

Robert Fay Schrader. *The Indian Arts & Crafts Board: An Aspect of New Deal Indian Policy.* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983) xii, 364 pp., \$19.95.

The current popularity, eminence, and international appreciation of the creativity of American Indian artists are such a viable part of the contemporary art scene that most of us are well aware of this distinguished achievement. But it was not always so. Robert Fay Schrader presents detailed, historic review of the trials, endeavors, and vicissitudes of a small but select group of men and women who sought to gain public recognition of American Indian arts and crafts during the first half of the twentieth century. The general focus is on the activities of the Indian Arts and Crafts Board, an advisory and supervisory agency created in 1935 as part of New Deal policies and dedicated to the promotion and protection of Indian arts and crafts as a means to economic independence and cultural revitalization. Although the Board continues to function effectively today, Schrader has chosen to end his account in 1945, the end of the Roosevelt administration, with a brief "epilogue" on subsequent events. The text also comprises a solid, if somewhat tediously detailed, defense of the Indian Office under John Collier, who fought for, brought into being, and defended the Indian Arts and Crafts Board, and under whose protective aegis it operated during those ten years of spectacular achievements amidst incredible opposition.

The publication is also more than an account of the birth and growing pains of the Indian Arts and Crafts Board in the years prior to and during World War II. The entire first third of the book presents a comprehensive documentation of economic and political events in the early part of the twentieth century as they affected the welfare and status of Indian peoples struggling for economic and cultural survival within the confines of Indian reservations.

Schrader's study was made possible with the recent release and deposition of the Indian Arts and Crafts Board records in the National Archives. Access to these materials has provided the grist for a long needed reconstruction and reappraisal of political events as they affected Indian artists and craftspeople. Forty pages of detailed Notes, presented sequentially by chapters at the end of the text, testify to a carefully documented study, which draws on other Congressional Documents, Presidential Papers, and Annual Reports of the Commissioner for Indian Affairs, and personal papers, as well as standard books and articles. Thirty-nine black-and-white photographs of prominent administrators, exhibitions, and Indian artists and their works also enhance the publication, which ends with a Bibliography and Index. A word of warning for those readers who are not dedicated history buffs: the number of documented details becomes overwhelming at times and will

test the patience of all but the most intrepid historian of governmental procedures.

In spite of the effectiveness of the Indian Arts and Crafts Board programs, problems and difficulties beset its efforts, accelerating with the involvement of the United States in World War II. Production fell off as Indian workers became involved in the armed services or war industries; budget requests were drastically cut in favor of allocation of funds for the war effort, forcing the termination of most field representatives in the Board's program; and conflict arose in Congress over the New Deal's support of "cultural pluralism." In January of 1944, Rene d'Harnoncourt resigned as general manager of the Board, followed by the resignation of John Collier as Commissioner of Indian Affairs in December of 1944 when the Indian Office was stripped of funds and authority. Amidst growing Congressional sentiment for termination of all Federal services and connections with Indians, and with the effectiveness of its program seriously impaired, the Indian Arts and Crafts Board of that period literally disintegrated, although Collier and d'Harnoncourt continued to serve as advisory Board members.

It is to the credit of the sound policies and programs initiated by Collier and d'Harnoncourt that the Indian Arts and Crafts Board ultimately won its battle for survival. Focusing on rehabilitation of Indian workers after the war, it managed to outlive the termination policies of the mid-1950s and to successfully carry on and expand its programs.

In 1960-61, with opposition to termination growing, the Board was able to bring about the establishment of the Institute of American Indian Art in Santa Fe, an outstanding school for the training of young Indians in the arts. The Board continues to this day to promote and support many of the significant goals of its formative years, with continuing emphasis on technical assistance in production and marketing. Today, the dreams and efforts of Collier and d'Harnoncourt are fully realized in Congressional support, in increased sales, and in increased appreciation of Indian arts and crafts worldwide.

— Helen Schuster
Iowa State University