The New Deal and Local Archives: The Pacific Northwest

By G. Q. FLYNN

Indiana University

IN A recent article in the *Journal of American History,* Gerald T. White of the University of California at Irvine discusses the value of regional Federal Records Centers to the historical profession. The centers were first established in 1950, when it was decided to send Federal records of a regional or local character to these subtreasury record banks. Very simply, the rate of paper production in Washington made this decision imperative. One of Professor White's main points is that the existence of these centers is too often unknown to historians. The professor is encouraged, however, in that steps are being taken to alert the profession to this vast collection of records. Archival journals have printed inventories, and the centers have sponsored day-long symposia in their regions to familiarize the scholarly community with what they are doing.

As a result of this campaign in 1966, some 400 people expressed interest in the records held at the centers, but, according to White's survey, most of these inquiries were of a cursory nature. Indeed, his general conclusion about the centers seems somewhat gloomy. He writes that "It seems certain that a good many inquiries made at the centers in the future, as in the past, will be specific in nature and often of marginal scholarly significance."[1] Because the local records lack what he calls the "richness of the National Archives" and other depositories, he feels that their main contribution in the future will be minimal.

This essay treats the question of whether or not the professor's pessimism is warranted when one considers the relevance of local materials available in the Pacific Northwest for a study of the 1930's and the New Deal. In order to establish a reference point for a consideration of the sources available in this immediate region and how they might contribute to the overall evaluation of the period, it might be wise to first examine the present state of New Deal historiography.

Precise figures are not available, but there seem good grounds for asserting that few decades in American history have received the amount of attention given the 1930's and the New Deal. One scholar estimated that over a hundred scholarly books and articles dealing with the period

The author, professor of history at the university, read a version of the paper on May 23, 1969, at the Sixth Annual Archival Symposium (Seattle, Wash.), sponsored by the Society of American Archivists in cooperation with National Archives and Records Service Region 10, and Seattle University.

1 Gerald T. White, "Government Archives Afield: The Federal Records Centers and the Historian," in *Journal of American History,* 55:841, 833–842 *passim* (Mar. 1969).

have appeared from 1962 to 1966.[2] These studies, furthermore, cover only domestic questions. Obviously there are several explanations for this concentration of scholarship. Some students suggest that the controversial nature of the period explains the interest. The well-known assertions that the New Deal originated the general welfare state and the phenomenon of big government are often heard. The New Deal is, furthermore, one of the most popular historical periods for those who need some sort of contemporary justification for the study of history. Its proximity in time also means that witnesses are still around, eager to point out the historical relevance of their earlier careers. Another significant fact, and one that archivists are undoubtedly aware of, is that both the public and private records of the period were made available to the scholarly community in a form and scope seldom duplicated in the annals of American documentation. Roosevelt was barely in his grave when the records of his administration were opened to legitimate scholarship. Although certain sensitive material dealing primarily with foreign affairs has been restricted, the rate of availability of material has been unprecedented.

In all this scholarship, however, most historians have continued to focus on the same general level of analysis. Most of the scholarship takes a national view of events in the 1930's, and the presidential prespective has unquestionably been considered the most revealing. True, some studies have considered grass roots problems, especially in evaluating the political events of the period. I refer here to the studies of the South by men like Frank Freidel and James Patterson, of Pennsylvania by E. Jeffrey Ludwig and Richard C. Keller, and of local political machines by Lyle W. Dorsett and others.[3] But, quite properly, these studies also derive their relevance from their broader purpose. The questions they ask relate to the connection between local political events and the New Deal. Social history has also displayed this national bias as Negroes, Catholics, conservationists, and others are placed within the framework of New Deal developments.[4] In one sense, this approach is to be commended. One could argue that any historical study which does not

[2] Richard S. Kirkendall, "The New Deal As Watershed: The Recent Literature," in *Journal of American History,* 54:839 (Mar. 1968).

