

David Horowitz. *The Anxieties of Affluence: Critiques of American Consumer Culture, 1939–1979*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004. Pp. ix, 339. Cloth, \$29.95; ISBN 1-55849-432-4.

Following the terrorist attacks of 9/11, President George W. Bush encouraged Americans to demonstrate their patriotism by consuming and supporting the national economy. As a leader not known for self-reflection, Bush was apparently unaware of the anxieties regarding affluence expressed by American intellectuals. The post World War II prosperity experienced by many Americans evoked dreams of a democratic capitalism as well as nightmare visions of a shallow mass culture based on materialism. These ambiguities were lost upon President Bush.

In *The Anxieties of Affluence*, David Horowitz, professor of American Studies at Smith College, investigates responses to affluence from the end of the Great Depression through the energy crisis of the 1970s. Horowitz employs five tools of analysis: the relationships between affluence and morality; the substitution of psychological explanations for Marxist social analysis; the role of public intellectuals and their books in establishing the context for a national discourse on consumption; the impact of social movements on altering patterns of consumption; and the rise and fall of the Cold War consensus, whose decline led to “less confident understandings of the impact of international markets on national life.”

Horowitz begins his narrative with an examination of Lewis Mumford’s vision that World War II would convince Americans to abandon materialistic concerns. Instead, the postwar era was characterized by the ideas of émigrés Ernest Dichter and George Katona who celebrated the contribution of affluent consumers to the quality of American life. One of the more interesting chapters in the books deals with historian David Potter, author of *People of Plenty*, whose privileged traditional Southern background provided him with an apprehensive view of the disorderly world created by growing affluence.

John Kenneth Galbraith, Vance Packard, and Betty Friedan are perceived as critics of American society who assumed that middle-class prosperity was the major national goal. On the other hand, intellectuals such as Paul Goodman, Oscar Lewis, Michael Harrington, and Rachel Carson questioned whether suburban affluence was an important issue, undermining the assumptions linking democracy, capitalism, and consumption. During the 1960s, critics of affluence such as Ralph Nader, Martin Luther King Jr., and Paul Ehrlich emphasized the adverse effects of prosperity. Their work further discredited the Cold War consensus and launched consumer social movements such as environmentalism.

Horowitz concludes his discussion with the doomed efforts of intellectuals Daniel Bell, Christopher Lasch, and Robert Bellah to collaborate with President Jimmy Carter in formulating a post-affluent energy policy. Many consumers opposed this initiative, and in the 1980s President Ronald Reagan championed a policy of no limitations upon

American consumption. Nevertheless, critical voices such as Barbara Ehrenreich, David Brooks, and Juliet Schor were not silenced during the 1980s and 1990s. In fact, Horowitz holds out great hope for what he terms the post-moralist critics who do not take an elitist perspective on economic growth. Yet, Horowitz is unsure how the national anxiety regarding affluence will play out in the post-9/11 world, but it seems safe to assume that President Bush will not have the final word.

Horowitz's study of affluence and its discontents raises some crucial questions that should make for stimulating debate in the history classroom. The prose is sometimes demanding for students, and the book will be used best at the graduate level or with advanced undergraduates. History instructors at all levels would do well to consult the Horowitz volume and incorporate the discourse of modern affluence into their classes, for these are essential questions with which students must grapple in the twenty-first century.

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Gary W. Reichard. *Politics as Usual: The Age of Truman and Eisenhower*. Second ed. The American History Series. Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, 2004. Pp. xvii, 213. Paper, \$14.95; ISBN 0-88295-226-9.

With the end of the Cold War and the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, much has changed since Gary Reichard's *Politics as Usual* appeared in 1988. Accordingly, the new second edition incorporates recent scholarship informed by the opening of Soviet archives, and it gives greater attention to events in the Middle East. Despite the changes, Reichard's theme remains consistent: The period between 1945 and 1960 was "the last sustained period when 'politics as usual' prevailed in the United States." What other writers have seen as the age of the "vital center" or of the "liberal consensus," Reichard, a historian and administrator at California State University, Long Beach, sees as a period of "a seemingly purposeful equilibrium."

Politics as Usual consists of four chapters, a brief conclusion, and a bibliographic essay. Each of the four substantive chapters covers a single term in the presidencies of Harry S. Truman and Dwight D. Eisenhower. In converting the American economy from wartime to peacetime, Truman faced almost insurmountable problems that he handled with no particular skill. Truman hit bottom with the Democratic debacle in the congressional elections of 1946, but defeat allowed Truman to stage a comeback. The new Republican Congress became a useful foil for the feisty president. Partisan differences on domestic issues were obvious, and despite contemporary rhetoric to the contrary, Reichard believes there was no consensus about American diplomacy. Truman, he argues, won support for such initiatives as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization by "manipulating" the anti-Communist anxieties of