Increasing farm income was a prominent part of the New Deal effort to lift the nation out of the depression. Increasing farm income had become the major activity of the American Farm Bureau Federation.

The Farm Bureau had lost some prestige when its efforts to have the McNary-Haugen Bill enacted into law were nullified by presidential vetoes. It had lost some membership when farm prices became extremely low during the depression years. The organization had much to gain in 1933 by supporting a successful national farm program to increase farm income.

There were difficulties to overcome. The Farm Bureau was beset with sectional differences in objectives. Its membership was low in the South. In her book Mrs. Campbell describes clearly and factually how the organization, under the able leadership of its colorful and sincere president, Ed O'Neal of Alabama, was able to surmount these and other obstacles and how the relationship between the Farm Bureau and the New Deal were most cordial during the early years but strained in later years.

In the Preface the author indicates that a large part of her information came from documents made available to her by the Farm Bureau. She states that she examined these documents "in the spirit of objective scholarship." In the opinion of this reviewer, who had the opportunity to observe at comparatively close range most of the events described therein, Mrs. Campbell wrote the entire book in the same spirit.

The book sheds much needed light on the causes of the rift between the Farm Bureau and the New Deal. The widely held impression that the rift grew out of deep ideological difference is perhaps due to the fact that in this case, as in nearly all struggles for political or personal power, the ideological differences are overemphasized. The author refers to this struggle for power as involving "many sorts of conflicts, the threads of which are exceedingly tangled" (p. 159). The eight sources of conflict named on page 160 constitute a formidable list.

There is a suggestion in the next to last paragraph of the book that there was a widening ideological split between the Department of Agriculture, as it turned to the left, and the Farm Bureau, as it turned to the right. However, the book quite properly directs its major attention to differences over administrative and jurisdictional matters. Little or no evidence is presented to indicate that the Farm Bureau turned to the right. Instead it is shown that the organization became more liberal as it came to the support of such New Deal proposals as the Tennessee Valley Authority, reciprocal trade agreements, and anti-monopoly measures. It turned neither to the left nor right in its efforts to increase farm income. "Parity" became a sacred Farm Bureau slogan (p. 114).

The organization worked diligently in the late 1930's to obtain appropriations which would provide parity payments to farmers "for the
purpose of bringing total market price plus payments up near the
parity level” (p. 115). “In order to ensure that support prices should
be close to parity, the Farm Bureau was pressing strenuously in 1941
for mandatory commodity loans at 85 percent of parity” (p. 132).
The book makes clear that in the era it covers there was no devia-
tion by the Farm Bureau from its primary objective of increasing
farm income.

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Notes, bibliography, index. $6.75.)

Neil MacNeil, the chief congressional correspondent for Time, has
attempted “to define the House of Representatives . . . as a living
political institution . . . [in the light of] its own past and traditions”
(p. ix). Although he does not plow very deeply the ground he has tried to
cover, he has covered it. The result is a neither unentertaining nor
uninformative survey of the workings of the House, greatly emphasizing
the post-World War II period, treating less extensively the “modern
House” from Thomas B. Reed to Sam Rayburn, and referring sporadical-
ly to the House’s first century of existence. The organization is topical,
with a chapter on each of fifteen major aspects of House activity,
and with one exception every chapter subject (the speakership, the
rules, the lobbies, legislative oversight, relations with President or
Senate, etc.) is dealt with topically rather than narratively or chronolog-
ically even in a loose sense. The author’s sources were in part published
monographs and documents, but he relied most heavily on “the distilla-
tion of my own daily observation of the House for eight years and
of many thousands of conversations with its members” (p. x).

From such sources and plan flow both the virtues and the defects
of the book. MacNeil states clearly where the House’s rights and
duties are unique, and where they must co-ordinate with the President
and the Senate. He enlivens his discussion of the speakership, and
indeed his whole book, by focussing on such giants as Henry Clay, Reed,
“Uncle Joe” Cannon, Nicholas Longworth, and Rayburn. He describes
the evolution of the “political” speakers (i.e., speakers who saw them-
selves as more than parliamentary functionaries) and agrees with them
that to a great degree the strength of the House depends on the strength
of the speaker. Powers, procedures, and rules of the whole House
and its agencies are outlined clearly. What is perhaps the book’s
most useful section, however, is the thirty-six-page narrative, really an
excursus from the author’s general plan, describing the battle in 1961
between Rayburn and Howard Smith over enlarging the Rules Com-
mittee.

Although this is a book largely without theses, the few that the
author has are in some cases questionable. Today’s House, he says,
restrains the more “liberal” President and Senate because they are
subject to “bullet-vote” pressures from urban minority groups in
populous states (p. 38). Even if this is in some sense an explanation
of the situation, there are surely other reasons for it. Also questionable
is the repeated view that only since Woodrow Wilson’s or Theodore