[3] Frank Freidel, *F.D.R. and the South* (Baton Rouge, 1965); James T. Patterson, "The Failure of Party Realignment in the South, 1937–1939," in *Journal of Politics,* 27:602–617 (Aug. 1965); E. Jeffrey Ludwig, "Pennsylvania: The National Election of 1932," in *Pennsylvania History,* 31:334–351 (July 1964); Richard C. Keller, "Pennsylvania's Little New Deal," *ibid.,* 29:391–406 (Oct. 1962); Lyle W. Dorsett, "Kansas City Politics: A Study of Boss Pendergast's Machine," in *Arizona and the West,* 8:107–118 (Summer 1966).

[4] John A. Salmond, "The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Negro," in *Journal of American History,* 52:75–88 (June 1965); George Q. Flynn, *American Catholics and the Roosevelt Presidency* (Lexington, 1968); Leslie H. Fishel, Jr., "The Negro in the New Deal Era," in *Wisconsin Magazine of History,* 48:111–126 (Winter 1964–65); Donald C. Swain, "Harold Ickes, Horace Albright, and the Hundred Days: A Study in Conservation Administration," in *Pacific Historical Quarterly,* 34:455–465 (Nov. 1965). See especially the recent work by James Patterson, *The New Deal and the States* (Princeton, 1969), in which the author assesses the general impact of the New Deal on our Federal system.

relate to the largest possible frame of reference is failing in a fundamental task. Yet to the degree that the expansion of Federal power during the 1930's forces this historical orientation, these tendencies may have implications for a consideration of the future of local research material for the period.

Not only has the literature been extensive in volume and national in outlook, but it has also been controversial in interpretation. Like most important events in American history, the New Deal and the 1930's have been subjects of historiographical dispute. One of the most critical questions under dispute, and most important for our present consideration, is the uniqueness of the reform movements in the 1930's. As some historians have phrased it: Does the New Deal represent a new departure in our Nation' history, or is it to be viewed as a continuation of liberal developments underway since the turn of the century?[5] Admittedly many of the sources of this controversy seem to be based on semantic quibbling, but substantive questions are also involved. Some of our profession's most distinguished men, such as Henry Steele Commager, Arthur Link, Frank Freidel, and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., are on record with the view that the New Deal was the full flowering of progressivism or 20th-century liberalism.[6]

This view of the New Deal, however, has not gone unchallenged. Distinguished scholars support the thesis that the New Deal was indeed new, and one of the things that made it new was the central role that the Federal Government played in shaping the country's destiny. Richard Hofstadter, Carl Degler, Louis Hacker, and William Leuchtenburg all speak of the revolution that occurred in 1933 and of how Roosevelt embarked upon a new order of things.[7] Implicit in this interpretation is a rejection of local and State reform movements as germinal for New Deal actions. Even Schlesinger and Freidel agree that the only proper way to view the New Deal is from the White House perspective. Of course, in some ways it is only natural for historians to be drawn to this presidential perspective. Unlike a social scientist, whose unstated determinism forces him to concentrate on the operation of social and economic trends, the historian has tended to emphasize the dramatic, the unique, the heroic.

[5] See particularly Edwin C. Rozwenc, ed., *The New Deal: Revolution or Evolution?* (Boston, rev. ed., 1959).

[6] Commager, "Twelve Years of Roosevelt," in *American Mercury*, 60:391–401 (Apr. 1945); Arthur Link and Bruce Catton, *American Epoch*, p. 384–385 (New York, 3d ed., 1967); Freidel, *The New Deal In Historical Perspective*, p. 6 (Washington, 2d ed., 1965); Schlesinger, "Sources of the New Deal: Reflections on the Temper of a Time," in *Columbia University Forum*, 2:8–9 (Fall 1959).

[7] Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to FDR*, p. 302–305 (New York, 1955); Degler, *Out of Our Past*, p. 416 (New York, 1962); Hacker, *The Shaping of the American Tradition*, p. 1125–1126 (New York, 1947); Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, 1932–1940*, p. xii, 336 (New York, 1963). It is interesting to compare the point of view of the editors of the New American Nation Series, H. S. Commager and R. B. Morris, on p. x with that of Leuchtenburg.

