

JODY CARLSON. *George C. Wallace and the Politics of Powerlessness: The Wallace Campaigns for the Presidency, 1964-1976*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books. 1981. Pp. xv, 331. \$22.95.

Why did people vote for Wallace? Was his movement in any proper sense "fascist"? How was it organized? Did it have an ideology? Could some other demagogue rally his supporters again? Hunter College sociologist Jody Carlson answers these questions through a re-analysis of survey data gathered by others, and of Wallace speeches and campaign documents, interviews with Wallace staffers, and a perusal of secondary literature and newspaper stories—nearly all of the latter from the *New York Times*. Marred by a wooden writing style, a mechanistic organizing scheme, and extremely unsophisticated statistical data analyses, Carlson's book is objective and often interesting and will be a considerable resource for future historians of the "New Right."

Of Carlson's sixteen chapters, the nine that sketch Wallace's early career, narrate his 1964-76 national campaigns, and recount the themes of his speeches in each race contain few surprises for anyone who followed the national media at the time. The heart of the book is an explication and a series of tests of four social-psychological hypotheses about Wallace supporters, which she labels the "authoritarian personality," "marginal voter," "status politics," and "power" theories. Although there were few survey items drawn from Adorno's "F scale," Carlson argues that the much greater tendency of Wallace supporters than other voters to favor a military solution to the Vietnam war and harsh treatment for civil rights and antiwar protesters indicates their basic authoritarianism. Drawn from all social classes, as likely as other people to participate in, and to pay attention to, politics (at least when provided with candidates who share their views), and not notably anxious about their status or extraordinarily socially mobile either up or down, the Wallace supporters do not fulfill the expectations of the "marginal voter" or "status politics" theorists. Finding that Wallace backers were more likely to feel politically powerless than partisans of other 1968 candidates,

but not more anomic or powerless with respect to their personal lives, and that Wallace emphasized and manipulated such anti-Washington impulses in his speeches, Carlson contends that feelings of powerlessness, especially about matters of racial policy, provide the key to Wallace's appeal.

But Carlson's conclusion is not the only possible interpretation of her data. Wallace supporters were disproportionately poorly educated (pp. 53, 168, 238), white rural (p. 89) people of Southern birth or residence (pp. 46, 88, 159, 259), who were much more racist than other whites, even those who favored Goldwater in 1964 (pp. 48, 94-98, 120, 164, 245, 261). In neither socioeconomic traits nor attitudes did they change much over the twelve-year period (pp. 253-68). Although not marginal in their parochial neighborhoods, they were increasingly irrelevant in the country's urbanized, cosmopolitan, and technocratic society. The survey questions she analyzes can no more rule out such a less simple-minded marginality hypothesis than they can enable one to determine whether the Wallace people's sense of powerlessness was, as she asserts (p. 171), or was not merely a reaction against the national government's move toward racially egalitarian policies. Although she puts a fancier label on it, one cannot, on the basis of Carlson's evidence, dismiss the contention that Wallace supporters were principally just backwoods racists.

An opportunistic posturing politician who moved aside from the schoolhouse door and later, when he needed black votes, tricked Rosa Parks into having her picture taken with him (p. 187), Wallace built no enduring organization, purveyed no consistent ideology, and, according to Carlson, left no political legacy (p. 287). With Ronald Reagan and the "New Right" in power, the last point seems less certain than it must have when this book went to press. Future historians may find what Carlson terms Wallace's "masquerades" (pp. 63, 67) to be prologues to Reagan's more substantial drama, Wallace's a "shadow movement" to Reagan's real conservatism, Wallace's supporters less satisfied with symbolic gestures against blacks, national social programs, and "weakness" in foreign policy than she presents them.

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