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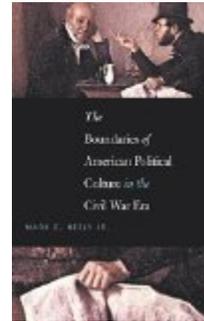
Mark E. Neely, Jr. *The Boundaries of American Political Culture in the Civil War Era*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005. xvi + 159 pp. \$29.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8078-2986-8.

Adam I. P. Smith. *No Party Now: Politics in the Civil War North*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006. 336 pp. \$55.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-19-518865-3.

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Propaganda and Partisanship in the Civil War

Mark E. Neely Jr.'s *The Boundaries of American Political Culture in the Civil War Era* evolved from the Steven and Janice Broce Lectures, which he gave at the Richards Civil War Era Center at Pennsylvania State University. Initially intended to revise the argument of Glenn C. Altschuler and Stuart M. Blumin's *Rude Republic: Americans and Their Politics in the Nineteenth Century* (2000), which questioned "the importance of politics to the daily lives" of Northerners, Neely argues that politics penetrated into the private life of average Northerners and blurred the "boundaries between the sphere of political and private life" (pp. vii, viii).

Neely argues that, in contrast to Altschuler's and Blumin's depiction of the people as apolitical and only interested in politics during elections, politics had an important place in the mid-nineteenth-century home. Using the popularity of the numerous party-sponsored newspapers, political prints, lithographs, and photo albums, Neely indicates the permanent and wide-spread interest in political material. He continues to challenge their conclusions by maintaining that lithographs, prints, and similar items for the home were not commissioned by the parties but were a reaction by businesses, such as Currier and Ives, to an existing market that demanded political imagery. It was private entrepreneurs who came up with the ideas for these products and financed them, which incidentally, also allowed parties to save money on cam-

paigning. Neely concedes that not all images were made for middle-class parlors; cartoons, for example, might be exhibited publicly, as in shop windows. Yet, such innovative uses of political imagery also indicated the people's interest in politics. Thus Neely contends that "politics in the Civil War North ... was a fast-moving, innovative, and rapidly changing endeavor," a conclusion that also challenges Jean H. Baker's *Affairs of Party: The Political Culture of Northern Democrats in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (1998) and Joel H. Sidney's *American Political Nation, 1838-1893* (1983), which argue that political parties did not develop new ideas (p. 36).

In chapter 3, Neely takes issue with Iver Bernstein's presentation of the Union League Clubs in *The New York Draft Riots: Their Significance for American Society and Politics in the Age of the Civil War* (1991) and shows that the founding members of the New York City club came from wide variety of professions with diverse interests. He concludes that while the club had members from the merchant class who made valuable monetary contributions, it did not—in contrast to Bernstein's view—advance strictly mercantile interests. Neely also questions Bernstein's contention that the New York City club presented a flag to a African American regiment in reaction to the New York draft riots; instead, Neely believes that the radicalism of the club, sparked by a similar event in Boston, better explains its motivation.

In the last chapter, Neely introduces the role of minstrels to show that politics did not penetrate every aspect of Northern life. Taking issue with Baker's statement that Democrats used racial prejudice for political purposes, Neely argues that in contrast to the racist connotations of Civil War-era minstrels, the early political usage was bipartisan, not racist, and that they started with Whig Party minstrel songsters in 1844. Neely argues that Lincoln and his wife visited the minstrel performances in Illinois and later in Washington purely for entertainment purposes, which, according to Neely, illustrates that there was a clear distinction between politics and entertainment. Even with the Democratic Party's political use of minstrels, their use as a form of political expression remained minimal. Neely concludes his work by pointing once more to "the astonishing levels of political involvement among Americans of the Civil War era" and the blurred boundaries between political and popular culture (p. 127).

Neely's work is an excellent revisionist study, with a unique use of sources, ranging from small songbooks to large cartoons and posters. It should also attract readers interested in issues beyond Civil War politics. Throughout the book, Neely criticizes a divisiveness in the historical profession that has led to the misinterpretations of politics by social historians and the New Political History. One passage is outstanding for its clarity in presenting the problem: Neely writes that "the authors of *Rude Republic* have written back into that century a dispute that exists more in twenty-first-century university history departments than in the 'chimney corners' of the past" (p. 29).