The "New Deal as revolution" school naturally suggests that budding historians should spend most of their time at the National Archives, the Library of Congress, and the Library at Hyde Park searching for documentation. At Hyde Park Roosevelt, with the cooperation of his former Postmaster General, Frank Walker, worked hard to guarantee that students of the 1930's would be drawn into a presidential perspective. Despite his decision not to have an historian in residence, as is the custom of late, Roosevelt was very solicitous of the scholar's need for documentation. The amount of material available, the high degree of staff competence, and their intimacy with the collection are enough to convince any man that this is the only civilized place to do research. The number of monographs, theses, and dissertations resting upon the material at Hyde Park is already extensive; and, when we add the resources of the National Archives and the Library of Congress, we can understand why a New Deal scholar would feel satisfied without recourse to local records.

Recently, however, in true cyclical fashion, a younger group of scholars has arisen to emphasize the distortion of historical perspective that may result from an exclusive presidential or national point of view. These men have also reemphasized the continuity of the New Deal with earlier reform impulses.[8] At first glance such a shift seems to augur well for the future exploitation of local sources. Though this rejection of New Deal originality has made some of these men liable to John Higham's charge of being neoconservative or consensus historians,[9] I think this is to oversimplify what they are trying to do. In a series of articles, Prof. Richard S. Kirkendall has demonstrated that many recent scholars are finding that some New Deal agencies and programs had their roots in the Progressive movement. Even Leuchtenburg has pointed to the experience New Dealers gained under Wilson and during the mobilization period in World War I.[10]

Even after one acknowledges Hofstadter's qualification that absolute discontinuities do not occur in history, it still seems clear that much recent scholarship has demonstrated a connection between earlier reform movements and later New Deal agencies. Clark A. Chambers has shown how the social reformers of the 1920's pointed directly to the social work of the New Deal.[11] What Chambers has done in the field of social work,

[8] See especially two articles by Richard S. Kirkendall, "The Great Depression: Another Watershed in American History?" in John Braeman *et al.*, eds. *Change and Continuity in Twentieth-Century America,* p. 146 (Columbus, Ohio, 1964), and his "The New Deal as Watershed: The Recent Literature," in *Journal of American History,* 54:839–852 (Mar. 1968).

[9] Higham, "The Cult of the 'American Consensus': Homogenizing Our History," in A. S. Eisenstadt, ed., *The Craft of American History,* 1:193–205 (New York, 1966).

[10] Leuchtenburg, "The New Deal and the Analogue of War," in *Change and Continuity in Twentieth-Century America,* p. 81–143.

[11] Chambers, *Seedtime of Reform: American Social Service and Social Action, 1918–1933,* p. 226 (Minneapolis, 1963).

Kirkendall and C. M. Campbell have done in agriculture[12] and Samuel Lubell and J. Joseph Huthmacher have done in politics.[13] Sidney Fine and James W. Prothro have shown the high degree of continuity in business attitudes and philosophy from the 1920's through the 1930's.[14] As for the leading figure in the drama, F.D.R. himself, Freidel, Schlesinger, James M. Burns, and others have shown repeatedly how the President was shaped by his role in the Wilson Administration and how, after all of the fantastic gyrations of his administration, he is best understood as a pragmatic practitioner of genteel American liberalism.[15] Certainly neither in his economic outlook, nor in his general approach to government, did Roosevelt betray an overly radical tone, despite his misadventure with the Supreme Court in 1937. Kirkendall's conclusion that the New Deal represented a continuation of a "large-scale transformation of American capitalism . . . underway for at least half a century"[16] seems to be receiving additional endorsement each day.

Clearly, this reorientation of the origins of the New Deal has led to questioning the value of studies emphasizing an exclusive presidential or national view. If the New Deal represented a continuation of reform movements long underway, it seems at least plausible that we might gain more insights into the developments of the 1930's by studying these grassroots developments. And clearly, as most of the reform movements before 1933 had their most vibrant existence on a local rather than a national level, we should anticipate and advocate increased use of local source materials. Along these same lines, Prof. David Shannon has recently suggested that the Senators and Representatives of the New Deal period were more direct agents of reform than the White House. Prof. J. Joseph Huthmacher's recent study of Sen. Robert Wagner makes clear that an understanding of this man's role in the New Deal is impossible without a view of his local political problems in New York.[17]

Finally, another healthy portent for local depositories is the new emphasis in the historical profession upon the use of social science techniques and suppositions, a tendency which throws into disfavor a narrow political narrative with its emphasis on individual action. The

12 Kirkendall, "A Professor in Farm Politics," in *Mid-America,* 41:212–214 (1959); Campbell, *The Farm Bureau and the New Deal: A Study of the Making of a National Farm Policy, 1933–1940* (Urbana, Ill., 1962).

