

once again we are left with the tantalizing question: Why did they do it?

Dearborn's answer is ingenious, and his support for it from contemporary sources is convincing. He writes, "Central to legislators' actions were their own understandings of the likelihood of presidents acting in the national interest" (p. 11). The Founders had no such idea of the presidency. Rather than the direct election of the presidency, they established an elaborate electoral college system to separate the public from election of the president. The idea that presidents are the tribunes or stewards of the American people can be found in the presidencies of Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, and Theodore Roosevelt, however. Jackson noted that only the president is elected by the entire nation, and therefore it is only the president who represents the nation as a whole. Alternatively, members of the House represent districts, and senators represent individual states. Hence, their interests are particularistic, whereas those of presidents are national. Such ideas have been ably expressed before by Douglas Kriner and Andrew Reeves in their work on particularistic presidents, as well as in William Howell, Saul Jackman, and Jon Rogowski's work regarding nationalizing politics. Drawing on these works, Dearborn summons considerable historical evidence, mostly from the *Congressional Record*, to demonstrate that legislators of both political parties, in times of both unified and divided government, supported delegating authority because they believed that only the president represents the national interest. Furthermore, this pattern continued from at least 1910 through 1949 with the establishment of the Defense Department, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the National Security Council. These three institutions provided presidents with significant information advantages over Congress in foreign affairs. This was a major transfer of power to the presidency.

Dearborn then solves yet another mystery. Why did Congress change course beginning in the 1970s by passing a series of laws that challenged presidential authority, and why did it begin to develop its own institutional resources to offset the president's information advantages? The answer is that Vietnam and Watergate undercut trust in the presidency. Analyses of presidential approval ratings show a consistent decline beginning in the 1960s, and work by Marc Hetherington demonstrates that trust in the federal government began to decline at the same time.

As a result, the idea that presidents represented the entire nation was challenged by more obstreperous members of Congress and by a new assumption, particularly from 1973 onward: Congress needed to hold presidents accountable. Again, using various sources, Dearborn demonstrates that the viewpoints of legislators of both political parties changed. The key explanation then for both the broad delegation of congressional authority to the

president and the counterrevolution to limit such discretion was the existing perception of the president's ability to represent the entire nation. And as we move toward a time when the presidents of both parties regularly see their approval ratings under water—that, is below 50% for much of their presidencies—the idea that the president represents the nation as a whole has become a subject of considerable debate and scholarly concern.

In his remarkable book, Dearborn provides copious primary source evidence to support his thesis, and each of the case studies presents new and important information for understanding one major facet of the expansion of presidential power. Needless to say, were Robert Stack still alive, he would deem this particular mystery as solved. It is a fascinating book that is appropriate for classes at the undergraduate and graduate level and is a terrific read for individuals interested in the subject of presidential power.

A Voice but No Power: Organizing for Social Justice in Minneapolis. By David Forrest. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2022. 304p. \$112.00 cloth, \$28.00 paper.
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In *A Voice but No Power*, David Forrest investigates the ways that grassroots social justice organizations represent (or misrepresent) the interests of disadvantaged communities. Drawing on three years of ethnographic fieldwork in Minneapolis, Forrest examines mobilization and discourse around three coalitions: The North High Coalition, the Welfare Rights Committee, and the Bailout Coalition. He argues that these organizations were undercut in their pursuit of abolitionist demands that challenge oppression in favor of moderate policies that were influenced by neoliberal ideologies.

The most notable strength of this book is that it adds to what is known about how disadvantaged communities mobilize and the ways that organizations do or do not represent them well. In doing so, it provides insight on how activists with left-leaning ideologies think and act. The most notable weakness is that the book is less informative about how moderate and centrist policies enter into the strategic calculus of these groups. It does not sufficiently acknowledge the range of reasons for why social justice organizations may endorse non-abolitionist demands.

The conceptual problems of *A Voice but No Power* are evident in the definition of "abolitionist demands," which are described as "far-reaching but realistic reforms that bolster long-term efforts to eliminate systemic oppression" (p. 17). But a satisfactory discussion is never provided of what is "realistic," how it is determined, and—perhaps most importantly—who makes this determination. Examples given of realistic policies, such as single-payer health

care, are all exclusively taken from the agendas of socialist and other left-leaning parties and organizations.

