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Robert J. Kerstein. *Politics and Growth in Twentieth-Century Tampa*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001. x + 440 pp. \$55.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8130-2083-9.

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Political Regimes and a Growth Machine

Historians often conjure with politics, and political scientists inevitably contemplate history, so that the two disciplines frequently overlap. It is appropriate that Robert J. Kerstein, professor of political science at the University of Tampa, has produced a history of growth politics in that city. Tampa's growth spasm coincides with most of the twentieth century, which accounts for Kerstein's imposing chronology. This is a narrative of the people, events, and factors that characterized Tampa's experience of the so-called Sunbelt phenomenon, placed into the analytic framework of what political scientists call "regime theory."

Citing John Mollenkopf's *The Contested City* (1983), and Amy Bridges's *Morning Glories: Municipal Reform in the Southwest* (1997), among others, Kerstein begins with a discursive first chapter, "The Myth of Sunbelt Exceptionalism." Here he cites an impressive body of work on Sunbelt urbanization. In discussing urban studies, Kerstein is attentive to the distinctions between political formations in such diverse places as Houston and Atlanta, both of which are customarily included under the broad rubric of "Sunbelt metropolis." The conventional interpretation of New South politics is a steady pattern of urban rule by a "commercial-civic elite." In that construct, southern cities differed from their northern counterparts in that southern businessmen dominated city government much the same as political machine bosses did in the North. Northern politicians had to negotiate more heterogeneous urban populations, whereas in the South, lower immigration and the disenfranchisement of

African Americans meant that there were fewer vectors for political conflict. After World War II, bosses and elites alike gave way to a more diffuse urban polity. In the 1950s and 1960s, southern cities, such as Tampa, grew so much that their electorates could hardly avoid more heterogeneity. By the 1970s, American cities in general showed the effects of increasingly democratized electoral politics. Elites, while hardly marginalized, increasingly faced grassroots challengers to their traditional hegemony.

Not so fast, Kerstein cautions. The transition from an elite oligarchy to more popular democracy was often punctuated by conflict among members of the commercial-civic elite, or by sporadic electoral activism on the part of citizen groups. Kerstein also notes that nothing was inevitable about the shift to a more open political process, particularly in the South: "History can move backward, as well as forward" (p. 10). That is why Kerstein argues in favor of examining cities, in this case Tampa, through a "regime perspective." Urban political regimes are informal but stable, and identifiable through goals or objectives such as downtown development. Regimes can take on the character of their dominant constituencies, whether they be labor groups or bankers. Over time, regimes have been more consistently responsive to the needs of private-sector investors, while still accommodating the interests of citizens who are sometimes opposed to powerful economic agents. An urban political regime can contain groups or individuals who are in mutual opposition on certain issues, but who

are allied on others.

The politics of growth are elemental to Tampa's history during the twentieth century. American cities generally embrace growth because it is the most expedient way to bring business and wealth into their jurisdictions. However, pro-growth policies do not generate an automatic consensus. Kerstein argues that the regime perspective highlights the nuances of conflict over growth politics by illustrating the character of differing regimes with alternate priorities. Corporate-style regimes might flourish in a place (and time) where growth is lightly contested. In different circumstances, a more inclusionary "progressive" regime might emerge, accessible to middle- and working-class citizens, with greater public participation in planning and wider dissemination of the benefits of growth. During still other periods there may be no coherent regime in place at all, but rather a factionalized coalition whose members compete over certain policy priorities. Such a condition, Kerstein notes, is often missing from regime analysis, but it accurately describes Tampa's contentious politics at various points in the twentieth century. During the teens and 1920s, for example, influential political actors disagreed vigorously over public regulation of utilities, but were of like mind on excluding blacks from the electoral process. Indeed, the notion of whites' supremacy influenced Tampa well into the second half of the twentieth century.

The second chapter opens the chronology with a discussion of the four decades from the 1880s to 1920. This period falls into three discrete "regime" segments, each characterized by differing levels of consensus about growth. In an era of American Progressivism, Kerstein finds relatively little that was progressive about Tampa's politics. Civic elites excluded women and blacks from politics, and were staunchly antilabor. Chapter 3 measures the decade of the 1920s by recounting Tampa's brief experiment with commission government. In 1920, a successful referendum campaign amended the city's charter to provide for a mayor-commission government and at-large elections. In rhetoric echoing Progressives elsewhere, advocates pointed to the businesslike efficiency that a more rational city administration could achieve. Reformers claimed that placing city government in the hands of a professional city manager would promote growth. The incumbent regime's record of hostility toward organized labor led to union workers' support for the referendum, although labor gained little as a result. Women participated in elections for the first time during the 1920s, but none ran for office. For African Americans, Tampa's reform government was meaningless, as

the White Municipal Party continued to dominate local elections. By 1927, the coalition behind Tampa's reform government had fractured. After another referendum, Tampa reverted to the previous strong-mayor system with representatives elected from single districts.

Chapter 4 examines Tampa's politics during the harsh years from 1928 to 1943. The economic boom collapsed in 1926, and by 1931, Florida was experiencing the full effect of the Great Depression. Kerstein discerns little regime coherence during the period, finding rather that "political organizations took on a life of their own" (p. 72). Political actors denounced one another for corruption while competing for the personal economic benefits of political power. As an example, Kerstein points to a protracted struggle to build a new airport that might attract regular commercial airline service to Tampa. The effort initially fell short due to disagreements over the location, with officials and businessmen blaming each other for letting personal greed interfere with the greater good. For the rest of the 1930s and into the 1940s, the tone and temper of local politics followed a similar pattern. What Tampanians did seem to agree on was continuing to repress blacks and labor politically, while improving the local economy with money from federal New Deal initiatives and investments in war industries, such as shipbuilding.