13 Lubell, *The Future of American Politics* (Garden City, N.Y., 2d ed., 1956); Huthmacher, "Urban Liberalism and the Age of Reform," *in Mississippi Valley Historical Review,* 49:231–241 (Sept. 1962), and his *Massachusetts People and Politics, 1919–1933* (Cambridge, 1959).

14 Fine, *The Automobile Under the Blue Eagle: Labor, Management, and the Automobile Manufacturing Code* (Ann Arbor, 1963); Prothro, *The Dollar Decade: Business Ideas in the 1920's,* p. 212 f. (Baton Rouge, 1954).

15 See especially Burns, *Roosevelt: The Lion and the Fox* (New York, 1954); and Paul Conkin, *The New Deal* (New York, 1967).

16 Kirkendall, "The Great Depression," in *Change and Continuity in Twentieth-Century America,* p. 188–189.

17 Huthmacher, *Senator Robert F. Wagner and the Rise of Urban Liberalism,* p. 24–37 (New York, 1968).

perspective of the social scientist is most productive when the historian analyzes long term social and economic developments. Clearly, such developments cannot be studied solely from a national perspective. Washington may act upon the consequences of these movements, but a clear recognition and understanding of them demands rigorous investigation of all that helped to create them. Specifically, the social science approach demands, as raw data, a considerable amount of statistical information for correlation. To take one example, long term trends in farm policy will not be understood by rummaging about in the National Archives or at Hyde Park, but they may be clarified on a local level as the minutes of meetings of many State farm associations are examined and tested for the presence of variables.[18]

All of this simply points out that, in terms of both historiographical cycles and professional redefinition of methodology, the times are propitious for an exploitation of local resources on the 1930's. The average historian, however, feels a certain timidity before such a task. He knows of the solicitous attitude of the Library of Congress and Hyde Park, but what sort of conditions and material can he expect to find on the local level? From a rather cursory survey of Region 10, it would appear that the New Deal historian can find much of interest in the Pacific Northwest.

Since to many historians the study of the past means first of all the study of governmental action, it seems wise to begin our survey with the public records available in the major historical depositories of this region. As one might suspect, the State records for this area during the 1930's are rather full. To take the State of Washington as an example, there is a great deal of material in State records covering such topics as public works, public assistance programs, and labor affairs. The Washington Emergency Relief Administration worked very closely with the national relief agencies. In 1935 the name of this agency was changed to the Department of Public Welfare, but its concern with child welfare, old age assistance, and general relief continued. The files of this enterprise, including its fruitful correspondence with such federal agencies as the Works Progress Administration, the Social Security Administration, the Rural Resettlement Administration, and the Civilian Conservation Corps, are available in Olympia. Such material should provide insights into the attitude of State officials toward welfare work before the crash, into how local resources were taxed with the problems of the depression, how coordination and liason problems of State implementation of Federal programs were solved, and into similar problem areas where the national perspective has proved inadequate in understanding the history of public relief and assistance.

The State archives also provide coverage of the official correspondence

[18] Seymour M. Lipsit and Richard Hofstadter, eds., *Sociology and History: Methods*, p. 3–58 *passim* (New York, 1968); R. Berkhofer, *A Behavioral Approach to Historical Investigation* (New York, 1969); Thomas C. Cochran, "The Presidential Synthesis in American History," in *Sociology and History*, p. 371–383.

of the Governors who held office during the 1930's. Surely a study of political events during the New Deal can ill afford to ignore these pivotal leaders. For example, the Governor's File in the Idaho State Historical Society in Boise contains information on the implementation of New Deal Agency work in the State. Washington State Archivist Sidney McAlpin reports that the official correspondence of Gov. Clarence D. Martin is open to scholars.[19]

