

Book Review: New Politics in the Old South: Ernest F. Hollings in the Civil Rights Era by David T. Ballantyne

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Ballantyne, David T. *New Politics in the Old South: Ernest F. Hollings in the Civil Rights Era*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2016. xiii + 206 pages. Hardcover, \$34.99.

Extreme racism and the mass terrorism that attaches to it did not emerge suddenly and without prelude in June 2015 when White supremacist Dylann Roof killed nine African Americans during a prayer service in Charleston, South Carolina. Indeed, the tragedy of racist violence has often destroyed the terms of otherwise successful Governors of South Carolina—especially if their words and actions contributed to the massacres.

A wonderful, and teachable, exception came in January 1963 at the end of the gubernatorial term of Ernest Frederick (Fritz) Hollings, the subject of this fine political study by British historian David T. Ballantyne. The shining moment for Hollings, and for all South Carolina governors thereafter, came in his State of the State address, as he completed his term and welcomed in his successor, the scholarly (and moderate segregationist) Donald Russell. Hollings' speech affirmed that the African American Harvey Gantt was to integrate Clemson University after a federal court ruling that Governor Hollings had fought. Although he could have dodged the issue by leaving everything for incoming Governor Russell, Hollings used his address to the general assembly to call for order, decorum, and harmony in the face of the 'fact of the land,' as he termed the Earl Warren Supreme Court decision.

The result was a peaceful and successful integration of a Deep South university, which was accomplished in the same month that Mississippi's Ross Barnett and Alabama's George Wallace gave infamously racist and inflammatory speeches prior to the campus violence at their flagship schools. The difference is traceable to the very real distinction between Hollings on the one side and Barnett and Wallace on the other, as the difference played out in Alabama and Mississippi, which suffered racial violence not only on their university campuses but in many other aspects of state life as well. In narrating this felicitous story, Ballantyne does not overpraise, describing Hollings as a 'moderate segregationist' who fought integration in the courts and then accepted it by ushering in moderate integration 'with dignity.'

Ballantyne also aptly describes Hollings as 'transformative' and 'a modernizer' because he attracted heavy industry and high-wage service businesses with the technical colleges he built as educational training grounds for skilled labor. While filling a crucial need for scratch ankle farmers of both races and for white mill hands, he also improved secondary schools and research universities. Even more impressively, after explaining to the voters the reasons for proposed tax increases, he balanced the budget. In addition, he

brought modern management to the State's spending and investments, eventually winning the coveted AAA bond rating to replace the low-grade, almost 'junk bond' rating he had inherited. This story has been told before by historians Lewis Pinckney Jones (1971; rev. ed. 1997), Jack Bass (with DeVries, 1976; with Poole, 2009), and Walter Edgar (1998), who Ballantyne respectfully acknowledges; however, Ballantyne brings a particularly pointed, and apt, focus to Hollings as a transformative modernizer.

In those days a South Carolina governor could only serve one term; therefore, the successful and ambitious Hollings challenged the United States Senate seat of redoubtable Olin DeWitt Talmadge Johnston (who, in his early career, had bested the legendary Cotton Ed Ellison duRant Smith and Strom Thurmond). The hard charging aspirant was dealt a definitive blow, yet Ballantyne marks Hollings' wisdom, as well as his aggressiveness, when he made peace, not only with Johnston, but with Johnston's best operatives and with Johnston's wife. When the old Senator died of cancer in 1965, Johnston's people 'naturally' rallied to Hollings' side as the logical successor. In the 1966 State Primary, Hollings won the Party nomination and then defeated the Republican nominee.

In the Senate, Hollings voted against the civil rights measures of the late 1960s, opposed Thurgood Marshall for the Supreme Court, and generally was no hero of The Black Movement. Yet, he did make "small but tangible accommodations" to black Democrats (p. 3) and eventually found a winning combination for tolerating black voters without enraging white voters. Hollings focused on hunger and became the foremost Senatorial expert on nutrition and its relationship to poverty. In this way, he worked on an issue of substance that could actually help his black constituents in terms of their basic human needs without championing rights rejected by his majority white constituents. After about six years in the Senate, a group of politicians—Georgia's Jimmy Carter, Florida's Reuben Askew, and Arkansas' David Hampton Pryor—emerged and called themselves southern New Democrats. They were moderate on race relations, fiscally conservative, hawkish militarily, and progressive on some basic needs of the black and the white poor. Ballantyne suggests that Hollings was something of a model or prototype for these new politicians, and hence the title of his biography.

Unfortunately, the New Democrat movement itself was exceedingly short lived and soon the Deep South was completely Republican, with Hollings not so much a prototype as the last standing Democrat. Hollings' work on the national budget was important, his efforts on behalf of the military were certainly popular (especially in a State heavily dependent on military spending and with proud militaristic traditions), but it was his vital work on the issues of hunger that truly distinguishes him from others in the Senate between 1966 and 2005.

Ballantyne has written a thorough and thought-provoking exposé on Ernest Frederick Hollings, a man whose unique, politically astute, and useful work—as well as his brave and principled stand at the end of his governorship—sets him boldly apart from other Deep South politicians. *New Politics in the Old South: Ernest F. Hollings in the Civil Rights Era* is a worthwhile read for scholars and practitioners in the fields of history and political science.

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