

## BOOK REVIEWS

older systems of "political communication," or the old symbols lost force from long manipulation.

The author has been praised for being well-versed in "the new tools and concepts of the social sciences," and he spent some time at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University. The volume here may, then, be considered in this light. Jacksonian thought has become for Meyers a problem in political communication. But the results, while interesting, are not as impressive and new as one may observe in some other areas of behavioral science. Without the unusual ability of the author to write, *The Jacksonian Persuasion* might have been a less interesting and rewarding volume.

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Book reviewed in SOUTHWESTERN SOCIAL SCIENCE QUARTERLY,  
Vol. 38, No. 1, March 1958.

ARVIN MEYERS: *The Jacksonian Persuasion: Politics and Belief*. Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1957. 231 pages. \$5.00.

*The Jacksonian Persuasion* elicits our interest on at least three grounds. It is, presumably, a product of the new flight of the behavioral sciences; it is also another contribution to the recent liberal and literary enthusiasm for the political leaders of the Jacksonian era. On a third ground, it is a very readable book, a fact which commends the

1958  
SOUTHWESTERN SOCIAL SCIENCE QUARTERLY

author to our future attention. Much, perhaps, is today being written about little. Robert G. McCloskey has remarked of American political thought: "The difficulty, to be downright, is that American political thinkers have not often produced works that rank with the best that has been thought or known in the world's intellectual history."

Meyers begins with a statement of what the Jacksonian persuasion, or "ideology," was; from this he moves into a discussion of certain leaders of the movement, some of whom are clearly not to be taken as an appropriate historical measure. He examines the movement with the dwarfs. The movement, Fenimore Cooper, and the movement are considered with Theodore Sedgwick, William Leggett, and Robert Rantoul, and other lesser figures in politics.

If one should ask what is the inarticulate premise on which the author writes, the answer might be that it could be called neo-Beardism—the examination of the economics of the political man. Indeed, property seems to be almost the only common element in either Jacksonian liberalism or conservatism, just as the "monster" of the movement was the Bank, which seemed to endanger the property of middle-class Jacksonians. One wonders a little just why the Jacksonians were so "progressive" since, as the author says, democracy had already triumphed before they won their great political victories. And the author seems to agree that the free-trade and *laissez-faire* adherents of the time go ill with the liberalism of the contemporary welfare state. In the end the Jacksonians and the Whigs seemed to come closer together, as the vitality ebbed from the