This type of record is duplicated in all of the States of this region. Other State Archives, such as those of Oregon, include in their collections rich material on how the Works Progress Administration affected the State. One agency of the WPA that generated a considerable amount of local records was the Federal Writer's Project, including the Historical Records Survey of each State. The records of this operation in Washington are held by the University of Washington Archives. Richard Berner has 30 boxes of material on the WPA's Seattle office, including material on the Federal Writer's Project and Federal Art Project. In Montana the WPA files can be found in the Montana State University Archives. Other official records include those of local labor agencies both before and during the 1920's. Such files as those on the Idaho State Federation of Labor, kept at the Idaho State Historical Society at Boise, are worthy of attention and are receiving it from scholars such as Leonard Arrington and Elmo Richardson. Records such as these will help us trace the evolution of labor interest groups and help us understand the problems with which Frances Perkins had to cope in the 1930's.[20]

Local sources also have material dealing with other aspects of the 1930's. Many insights can be gleaned from a survey of local newspaper files, such as those available at the Montana Historical Society of Helena and elsewhere. The archival holdings of the University of Washington are, as they should be, a treasure house of documentary material on the period. The collection Mr. Berner presides over is made even more useful by the excellent name, subject, and chronology index he and his staff have provided. The high caliber of thesis and dissertation literature which emanates from the university's history department is testimony to the success of this program. We have already mentioned his WPA records, but it seems pertinent to emphasize also the material dealing with labor developments in the Seattle area, a special file on the Civilian Conservation Corps from 1934 to 1935, the correspondence and reports connected with the Historical Records Survey for the State, and a special project of material on Afro-American history. Mr. Berner has also taken

[19] Sidney McAlpin, Washington State Archivist, to the author, Apr. 17, 1969 enclosure of "Guide to Washington State Archives"; Merle W. Wells, Archivist of the Idaho State Historical Society, to the author, Apr. 17, 1969.

[20] Margaret E. Keillor, Oregon State Archives, to author, Apr. 2, 1969; Wells to author, Apr. 17, 1969; David M. Pibel, Archivist of Montana State University, to author, Apr. 30, 1969; Elmo R. Richardson, "Western Politics and New Deal Policies," in *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, 54:9–18 (Jan. 1963).

special interest in the collection of material dealing with "unorganized labor." The University of Washington has the files of the Unemployed Citizens League and information relating to the activities of radical groups such as the Industrial Workers of the World.[21]

It would be impossible to list the private manuscript collections available at the University of Washington and at other repositories in the region which have important information on the social, economic, and intellectual trends of the 1920's and 1930's. The general guide to manuscripts edited by Philip M. Hamer and the *National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections* provide convenient reference to many of these manuscripts. There are a few collections, however, that deserve special mention. The University of Utah at Salt Lake City holds the papers of John A. Whittaker, who served as liason between the Mormon Church and the Federal relief agencies. The university also has the voluminous but still unorganized papers of George Albert Smith, who as President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was intimately aware of the effects of the depression upon the people of Utah. At the University of Alaska are papers of Territorial Delegate Anthony J. Dimond, who served during the New Deal period. Equally important are the papers of Luther Hess, who was involved in rural rehabilitation and resettlement in Alaska, and the papers of Carl Lomen, whose running struggle with Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes makes lively copy. At the University of Oregon (Eugene) can be found the papers of Walter M. Pierce, another Democratic Congressman of the 1930's. Eugene also has a varied collection of material dealing with socialist and political radicals, including the papers of the Oregon Commonwealth Federation, papers of socialist Wendell Barnett and of Tom Burns, a local radical, besides the official papers of the Townsend National Recovery Plan Corp. The papers of the noted Roosevelt hater, John T. Flynn, are also deposited at this institution.[22] The University of Washington has a number of private manuscripts collections dealing with both the Rural Electrification Adminstration and the WPA.

At Bozeman, Montana State University Archivist David M. Pibel has the fully indexed papers of the noted agricultural economist and Undersecretary of Agriculture in the 1930's, M. L. Wilson. Wilson's correspondence with individual farmers, agrarian organizations, and State officials, together with his official duties as assistant to Henry Wallace, makes these papers important for an understanding of New Deal farm policy. The university also has the material produced by the Federal Writer's

21 M. Gary Bettis, Curator of Manuscripts, University of Washington, to author, Apr. 3, 1969, enclosure *U. of W. Library Leaflet*, New Series 1, "The Manuscript Collection of the University of Washington Libraries," revised Nov. 1967; Richard C. Berner, "Labor History: Sources and Perspective," in *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, 60:31–33 (Jan. 1969).