Overall, Neely presents a convincing argument, and he does an excellent job of weaving the historical and historiographical debates together. Another major plus is the inclusion of many images. The book's only flaw is what appears to be a minor contradiction. In chapter 2, for example, Neely argues that the politicians "had few money worries" because private enterprise with its political imagery did the campaigning for them, while in chapter 3, he says that the Union League Clubs greatly benefited the Republicans by bringing a moneyed elite into the party that helped finance the League's political campaigns (p. 65). While it is a minor contradiction, it also indicates how much and quickly politics changed in this period. This minor point aside, the book is a valuable contribution to our understanding of how much Civil War-era politics penetrated the homes and lives of Northerners.

In contrast to Neely's politically interested people, Adam I. P. Smith, in *No Party Now: Politics in the Civil War North*, argues for antiparty feelings. Smith presents a reevaluation of Eric McKittrick's influential 1967 essay, which argued that dissent in the Civil War North played out in the established party framework, and that the North benefited from the two-party system. Recent historians, such as Gary Gallagher and George C. Rable, have argued for a politically unified South that opposed partisanship on patriotic grounds. In line with these recent reinterpretations, Smith argues for a continuation of the antiparty feelings that had been prevalent since the foundation of the United States. Thus the Lincoln administration, while abandoning some of its radicalism, attacked the perceived disloyalty of the Democrats and created a patriotic "antiparty nationalism" (p. 161). The two-party system, Smith suggests, did not benefit the Civil War North.

Going back to the early republic, Smith illustrates how party was often negatively associated with corruption and patronage. Republicans, according to Smith, used the antiparty feelings and the patriotic spirit of sectional self-interest to build their own party. He concludes by saying that the people "could not imagine fighting a war with party battle raging," but neither was it easy to bridge party lines (p. 23). In the early response to secession, politicians tried to place patriotism and compromise above party interests. While the Republican Party needed to broaden the administration's support, it believed that to abandon its principles would threaten the party's integrity. After Fort Sumter, bipartisan cooperation in the form of the Union Party tried to bridge partisanship. However, not all Democrats joined the movement, and Republicans remained suspicious of their political foes, which rendered the suspension of party conflict impossible. The Emancipation Proclamation and its threat to the Democrats' "white man's republic" changed the purpose of the war from reunification to abolition and re-ignited party conflict as both parties claimed the mantle of the Union Party.

In the second half of the book, Smith gears his argument towards the 1864 presidential election. The Republican fear of a resurgent Democratic Party helped to create the patriotic antiparty propaganda of the Union Leagues. The leagues suppressed opposition to the war and promoted radicalism, at least according to conservative Lincoln supporters. Even more important in the creation of a pro-administration patriotic antiparty spirit was the army. The army, according to Smith, helped to intimidate opposition at the polls and forged loyalty to

the government.

At the Union Party's 1864 convention, the diversity of political interests that had come together under the party's umbrella made it difficult to establish a platform. Radical and conservative supporters of the Lincoln administration debated how to disconnect emancipation and racial equality and not appear to prolong the war by insisting on emancipation. With a peace plank in the Democratic Party's platform, George B. McClellan had to appeal to racism and oppose the administration's war powers to avoid widespread voter defection. Lincoln's reelection appeared even more likely after John C. Frémont's splinter party bowed out of the race and the Union armies found success on the battlefield. However, a fierce political campaign was fought. The Republicans emphasized their Union Party identity, attacked their opposition's partisanship, and argued for their own patriotism. Smith concludes, "The antipartyism of the Union organization rhetorically transformed every election into a test of loyalty, a process aided by the strength and visibility of the Democrats' peace wing" (p. 162).

Smith presents an informed argument, but he leaves at least one question unresolved. While writing that "many Civil War Northerners denied their own partisanship and the legitimacy—or patriotism—of their oppo-

nents," his arguments seems to indicate that it was mostly Republicans who tried to deny the legitimate opposition of their political foes (p. 5). One wonders if the argument applies, as Smith seems to claim, to all Northerners or just supporters of the Republican Party. After all, it was they who questioned the legitimacy of the opposition and were the fiercest partisans, which is at least the impression one gets from Smith's book. To quote Neely, "the people deserve better," and it seems doubtful that the people did not see the Republican antiparty propaganda as partisan fighting (p. 31). Still even with this lingering question, Smith's book presents a valuable historical contribution that illustrates how the two-party system, with its fierce partisanship and Northern antiparty feelings, made it much harder for the government to conduct a successful war.

Both Neely and Smith, writing in a revisionist spirit if with different points of view, agree that politics mattered to Civil War Northerners. Neely shows that politics penetrated the homes of Northerners, and that the private and public spheres overlapped. Smith argues that the political campaigning in the North relied on an antiparty spirit and the belief that wartime opposition was illegitimate. Both authors advance our understanding of politics and partisanship in the North during the Civil War.

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