An introductory section sets the stage by reviewing the development of domestic progressivism and of idealistic plans for international peace and by pointing out that World War I resulted in the creation of "powerful countertrends" which brought about the withering of these movements. The author begins his story with two chapters on preconvention politics in which he inspect each major candidate's background, qualifications, and prospects for the nomination. In the chapters on the national conventions the reader will find especially interesting studies of Woodrow Wilson's active desire to receive the nomination for a third term, the maneuverings during the Saturday afternoon recess before the last two ballots at the Republican convention, and the "smoke-filled room." The nomination of Harding, the author feels, does not need the conspiracy theme to explain it; "given the prevailing political atmosphere of 1920, and the situation in the party, the nomination of Harding was a logical result of the convention" (p. 98).

The campaign and election bring the book to its conclusion. Here in one place are discussed not only the differing interpretations of the two parties but also the shifting emphases within each party. Nevertheless, by treating the major issues separately, the author makes the role of each in the outcome of the election as easily understandable as it is likely to be made while still giving reasonable consideration to the complexity of the situation. The election, he concludes, merely confirmed what had already taken place: the war had created a "social climate which neither produced nor supported progressive leaders" (p. 167). Peace and time would be needed to arouse once again the movement for humanitarian reform.

The Road to Normalcy reflects extensive use of newspapers, the New York papers in particular, but there has also been considerable work in collections of the private papers of the men involved as well as in published memoirs, secondary works, and articles. The book is well organized and is generally very well written, although minor errors appear on occasion as, for example, the wrong middle initial for Thomas Riley Marshall (p. 112). It is a work which seeks primarily neither to condemn nor to approve; it seeks to understand. The result is a significant illumination of the path the United States took in its journey to normalcy.

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Walden S. Freeman


Many books have been written about Herbert Hoover. Much has been written about his presidency, and his role as war-relief administrator, but, strangely, relatively little has been written about him as secretary of commerce and still less about the secretary's work in economic diplomacy. Joseph Brandes' Herbert Hoover and Economic Diplomacy fills this gap. During the years 1921 to 1928 Hoover built the comparatively young Department of Commerce into one of the most influential forces in the federal government.
The author succeeds in carrying out his announced purpose of analyzing “the development and motivation of Hoover's economic policies as a major factor shaping America's position in the post-war world” (p. ix). By focusing on Hoover as the “Depression President,” the author feels, justifiably in this reviewer's opinion, that historians have tended to underestimate Secretary Hoover's influence on such major problems as war debts, reparations, the tariff, foreign loans, and foreign monopolization of essential raw materials.

The first two chapters of the book deal with the development of the Department of Commerce under the new secretary and the stature of Hoover as a person and as a cabinet member in the early twenties.

Chapter III deals with the clashes and conflicts between the departments of Commerce and State over the question of who should promote foreign trade. The author shows how Hoover made his department's Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce a very important agency for the promotion of American trade and thereby produced jealousies in, and friction with, the State Department.

In chapters IV to VII the author deals with Hoover's fight against foreign efforts to maintain high prices through monopoly on such needed raw materials as British rubber, Brazilian coffee, and Franco-German potash. Only partially successful, Hoover was greatly criticized by some Americans and by the foreign peoples involved, who felt they had as much right to protect their prices as did the United States with its high protective tariff or its Webb-Pomerene Act (1918). But Hoover could not see the connection, and he defended American tariff protectionism as essential to our prosperity.

Federal control of American loans and investments abroad is the theme of the last three chapters. The author makes a worth-while contribution here in pointing out the important part which the secretary of commerce played in our foreign investment and loan policy in the 1920's. While encouraging American private investment abroad, Hoover, contrary to common misconceptions in the 1920's and 1930's, "stood out as favoring definite and firm standards to assure the 'security and reproductive character' of each loan" (p. 153). Brandes shows that others in the Harding and Coolidge administrations were more responsible for the reckless foreign lending policy of that period than was Hoover. With regard to the war debts owed the United States, Hoover at first took a liberal position and favored the cancellation of pre-Armistice obligations. Later he favored the repayment of the total allied debt. He also favored the administration policy of not permitting the matter of war debts to be tied up with the question of German reparations.

In this reviewer's judgment this work is based on solid research. Perhaps a bit more repetitious than necessary in a few places, the book nevertheless constitutes a scholarly, objective study of Hoover's years as secretary of commerce. The bibliography and footnotes indicate a wide use of source materials. Factual errors and slips noted were too few and too minor to mention, except that the statement (p. 38) about the provisions of the immigration acts of the 1920's may be a bit misleading. An error in the page citations in the index is called to the reader's attention by a note attached to the book.

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