

Bruce J. Schulman. *Lyndon B. Johnson and American Liberalism: A Brief Biography with Documents.* Boston & New York: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1995. Pp. xiv, 269. Cloth, \$35.00; ISBN 0-312-10282-8. Pper, \$6.50; ISBN 0-312-08351-3.

Bruce Schulman has written a fine little book on Lyndon Johnson, one that instructors and students will enjoy reading. The beginning 162-page interpretive essay demonstrates mastery of the growing Johnson literature and offers concise and readable presentation, lively use of colorful anecdote, and judicious interpretation. Specialists will be impressed with his ability to comment on most of the many controversies about Johnson's life and politics. All instructors will enjoy mining it for lively lecture material and using it as a guide to the literature. Students reading about Johnson for the first time will gain a sense of the man's complications, his ability to attract and repel, his questionable ethics and lofty social goals, and his central place in the rise and, according to Schulman, the fall of twentieth-century liberalism.

The book is a synthesis of published sources and does not attempt to break new interpretive trails. Even so, readers revisiting familiar ground will be stimulated to see it in new ways. Schulman's discussion of liberalism is especially thought provoking. He believes Johnson expanded liberalism, pushing it to a stronger commitment to civil rights, rejecting the old faith that economic growth alone could end poverty, and calling for equality of results, not just equality of opportunity, as the goal of federal policy. Yet, while Johnson wrote these principles into law, Schulman's last chapter is subtitled "the decline and fall of American liberalism."

Schulman's Johnson believed the purpose of politics was to deliver benefits to everyone through an ever-growing government. A pragmatist who could be deceitful and vindictive, Johnson's "basic principle" was "effectiveness," and his total devotion to results emerges as the key to understanding Johnson's personality and politics. He did launch illegal CIA investigations of antiwar critics and authorized FBI campaigns to harass his opponents, but he could always convince himself his interests were the nation's and never understood ingratitude for his achievements. While Johnson did push liberalism in new directions, he was a traditional politician, unable to manage the press or communicate well on television. When he tried to forge a consensus behind his Vietnam policies and offered North Vietnam a development program if it would call off the war, "his political philosophy was tested and found wanting."

Students of the Johnson presidency tend to be overwhelmed by the man's incredible energy, his political tactics, and his "record of achievement unmatched by any other president;" and we still have not adequately analyzed how his programs worked. Schulman makes a brief attempt, but those who want to be informed participants in the current debate about the legacy of the 1960s will have to look further. Indeed, Schulman's conclusion that Johnson's main domestic reforms "are permanent features of the American political landscape" could be premature.

The Bedford Series in History and Culture is intended for the college supplementary reading market, and this book is well suited, although some students might challenge the editors' assertion that it would make a "reasonable one-week assignment." The fifteen documents add value, especially the six major Johnson presidential speeches. Students would also find this a valuable source for a brief report or extended paper.

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