Forrest criticizes activist leaders for failing to pursue abolitionist demands. But how come these leaders are not the ones who are best positioned to determine what is realistic? If a group chooses not to take an abolitionist path, could it be because it has decided that the policy in question is not realistic? Indeed, Forrest presents evidence of this problem from his own fieldwork. For example, he notes that “organizers have had an exceptionally difficult time making abolitionist demands seem realistic (to themselves as well as others)” (p. 72; see also pp. 95, 104). Thus, circular reasoning is built into the argument.

To determine what policies might have been realistic, a variety of empirical methods could have been adopted. For example, it would be possible to examine policymaking in comparable municipal contexts over time to see how likely it is for certain types of policies to be enacted or blocked. Such an approach was used by Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan in their book, *Why Civil Resistance Works* (2011), in which they demonstrate the comparative effectiveness of peaceful over violent tactics. Alternatively, a power analysis of the policymaking institutions in Minneapolis could have been informative. Instead, Forrest only asserts that these policies are realistic. Coincidentally, these are policies for which he himself has been an advocate (p. 71). Surely, a more objective approach would be desirable.

Another problematic aspect of the argument is the use of the concept of “contentious identities,” which are defined as identities that counter “stigmatizing identities” such as “the underclass” (p. 6). But then organizations are criticized for fostering contentious identities that promote moderation and reject abolitionism (p. 7). Abolitionism is assumed to be the proper policy goal. If contentious identities are so important—and if they often lead toward moderation—then why not trust the direction selected by activists with these identities? This kind of argument gives the book an anti-democratic flavor.

These criticisms notwithstanding, this book is instructive about the factors that constrain the ambitions of left-leaning activists and organizations. First, these groups organize in the context of dominant ideologies, such as what Forrest calls “capitalist realism,” that make it challenging to sustain left-leaning arguments. These arguments are often dismissed because the worldviews of key audiences are shaped by these ideologies. These compromised audiences include decision makers (e.g., the school board), mass media, supposedly allied coalitions, and even activist members of the organizations themselves. Forrest illustrates these points using quotations from e-mails, observations from community meetings, and reports on internal organizational deliberations. These data provide a micro-level portrait of how left-leaning arguments are systematically shut down by prevailing ideologies.

A second barrier faced by the advocates in Forrest’s study is that key audiences lack appreciation for the ways that communities under study are subject to oppression. For example, they may not understand the ways that race, gender, class, and other dimensions of marginalization combine to exclude people from good jobs, affordable housing, just policing, and efficient transportation systems. The markets that are the focus of ascendant neo-liberal policies reinforce this intersectional oppression. Many audiences are inclined to treat these market forces as a “natural” part of the way the world works. Educating the public about this oppression is at the very least extremely difficult—possibly facing insurmountable obstacles. Thus, Forrest’s account exposes some of the underpinnings for why many left-leaning arguments receive a cold reception.

A third obstacle for those who wish to advance left-leaning policies is that the constituencies for these policies are under-resourced and under-available. Activist meetings may be held at times when interested constituents are working (i.e., outside traditional 9-to-5 hours) or when they face challenges securing childcare. Transportation to meeting locations may be difficult to procure. Internet communication technologies relied on by the organizations may not be as familiar or accessible to some constituents as they are to others. Forrest’s work exposes the concrete ways in which members of disadvantaged constituencies may not be able to represent themselves fully, even within groups that are designed and motivated to represent them.

Yet Forrest’s position that grassroots social justice organizations are mistaken if they pursue moderate rather than abolitionist policies is problematic. A key issue is how the leaders, members, and supporters of these organizations assess, decide, and act in the face of risk and uncertainty. Advocates who are faced with choices between supporting moderate and left-leaning policies may have good reasons to opt for the moderate route, even if they are not blinded by the kind of false consciousness that concerns Forrest. Instead, they may realistically assess the risks at hand and decide that their best option is to endorse moderate policies, as Forrest observed during his extensive fieldwork. Moderate policies may simply be a surer bet. The consequences of choosing the losing path could include decades of lost opportunities for the community. It is easy to sit back from a distance and say that a group should have fought harder to overturn oppression. However, a democratic ethos calls for respect for decision-making by the people who have to live with the outcomes of the decisions.

A Voice but No Power is recommended reading for specialists in social movements who want to better understand the dynamics of left-leaning grassroots groups. It is also recommended for left-leaning activists themselves who want to more fully grasp the limits that they regularly face in their struggles to overcome oppression.