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Review of *The Indian Arts and Crafts Board: An Aspect of New Deal Indian Policy* By Robert Fay Schrader

C. Adrian Heidenreich
Eastern Montana College

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The Indian Arts and Crafts Board: An Aspect of New Deal Indian Policy. By Robert Fay Schrader. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983. Photographs, notes, bibliography, index. xii + 364 pp. \$19.95.

In fourteen chapters and thirty-nine pages of

notes Schrader chronicles the Indian Arts and Crafts Board during its development from the late 1920s to the passage of the Indian Arts and Crafts Board Act in 1935 and its work until 1945. Placing it within the general socio-political context of New Deal policies, including those of the Indian office, he provides a careful, detailed, chronological account of the background, activities, accomplishments, and, above all, the struggles of the board.

The central argument of this book is that the board, one of the major Roosevelt-Collier "Indian New Deal" programs, was the most significant of all in its importance for and impact on Indians. A second argument seems to be that John Collier and Rene D'Harnoncourt were consummate politicians and creative cultural catalysts in the face of very difficult odds.

To a great extent, Schrader accepts the rhetoric of Collier, D'Harnoncourt, and their supporters without critical evaluation. There is little tie-in with other legislation, activities, or difficulties of New Deal Indian policy (e.g., there are only two references to the Wheeler-Howard Act). Although much is made of the positive effect of the board on Indian art and life, the evidence presented is incomplete, and there is little examination of the influence or effects of white patrons or the markets on Indian arts. It is suggestive that the board itself,

D'Harnoncourt, and Collier came under contemporary criticism on these matters, as Schrader documents, and more attention to these issues would have strengthened the book.

More synthesis and evaluation of the key issues and activities would have been desirable. The work contains much repetition of essentially equivalent words and actions by Collier and his staff in their contact with innumerable congressional committees, private interest groups, and individuals. Although such detail is useful for certain research purposes, it becomes tedious. There are few visual illustrations of the artistic activities stimulated among Indians by the board or pieces of high-quality craftsmanship to demonstrate what was being revived or stimulated. Also, the illustrations do not match the word-pictures of the 1939 San Francisco and 1941 Museum of Modern Art exhibits. There are a number of typographical errors and there are paging omissions in the index.

Even with the weaknesses noted, however, this work on the Indian Arts and Crafts Board is a useful addition to the political history of Indian affairs and intercultural relations.

C. ADRIAN HEIDENREICH
Native American Studies Program
Eastern Montana College