
Pennsylvania politics in the twentieth century has caused political theorists to cringe, economists to curse, moralists to cry, and reformers to despair. Fully aware of these frustrations, Paul B. Beers has risen above them. Although he knows that the term "Pennsylvania Crude" often refers to the state's politicians as well as its oil, he has presented a dispassionate and balanced account of these years.

His volume has a basic biographical orientation, with the primary focus on the state's governors, particularly Gifford Pinchot and his successors. He identifies the liberal governors since 1922 as Pinchot, George Earle, James Duff, and George Leader. Earle's administration also fits into the disaster category which is shared with John Fine and Raymond Shafer. Despite widespread corruption and public disenchantment, Milton Shapp escaped similar castigation in Beers's analysis; apparently the author gave greater credence to the fact that "no Pennsylvania politician of this century...overflowed with ideas and principles as Shapp did." Thus he joins John S. Fisher, Arthur James, and Edward Martin in a political limbo. By the author's appraisal, the administrations masterminded by Pinchot, Duff, Leader, David L. Lawrence, and William W. Scranton were the most successful.

Beers also includes brief biographies of such influential leaders at both the state and national levels as Boies Penrose, John Wanamaker, the Vares, Joseph Grundy, the Guffeys, Harvey Taylor, Joseph Clark, Hugh Scott, Robert P. Casey, K. Leroy Irvis, and Henry Cianfrani. The influence of prominent families (Mellons, Pews, and Annenbergs) is also detailed in this collection of thumbnail sketches.

Organized around individuals in this manner, Beers's Pennsylvania Politics has no theme and no conclusions. That does not discredit the work. The author discusses the who and what of state politics, leaving the why and how without close scrutiny. He mentions specific aspects of issues (items pertaining to education, budget, tax structure, highways, and so forth) as appropriate in his sketch of each governor, but he does not analyze any of these broad topics over an extended time period. Although there is no assessment of the impact of the consolidated school systems, voting trends, changes in popula-
tion, and the grab for "super-generous" fringe benefits by legislators (and to a lesser degree by other state employees), this volume provides valuable personality insights unavailable in any other single publication.

Interspersed throughout the volume are many interesting and informative Pennsylvania firsts, including the first woman elected to statewide office, the first black legislator elected, the first state senator ousted from office, the first full-time party chairman in the state, the first Republican president to be elected without carrying Pennsylvania, and the first Democratic United States senator to be elected directly by the people of Pennsylvania. In addition, the author mentions certain national firsts by Pennsylvanians: the first woman to receive a national convention vote for a presidential nomination and the first presidential candidate to be charged with violation of the new federal election law.

Indicative of the author's years as a successful journalist, this volume demonstrates his appreciation of quotable quotes. Richardson Dilworth is the politician "born with a silver foot in his mouth"; Scranton's boomlet at the Republican presidential convention in 1964 becomes "the amateur hour"; Shapp's legislative family with its proclivity for winning expense-free vacations in federal prisons was dubbed "the Kosher Nostra." In that heyday of corruption the domain of the representatives was tagged "the House of Ill Repute," and after a twenty-member fight on the floor over the 1977 budget, Speaker K. Leroy Irvis reminded his colleagues that "this is not a third-grade classroom in recess." During that budget battle Senator Cianfrani went to the House to whip a recalcitrant Democrat into line. As Cianfrani explained, "I acquainted him with the facts of life here." Shortly thereafter the courts acquainted Cianfrani with certain facts of life which he himself had conveniently overlooked and sent him to the Allenwood prison to reflect on them.

Beers supplements these colorful quips with many picturesque and provocative phrases and well-measured adjectives of his own. He is at his best in describing Earle, Grundy, and Shafer. Unfortunately, a few factual errors have crept in, but none of them alters the interpretation of any part of the text. This is the most significant collection of biographical information extant on Pennsylvania's twentieth-century political leadership. And it is enjoyable reading.

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