Kerstein's fifth chapter measures Tampa's postwar politics from 1943 to 1955 by roughly following the administration of Mayor Curtis Hixon, who held office throughout the period. Thanks to federal spending Tampa's postwar economy boomed. However, political factions continued to trade allegations of corruption while excluding most ordinary citizens. Even though women had the franchise, and the U.S. Supreme Court had outlawed the white primary, no one from either group won elective office, and Tampa's governance remained the province of elite white males. In 1956, Hixon died in office. In a special election that followed, Tampa elected its first Latin mayor, Nick Nuccio. Tampa's first coherent growth regime developed in the 1960s, which Kerstein addresses in chapter 6, "Growth Politics, 1956–1967." Business and political leaders collaborated effectively to promote a major annexation of unincorporated lands, urban renewal, and economic development, such as a new state university. Meanwhile, federal interstate highways propelled metropolitan and regional growth beyond Tampa.

Kerstein hits his stride with the concluding four chapters, which cover the last three decades of the twentieth century in Tampa. Here he has been able to inter-

view veterans of Tampa's politics and commerce. Tampa saw an infusion of corporate representatives who took up local growth as a mission, and increased diversity in political regimes. Suburbanization is an important part of this account as, like most twentieth-century cities, Tampa spread past its municipal boundaries. Kerstein does a good job of putting political Tampa into the context of its metropolitan area, especially at the county level. Since World War II, Tampa's growth increasingly affected unincorporated Hillsborough County, with political and economic consequences for the governments of both the city and county.

Many historical actors appear in Kerstein's narrative, though in little depth. Given the broad chronology of the book, that is unavoidable, but it is unfortunate. Tampa has produced memorably colorful politicians and entrepreneurs, such as Peter O. Knight, Pat Whittaker, D. B. McKay, Robert E. Lee Chancey, and Hixon. From the 1910s to the 1940s, local gambling entrepreneur Charlie Wall wielded great influence over the city's elections. Bitter political feuds among these figures and their proxies persisted for decades. Beginning in 1940 and for the following eighteen years, municipal consultant George W. Simons Jr. advised Tampa's business and political elites on a host of growth issues. Simons was perhaps less colorful than his political clients, yet in a narrative of Tampa's growth he merits greater attention. During the 1950s and 1960s, many citizens invested themselves heavily in Tampa's annexation battles and proposals for consolidated government. However, such figures as attorney and politician Paul Danahy, who headed the Local Government Study Commission of Hillsborough County, receive only passing mention.

Kerstein points us anew toward the debate over Florida's regional identity. Geographically, Tampa is part of the South, but expatriate Yankees have long influenced, if not thoroughly infiltrated, its political and business elite. Examples include Henry B. Plant and Knight, during Tampa's early years. Peninsula Telephone founder W. G. Brorein, and his nephew Carl Brorein were both native Ohioans. Influential banker and shipbuilder George Howell was a Cornell alum from New York, longtime municipal consultant George Simons was an MIT graduate from Illinois, and "New Tampa" visionary Kenneth Goode was a Coloradan. Of course, the experience of becoming *Tampanos* reshaped each of these migrants. The question of Tampa's southernness affords

scholars an opportunity to consider just what constitutes the political and economic phenomenon called the Sunbelt, although Kerstein's discussion of the term in relationship to Tampa is more meditation than argument.

Kerstein exploits contemporaneous newspaper articles for insight into Tampa's ongoing political discourse. A particular strength of the book is its value as a guide to relevant newspaper reporting, as the author devoted impressive time and energy to that avenue of research. Kerstein shines as he writes about the period from the 1970s on, as he has skillfully employed his own interviews with political and business figures of the time. Indeed, the book is at its best in its description of policy influences of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. By concentrating on secondary sources for the earlier chapters, Kerstein breaks less new ground for those studying the decades prior to desegregation and the Great Society.

Maintaining a local focus, Kerstein looks past the larger political regimes that influenced suburban growth in Tampa or the South generally, such as the federal New Deal, the effects of World War II, or the broad effects of the Interstate Highway System. Moreover, Kerstein offers only glimpses of Tampa's response to Progressive-Era growth practices, such as zoning. Thomas Hanchett argues that the federal Lanham Act (1941) generated a wave of municipal planning and zoning throughout that decade. Tellingly, land use zoning was controversial among Tampa property owners, realtors, and businesses. Only in 1940 did Tampa's Board of Representatives authorize Tampa's first land use study, paid for by the Works Progress Administration. Over the ensuing decade, the city enacted zoning ordinances only grudgingly.

Politics and Growth in Twentieth-Century Tampa adds invaluable to the literature on that understudied city. Scholars of the twentieth-century South will welcome an attempt to frame its decades of change within the paradigms of political science. Analysts of contemporary suburban sprawl can draw much from Kerstein's able, nuanced accounting of its complex constituencies. Those who find Tampa itself to be a rich venue for historical examination may find this book more appetizing than satisfying. Its expansive chronology necessarily limits its historical depth. Kerstein's is the work of a sophisticated specialist examining the relevant questions in his discipline through the case of a complex, fascinating Sunbelt city.

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