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A child of the Southern Plains, Will Rogers became an iconic national figure in the 1920s and '30s. Renowned as a vaudevillean, a comedic movie star, a syndicated newspaper columnist, a radio commentator, and an author, Rogers's significance as a political figure has largely been minimized or overlooked. Richard D. White Jr. demonstrates successfully that Rogers indeed was an influential political commentator whose support on behalf of various issues was sought and coveted by presidents from Woodrow Wilson to Franklin Roosevelt.

A member of a prominent Cherokee family, Rogers was a cowboy whose talent, humor, and work ethic enabled him to become the voice of the “common man.” Although he had little formal education, he was an avid reader, highly informed on the social and political issues of the day, who used humor to entertain millions of Americans while commenting on those issues. Rogers was particularly concerned with the plight of Great Plains farmers and ranchers during the Dust Bowl and Great Depression. Frustrated in his attempts to get federal aid for them, he organized his own farm aid effort. His concern for those caught up in the ongoing tragedy led to his strong and effective support of Roosevelt's New Deal. Though not a sage political philosopher, he understood the suffering and perspective of millions of his fellow citizens and used his remarkable influence to help them.

Rogers could be swayed by individuals he had previously criticized. An amiable individual, his assertion that he'd never met a man he didn't like was, in large part, true. He stopped criticizing John D. Rockefeller after a short meeting and even expressed some admiration for Italian dictator Benito Mussolini after they'd engaged in a conversation.

Rogers's death in a 1935 plane crash with renowned pilot Wiley Post plunged the nation into mourning. Millions of Americans viewed Rogers as their representative, their voice, when he spoke and wrote on matters of political and social policy. Readers interested in the social and political history of the United States will enjoy this accessible new view of the life of Will Rogers.

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