22 Everett L. Cooley, Curator at the University of Utah, to author, Apr. 29, 1969; Paul McCarthy, Archivist of the University of Alaska, to author, Apr. 3, 1969; Martin Schmitt, University of Oregon Library, to author, Apr. 3, 1969.

Project in the State and extensive statistical surveys sponsored by the WPA.[23]

Finally, mention should be made of the records held by the Federal Records Center in Seattle. Since its opening in the 1950's this center has grown rapidly to a point where its material covering Washington, Oregon, Montana, and Alaska is almost beyond facile description. Paul A. Kohl, Elmer Lindgard, and others at Sand Point have helped us by publishing preliminary inventories of the records and by keeping the historical profession abreast of recent accessions through announcements in the *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*. While most of the records seem relevant to the earlier history of this region, there are some collections which bear on the 1930's. Much centers around such topics as public power and conservation. Secretary of Interior Ickes' work with Alaska Territory and with Indian affairs is documented here. Especially significant are documents dealing with public power projects of the New Deal, including those of the Bonneville Power Administration. Supplementing the Federal Records Center's resources are the records of the Seattle City Light Co. at the University of Washington. Here also archivists are engaged in a project to microfilm all theses concerned with electric power in the Pacific Northwest. A quick glance at the preliminary listing of these papers indicates that extensive progress has already been made in exploring local sources in the one area of public power.[24]

In a word, all these local records should help us understand a number of still outstanding problems related to the Federal Government's actions during the 1930's. The impact of Federal politics on State politics might be clarified from these records. Surely State parties felt the pull of Federal patronage and the influence of F.D.R. long before the purge attempt of 1938. Even more significant is the story of reciprocal actions between Federal and State agencies to combat the depression. Questions dealing with how States approached their problems of relief and public assistance deserve to be answered. Such investigations can also tell us a great deal about what has happened to the concept of federalism in this country, a topic of more than passing interest during an age when more and more individuals are complaining about their alienation from a Federal bureaucracy. In the area of social history, these local records will help us understand the impact of the economic crisis and governmental relief on the daily lives and assumptions of average citizens. Perhaps we can provide significant footnotes to the still unique work done by Helen and Robert Lynd on *Middletown, U.S.A.* One might also add that many New Dealers learned their political trade and developed their social consciousness by confronting local problems. Harry Hopkins' work with the Red Cross in New Orleans is only one example of this.

[23] David Pibel to author, Apr. 30, 1969; Mary K. Dempsey, Montana Historical Society, to author, Apr. 24, 1969.

[24] Wesley A. Dick, "Electric Power Field Rich in Thesis Possibilities," in *Northwest Public Power Bulletin*, Dec. 1966; also see list of Preliminary Inventories available from Federal Records Center, Region 10, 6125 Sand Point Way, Seattle.

While this brief survey hardly does justice to the depth and variety of local material concerned with the New Deal years, it should spotlight some of the major possibilities. Yet I should like to suggest that we not expect too much or the wrong things from local sources. These local documents can help deepen our understanding of the New Deal by answering the types of questions mentioned above, but I do not anticipate a major new interpretation to result. There are several reasons for my caution in this area. It seems to me that few historical events or movements can equal the New Deal in demonstrating the validity of the principle that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. One of the most overworked cliches in the historical profession is that only through the amassing of numerous local and narrow studies can a general or national movement be truly understood. Many of us remember being taught about the Progressive movement and Reconstruction in these terms. The general or national interpretation had already been published. One question facing historians was: Did this overall view do justice to what was happening on the local level, or did the national perspective really misrepresent the local movement? Only through a study of the Progressive movement in each State could we finally come up with a true synthesis of the movement. The same type of approach has been followed in the study of the American Revolution. There is a suspicion afoot in the profession that despite these studies, the original general synthesis is still acceptable with only a few modifications. Certainly this seems to be the conclusion of Page Smith on the studies of the American Revolution. Perhaps the Progressive movement is an exception because it was, after all, originally a local manifestation. Such a development, however, appears unlikely in the study of the New Deal. The New Deal was more than the sum of individual actions, let alone of State and local reform actions. It represented what Page Smith calls an event of existential or crisis history.[25] As such, its meaning is best captured in its totality. As 160 years of narrow factfinding has failed to change the main meaning of the American Revolution, so it may be true that we should not expect hundreds of monographs with a local focus to change an interpretation of the New Deal resting upon the papers at Hyde Park, the Library of Congress, and the National Archives.

