

**Outline** of “The Office of Price Administration, Consumption Politics, and State Building from the Bottom Up, 1941-1946 by Meg Jacobs

**INTRODUCTION** (purpose):

*Functions as a space to introduce the topic (Hook)*

- OPA precarious position as a government agency which garnered the interest and import from both the political left and right

*Provides minimal background information on focal point of the paper*

- Arose from New Deal and WWII era consumer politics and strongly influences consumer mentality and priority

*Includes the relevance of the argument to modern historical scholarship*

- Skowronek and Skocpol support that this agency heavily contributed to American state development through a competitive measure on behalf of the political spectrum

*Inserts the development of the author’s position (Thesis building)*

- “this article argues, the very way OPA legitimated and constituted its authority contributed to its eventual postwar defeat”

*Mentions a “pivotal” or climatic event that contributes to the topic’s transition*

- 1946 Packers’ Strike – consumers lost confidence in OPA

**THESIS** (stance):

*What the paper is arguing (included in introduction)?*

- “This article argues, the very way OPA legitimated and constituted its authority contributed to its eventual postwar defeat.” Through development consumer entitlement

*“Why is this important?” component*

- “We can understand how OPA’s ‘failure’ to put meat on the table generated the political animus and frustration that led to the decline of a form of state building predicated on a cross-class mobilization of consumers and, more broadly, to the postwar delegitimization of an interventionist New Deal state.”

**MIDDLE** (comprehensive argument):

*Beginning and Growth of Sentiments*

- Understanding the OPA first Bureaucracy and ways of pricing
  - Justification of this organization’s creation; First admin and director of price scheduling
- General Maximum measure proves ineffective; Inflation continues
  - Gen Max and its Fa
- Assertion of authority during wartime
  - “Hold the Line” Policies and effects

- The Public's viewpoint/perspective
  - Engendering ads according to specific audience; i.e. housewives
- Justification of the public funding the war effort
  - Sacrificial patriotism on the Homefront, funding the war effort = good, provides economic, moral, and social security, and ensures a "second Bill of Rights"
  - Contributes to public feelings of entitlement; because they contributed to the defense of American ideals, they now deserve incentives for doing so.
- An issue in ensuring the public receives benefits
  - Congressional conservatives do not like New Deal policies?

#### *Insertion of a Key Player*

- Women as a target audience for ads
  - Campaigning with Eleanor Roosevelt, terminology in ads, women's seminars, etc...
  - Primary folks on the Homefront
- Mobilizing women to fight against inflation
  - Women comprises of core volunteers; two divisions: labor unionists and unorganized shoppers
- OPA endorsed an empowering relationship between women and consumption
  - Training of women volunteers and opportunities to move up within the system
- Emphasizing the role and importance of local government in this initiative
  - Prioritizing community
- Created an intersection between public and private with consumption and patriotism
  - Contributed to over price control extension
- Why being a housewife legitimizes a voice in OPA dealings
  - Women engaged in political discourse and became a voice in representing the American consumer

#### *The Beginning of the End*

- OPA as an institution which thwarts market prices and asserts too much power
- Industries with narrow profit margins hurt
  - Grocers, Textile/Garment, and meat industries
- Conflict between warring administrations
  - WPB v. OPA
- Issue with reliance on an organized consumer interest
- Meat consumption increases amongst specifically poor consumers
  - The American public wants more meat
- Understanding the development of the meat industry and its reforms
  - Big Four Meat Packers and their frustrations
- OPA's intervention and Women's ongoing support for OPA over the packer's unions
  - "OPA not only served immediate consumer interests but more broadly represented a political culture premised on broad popular participation and consumer rights."

### *Defeats and the End (climax)*

- Popular support for OPA v. Policy-making elites
  - Truman administration v. localized groups of volunteer women and the OPA bureaucracy
- No coherent strategy in place for postwar inflation of prices; OPA blamed
  - OPA's bid to be reinstated as an administration
- Great steel strike in 1946
  - Compromises did not listen to the OPA's projections
- Public still supported OPA's initiatives and rejected the inflation of food prices
- The Meat Famine (climatic moment)
  - Chaotic upheaval over lack-of meat in grocers according to journalists
  - Women wanted their meat?
- OPA blamed and loses most public support
  - Truman puts to rest the OPA over the lack of meat in markets

### CONCLUSION (review and significance)

#### *Returning to the Introduction*

- "OPA had validated citizens' understanding of themselves as consumers and had given them a sense of economic entitlement.

#### *So what factor?*

- This experience sheds light into how public policy making is not always beneficial to state building – perhaps a weakness?
- The American public now adamantly supports an activist state

#### *Cliff hanger*

- How do state formed public policies contribute to the formation of social groups and their role in future state development?