

# Running Steel, Running America: Race, Economic Policy, and the Decline of Liberalism

Judith Stein

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The history of modern liberalism has been hotly debated in contemporary politics and the academy. Here, Judith Stein uses the steel industry--long considered fundamental to the U.S. economy--to examine liberal policies and priorities after World War II. In a provocative revision of postwar American history, she argues that it was the primacy of foreign commitments and the outdated economic policies of the state, more than the nation's racial conflicts, that transformed American liberalism from the powerful progressivism of the New Deal to the feeble policies of the 1990s.

Stein skillfully integrates a number of narratives usually treated in isolation--labor, civil rights, politics, business, and foreign policy--while underscoring the state's focus on the steel industry and its workers. By showing how those who intervened in the industry treated such economic issues as free trade and the globalization of steel production in isolation from the social issues of the day--most notably civil rights and the implementation of affirmative action--Stein advances a larger argument about postwar liberalism. Liberal attempts to address social inequalities without reference to the fundamental and changing workings of the economy, she says, have led to the foundering of the New Deal state.



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