



# **Sly and Able: A Political Biography of James F. Byrnes**

*David Robertson*

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Few political figures have had as long, as varied and as consequential a career in American history as Jimmy Byrnes. This master politician and self-made man served for half a century, as congressman and later as key New Deal senator from his native South Carolina; as Supreme Court justice; as "assistant president" during the Second World War; as Truman's secretary of state in the early years of the Cold War; and, finally, as governor of South Carolina. He came tantalisingly close to the American presidency and was a key participant in the decision to drop the atomic bomb on Japan. In later years he was a seminal figure in the so-called Southern Strategy that brought Richard Nixon to the White House. For his shrewdness and mastery of the art of politics Byrnes earned the sobriquet "sly and able". He was surely both - and one of the key shapers of American politics in this century.

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