Harry H. Woodring

McFarland, Keith D.

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Harry H. Woodring: A Political Biography of FDR's Controversial Secretary of War.

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As President Franklin D. Roosevelt's assistant secretary of war from 1933 to 1936 and secretary of war from 1936 to 1940, Harry H. Woodring headed the War Department during one of the most critical periods in the nation’s history. When he split openly with FDR over key decisions and actions preceding World War II, he earned the dubious distinction of being the only man that Roosevelt ever removed from his cabinet. This volume, a detailed study of Woodring’s political career, provides the first clear picture of this controversial man and reveals a new perspective on the military history and civilian-military relationships of the period.

“This well-written biography not only covers all aspects of Woodring’s political career but also sheds valuable light on the isolationist mentality of the 1930s: the danger involved in permitting the military establishment to atrophy; the disadvantages of allowing Congress to legislate foreign policy; and the machinations of an imperial president who refused to accept limitations on his executive power when the national interest dictated bold action.”
—Journal of American History

“Harry Woodring deserved a biography, and McFarland has provided a good one.”—American Historical Review

“Keith McFarland’s biography fills a gap in New Deal history.”—The Historian

“McFarland's biography of Woodring is balanced and well researched. In addition to documenting the story of an almost forgotten member of the Roosevelt administration, it provides insights into the politics and mechanics of rearmament. It is a valuable addition to the literature on the Roosevelt administration and World War II.”—Aerospace Historian

“McFarland's study is a helpful addition to the historiography of military affairs in the age of the Democratic Roosevelt.”—Military Affairs

Keith D. McFarland is president emeritus of Texas A&M-Commerce, where he also served as professor of history and dean for graduate studies and research. He is the author or coauthor of three books, including Louis Johnson and the Arming of America: The Roosevelt and Truman Years.

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