



The New Left: A History

William L. O'Neill

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In his latest publication, William L. O'Neill presents a concise critical history of the New Left, the thinking, people, and events that helped shape the 1960s in America, and its principal heir, the Academic Left. The first two chapters of this lively, interpretive narrative relate the history of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), an organization that despite such well-publicized actions as the first mass protest in Washington against the Vietnam War and the student strike that shut down Columbia University, was unable to expand beyond its student base or survive a factional split. Next covered is the theatrical Left, notably those at the head of the Yippie movement who skillfully manipulated the mainstream media to garner enormous publicity for their stunts and staged events but whose movement, like the SDS, failed to survive the decade.

Chapter Four follows the major figures in the story-Abbie Hoffman, Jerry Rubin, Tom Hayden, the Weathermen, Timothy Leary and others, and sifts through various theories to conclude why and how the New Left burned out so quickly. Finally, Chapter Five addresses the legacy of the New Left in the rise of the Academic Left, which, while riddled with ironies, remains entrenched in academe today.

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