No matter how intriguing the local story, most of the accepted history of the 1930's makes clear that the New Deal began in and was directed from Washington, D.C. Local movements and personalities did not cause the New Deal; they reacted to it. In addition, most observers have argued that Franklin Roosevelt was the unifying force behind this governmental explosion. Though we may reject the poetic insight that it was F.D.R.'s personality rather than a philosophy that served as the inspiration of the New Deal, it still seems dangerous to look toward local figures, even Congressional figures, for the key to the New Deal. This is not to deny

[25] Smith, *The Historian and History*, p. 202–204 (New York, 1966).

that men such as Robert Wagner and George Norris played pivotal roles in bringing to fruition the measures associated with the New Deal, but it is to insist that it was Roosevelt who represented these measures to the country, served as a clearinghouse for debate upon them, and finally administered them in his own unique way. Local agencies certainly played a key role in combatting the depression, and their cooperation with Federal agencies was essential. Still, it seems beyond dispute that in the 1930's the main action was in Washington, D.C. A series of State studies of the 1930's will give us an important view of State history, but such studies are unlikely to lead to some sort of cumulative conclusion that will profoundly change our understanding of the New Deal.

Does this mean that much of the material collected on the local level is really irrelevant to an understanding of the New Deal? Hardly! Obviously no one is suggesting that local archives close their doors because they will not provide keys to a new national interpretation of this period. The questions mentioned earlier are worthy of answers on their own terms. Undoubtedly, as Professor White pointed out in his article, Federal records and depositories will continue to be the main source of historical inspiration for the best work being generated in the field. Yet the professor also recognized, as we must, that the full story may require investigation into local sources. Lacking omniscience, we cannot predict when what appears to be of mere local significance today may tomorrow reveal itself as a pivotal point in the biography of a national figure. Humility is obviously in order here, but it does not seem too risky to predict that time and interest will insure the rarity of such occasions. Furthermore, many local archivists are collecting material at a rate that makes difficult the proper cataloging and indexing of the papers, without which they are seldom used effectively by historians. Surely it is not too bold to suggest that not all records are potential history in a national sense and that time and space require cooperation between archivist and historian to weed out much of this material. Perhaps the key to the problem will be found in microfilming and magnetic tape storage systems. Probably these local collections will have their greatest impact after they have been digested in the form of M.A. theses or doctoral dissertations.

Indeed, this points to what may be another major contribution made by local sources. The training of both graduate and undergraduate students in history can be enhanced by an opportunity to handle primary sources. It seems trite to suggest this for institutional archives such as those of the Universities of Washington, Oregon, and others, where such programs are standard procedure, but how many other educational institutions in the region are making use of records to train their tyro historians in the methods of historical criticism? Such a program would serve any number of purposes. It would help the student increase his historical perception. It might also lead to the transformation of records

and manuscripts into a form more likely to be consulted by advanced historians.

Of course, the most important rationale for local archives involves the very legitimate field of local history. Such local records are indispensible for good regional, State, and city histories. Too often the beginning historian ignores this field. Everyone seeks the more glamorous task of writing a broad synthesis with concentration upon dramatic and heroic figures. Yet even in this world of shrinking national boundaries, local history can serve an important function. Much is made today of the need to return to more humane governmental units in which the individual can understand his role and importance. The impersonal Federal system has given rise to calls for local and participatory democracy. For all we know this may represent the dawn of a new and creative period of federalism. Surely, the writing of local and State histories will thrive under such a movement, and this means that local sources will become even more important. History too can experience a period of creative federalism—national and local histories are both needed.