



Prisoners of Myth : The Leadership of the Tennessee Valley Authority, 1933-1990

Erwin C. Hargrove

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“This book is a must for anyone interested in public policy studies, the changing roles of government in modern America, and twentieth-century southern history. It is important as a study of government at its best and worst.”—Bruce D. Wheeler, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

“This is an excellent study of the agency’s leadership and major policy developments, and it is sure to rank as the best introduction for anyone interested in the Tennessee Valley Authority.”—American Historical Review

In *Prisoners of Myth*, Erwin Hargrove analyzes the organizational culture of the Tennessee Valley Authority by looking at the actions of its leaders over six decades. His probing narrative ranges from the heroic years of the New Deal and World War II through the postwar period of consolidation and growth to the time of the troubles from 1970 onward, when the TVA ran afoul of environmental legislation, built a massive nuclear power plant it could not control, and sought new missions for which there were no constituencies.

Hargrove shows how the TVA’s founding myth of multipurpose regional development was inappropriately pursued in the 1970s and 1980s by leaders who became “prisoners of myth” in their efforts to keep the agency heroic. Based on rich interview materials and historical documents from TVA archives, this study provides penetrating insights into the ways in which bureaucratic institutions perform in the face of historical change. In a preface written especially for this new paperback edition, Hargrove discusses the responses the book received upon its initial publication in 1994 and the theory of organizational leadership that emerged from his research into the TVA.

The Author: Erwin C. Hargrove is professor of political science at Vanderbilt University and the author, most recently, of *The President as Leader: Appealing to the Better Angels of Our Nature*.

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