

Editor's Note

Welcome to the 2013 edition of *Federal History*. This collection of research articles is topically quite diverse and illustrates the journal's broad view of the history of the federal government. In brief, that story is more than one of "high politics" or the actions and policies of federal officials, military leaders, or the courts. It also includes accounts of how popular movements, social and cultural changes, localities, and economic crises shaped national policies, politics, and even legislation. In that sense, federal history is not an isolated, specialized intellectual endeavor, but an essential tool for probing and understanding the larger history of our civilization.

We are pleased to feature the 2012 Roger R. Trask Award Lecture given by Raymond W. Smock, Director of the Robert C. Byrd Center for Legislative Studies. After tracing the contributions of federal historians over the past 80 years, he reminds us of the unprecedented challenge of the current Digital Revolution, or "Age of Big Data," and also emphasizes that the content of records takes first priority. Now more than ever, he stresses, only historians, with their ability to provide context, can help with preservation decisions and then prepare histories of our government. We must conquer this records challenge "before it buries us."

We also start with Michael Brodhead's recounting of the work of the Army Corps of Engineers' 1929–31 survey in Nicaragua for a possible second canal route, one under consideration for decades. (The article first appeared in our 2012 online edition.) It was a difficult expedition, reminiscent, Brodhead writes, of those to the American West. His colorful account helps us understand the technical aspects of their work and their interactions with Nicaraguans. Richard Fry shows how the Black Lung Association (BLA), in the absence of support from the United Mine Workers Union, conducted a grassroots campaign between 1969 and 1972 for more effective legislation to protect and compensate miners suffering from black lung disease. Their appeals for popular support, testimony before Congress, and partnership with key lawmakers led to the passage of the Federal Black Lung Benefits Act of 1972. John Sager examines the far-reaching public debate over universal military training between 1945 and 1952, a debate that arose out of concern for military preparedness in the early Cold War. The arguments by legislators, military figures, and educators went to the core meaning of American citizenship and its

responsibilities. Must everyone be required to serve, or is mandatory service a threat to individual rights and a democratic society? Christopher Hickman argues that a major reason for the policy failings of the Alliance for Progress in the early Kennedy administration was planners' false "embrace" of the Marshall Plan as a model for the new initiative. Latin American conditions and needs were different, yet the analogy of the Marshall Plan encouraged "unrealistic expectations." Those failures teach the lesson that policymakers must reassess current conditions with "a deep awareness of the past." That lesson seems to have been learned in U.S. dealings with Argentina in the early 1970s. David M. K. Sheinin reveals a more dexterous U.S. policy toward Argentina in the period 1970–75. Americans worked with the formerly anti-American Juan Perón after his brief return to power in October 1973–July 1974. They sought cooperation with Argentina economically, politically, and scientifically despite that nation's bluster and "developmentalism and state capitalism." That subtle cooperation and understanding differed from the hard line policies toward Salvador Allende's Chile. Kevin R. Kosar and Mordecai Lee review the little-known early career of urbanologist and political scientist Edward C. Banfield. We learn, in Banfield's own words, of bureaucratic conflicts at the Farm Security Administration, 1941–46, and the frustrations he encountered, but also gain a close look at the work of a public information officer. Those experiences made him deeply skeptical of the effectiveness of governmental relief programs and other major public efforts.

I want to thank Judson MacLaury, former Historian of the Department of Labor, for his valuable contributions since coming on board with this issue as Assistant Editor. Judson has been an active and contributing member of our organization since its founding, serving as editor of *The Federalist* newsletter for parts of the 1980s and '90s and later contributing research via various Society venues. I appreciate his careful readings and important insights.

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Editor, *Federal History*