federal impeachments in only eleven cases prior to 1960, but

it has held four trials since then. Moreover, the idea of impeachment has been seriously raised in a number of other cases, targeting officials from Chief Justice Earl Warren to President George W. Bush. Kyvig is not alone in suggesting that we have entered a new "age of impeachment" in which political conflict routinely involves the use of such unconventional weapons.

The book is not organized to systematically examine that thesis, however. Instead it provides a case-by-case study of episodes in which serious arguments were made for impeaching a federal official since 1960, beginning with Earl Warren and running through Bill Clinton. The chapters cover a range of figures in between, from Abe Fortas and William O. Douglas, Spiro Agnew and Richard Nixon, to Ronald Reagan and Harry Claiborne, Walter Nixon and Alcee Hastings. The individual chapters are fascinating, and bring to light new detail on the controversies and politics surrounding these figures. They will be essential reading for anyone interested in any of these individuals. Even in discussing well-worn cases, such as the criticisms of Earl Warren's tenure on the Court, Kyvig is able to find new angles and materials to advance our understanding of these episodes. He offers less support

for the claim that the last half century is really a distinctive and coherent political era relative to the impeachment power. It remains unclear that there are meaningful connections to be drawn between the impeachment and acquittal of Bill Clinton on the one hand and the impeachment and removal of Judge Harry Claiborne on the other. Likewise, there is not enough examination of the pre-1960 period given to evaluate whether the modern era is importantly different from, say, the early twentieth century when five judges were impeached,

or the mid-nineteenth century when a variety of officials were impeached, including a president and a cabinet official. This book may not answer the question that Kyvig sets out for it, but it does provide a fine history of modern impeachment threats.

KEITH E. WHITTINGTON is the William Nelson Cromwell Professor of Politics at Princeton University in Princeton, New Jersey. He is the author of *Political Foundations of Judicial Supremacy* (2007).



Roots Too

White Ethnic Revival in Post-Civil Rights America

By Matthew Frye Jacobson

(Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006. Pp. 483. Notes, index. Paperbound, \$19.95.)

In 1970, a multi-ethnic legion of steelworkers and students, housewives and welfare workers, priests and politicians gathered in Hammond, Indiana, to organize the Calumet Community Congress (CCC). Endorsed by national Democratic leaders, the CCC sought to marshal local ethnic pride and cooperation behind an agenda of social, economic, and political reform. Two years later, in the 1972 presidential election, Republican incumbent Richard Nixon won northwest Indiana's vote by promulgating a similar message of ethnic pride and cooperation, only for conservative, not social democratic, causes.

What northwest Indiana wrestled with in this brief moment—the fluc-

tuating politics of ethnic identity—the nation grappled with for an entire era. Matthew Jacobson explores this period of ferment in his masterful study, *Roots Too*. With stunning breadth and scintillating prose, he traces the “ethnic revival” that started in the 1960s and continued unabated through the century's last decades. The pivot—and much of the focus—of his story is the 1970s, when momentous occasions like the nation's bicentennial and television broadcast of Alex Haley's *Roots* “denoted Americans' heightened self-consciousness about their own roots and about the new, pluralized idioms of national membership” (p. 17). Prior to this point, ethnicity had been