

view ecosystems through the perspective of a single generation. By putting the realities of New England fishing squarely at his center and exposing the iconic image as a shibboleth, McKenzie truly shows how decisions made and not made resulted in the decimation of one of the world's most productive fisheries. And no amount of heroic mythology can mask *that* reality.

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*The Revolution of '28: Al Smith, American Progressivism, and the Coming of the New Deal.* By Robert Chiles. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018. Pp. x, 286. \$55.00.)

What should we make of Al Smith? Until now, most historians have viewed the "Happy Warrior" as something of an outlier. A Tammany Hall stalwart who served intermittently as governor of New York between 1919 and 1928, Smith became a national figure by adopting a vaguely progressive gubernatorial agenda and relying on the support of the New York political machine. After a decade-long battle with William Gibbs McAdoo for control of the Democratic Party, Smith won the 1928 Democratic presidential nomination, becoming the first Catholic nominated for president by a major American political party (and, until John F. Kennedy, the last). According to the standard account, while Smith's unsuccessful campaign electrified a group of largely immigrant and working-class voters, it ultimately constituted something of a dead end for liberal politics. It was the patrician Franklin Roosevelt, originally a protégé of Smith, who succeeded in translating the reform impulses of the progressive movement into the broad New Deal coalition that built much of the American welfare state. When Smith came out of retirement in the mid-1930s to denounce Roosevelt as a dangerous radical, he demonstrated, to the satisfaction of many historians that his own political vision had little in common with the New Deal.

Not so, argues Robert Chiles, whose book *The Revolution of '28* offers a fresh, revisionist take on Smith. Drawing on the work of Paula Eldot, Chiles contends instead that “Smith represents a transitional stage between Progressivism and the New Deal” (4). As governor, Chiles asserts, Smith focused on promoting a subset of progressive policies “centered on social welfare, labor protections, and cultural pluralism” (9) that appealed to and mobilized urban working-class voters who had never previously identified with progressivism. This alliance of middle-class progressives and the ethnic working class mobilized nationally for Smith’s unsuccessful 1928 campaign, laying the groundwork for the more successful coalition Roosevelt assembled four years later. Smith’s New York allies, including Roosevelt, Labor Secretary Frances Perkins, and Senator Robert Wagner, then embedded Smith’s gubernatorial policy platform in the heart of the New Deal—even if Smith himself had turned against that platform by 1932.

The origins of Smith’s “specialized, idiomatic progressivism” (11) lay, Chiles argues, in an unusual connection Smith forged with progressive women social workers such as Frances Perkins, Mary Dreier, Lillian Wald, and Belle Moskowitz. Serving on a 1912 commission to investigate the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire, Smith and Robert F. Wagner came under the sway of Perkins, who demonstrated to them firsthand the terrible working conditions poor immigrants faced. Both men became converts to the cause of social welfare, and as governor, Smith appointed social workers such as Perkins and Moskowitz to head up many of his pro-labor initiatives. Chiles’s argument is suggestive but not entirely convincing here. With the exception of a few celebratory gubernatorial speeches, the author offers little evidence that Smith gave social workers credit for shaping his progressive ideology, leaving Chiles essentially to take Perkins’s word for it—although Smith clearly did develop a close political relationship with social workers during the 1920s. Likewise, Chiles demonstrates that Smith, as governor, was committed to such progressive goals as state-run health care (in the form of state hospitals), environmental conservation, and administrative efficiency. However, with the exception of the hospital-building campaign, these are not policy initiatives particularly linked with social welfare or the needs of underprivileged or immigrant Americans, and they mark Smith as at most a moderate progressive. As Chiles himself notes, Smith rebuffed overtures by leading progressive conservationist Gifford Pinchot and allied himself not only with progressive social workers but with figures such as

Elihu Root who, while sympathetic to certain progressive goals, were generally considered conservatives.

The most important aspects of Chiles's argument, however, concern not the intellectual origins or legislative realities of Smith's platform, but how he presented it to American voters in 1928 and how those voters responded. When Chiles turns to these topics, he is on decidedly firmer ground. Quoting extensively from Smith's presidential campaign speeches, he shows convincingly that the New York governor's campaign foregrounded support for labor protections, social welfare, and other progressive causes and won the endorsements of key progressive figures. Especially impressive is Chiles's innovative solution to a problem faced by many political historians, including the author of this review: how do the electoral results of a losing candidate demonstrate the effectiveness of that candidate's message? Acknowledging that Smith lost the election "in a landslide" (126), Chiles breaks down the results by county and identifies what he calls the "Democratic Quotient" (129) of Smith's strength in each locality relative to his statewide support. In a compelling series of graphs, Chiles shows that Smith massively overperformed historical Democratic performance in large northern cities – spawning a generation of urban Democrats who would later come to identify with the New Deal.

Perhaps Chiles's most impressive chapter is his last, which offers a "thick description" of Smith's tremendous support in small New England industrial towns. Here Chiles participates in a broader movement, now emerging in contemporary historical scholarship, that takes seriously the statements and experiences of ordinary people as authentic representations of major historical events. Using newspaper articles, local politicians' speeches, internal campaign documents, and letters to the editor written by ordinary voters, Chiles constructs a comprehensive picture of Smith's supporters. The portrait that emerges is not, as previous historians have argued, one in which supporters were primarily motivated by Smith's ethnic background and his opposition to alcohol prohibition; instead, voters seemed at least equally interested in Smith's progressive approach to the economy and social welfare. Typical of the general sentiment was a letter from an Italian-American voter insisting that Smith's nationwide support stemmed primarily from the "partiality and favoritism that the Republican party has been showing to the manufacturer and powerful combines" (147). Such sources are invaluable in recasting the election as a referendum not on cultural issues unique to Smith,

but on the sorts of economic concerns that would come to motivate supporters of the New Deal.

Chiles notes in his introduction that *The Revolution of '28* "is not a political biography" of Al Smith (9), and readers looking for such a volume will be disappointed. Instead, it is something perhaps even more valuable: a detailed analysis of Al Smith's 1928 political coalition that employs innovative research methodologies to demonstrate convincingly the critical role Smith's campaign played in paving the way for the New Deal. Despite some flaws in the early chapters, the book is a substantial achievement and is indispensable reading for those interested in the interwar period or in twentieth-century American political history.

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*People Before Highways: Boston Activists, Urban Planners, and a New Movement for City Making.* By Karilyn Crockett. (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2018. Pp. 224. \$90.00 cloth; \$29.95 paper.)

Boston plays a crucial role in the history of urban planning in the postwar years. Not only was it the site of ambitious urban renewal projects and extensive highway construction, it was an important incubator for critiques of these large-scale plans and protests against them. Planners and politicians, eager to retain Boston's middle-class and its tax base in an age of suburbanization, set out to rebuild downtowns, rehabilitate neighborhoods, and better connect the city to its suburbs with new highways. Responding to the upheaval and displacement that these projects caused, community activists and academics in Boston launched a devastating counterattack that demonstrated the costs they imposed on poor neighborhoods and on communities of color. Their critique of large-scale, top-down planning found increasingly receptive audiences in city halls and academic programs around the country in the late 1960s and early 1970s, sparking a major nationwide shift in planning practices. Cities today are more decentralized and more participatory places in part because of the critiques launched in greater Boston in these years.