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Howard P. Chudacoff

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Harold Crooks, a Montreal journalist with a background in economics, describes the evolution of the large firms and considers the major issues. He compares *Dirty Business* to the "the exposés . . . of the brief golden age of muckrakers early in the century, [in its] focus . . . on a young industry whose power and freedom from regulation raises far-reaching questions" (p. 3).

The book is organized in three parts. Chapters one and two outline the nature of the garbage problem and describe the profitability of integrating collection and disposal of waste. Cheap landfill sites, notably old gravel pits, are very important in the operation of the garbage business.

The second part of the book considers the growth of the four large corporations: Brown Ferris Industries of Houston; Waste Management Inc. of Chicago; S.C.A. Services Inc. of Boston; and, Laidlaw Industries of Hamilton. Laidlaw Industries, under the ownership of Michael De Groote, evolved from a Hamilton trucking enterprise into a continental corporation deriving most of its business from waste collection. A final chapter in this section describes the role of big unions, especially the Teamsters, in the concentration of the industry.

"Garbage Wars," the title of the third and final part of the book examines the ruthlessly competitive growth of the large firms in Winnipeg, Toronto and Montreal. These chapters discuss the ways in which the large corporations achieved market dominance and sought dumping grounds for the vast quantities of trash. The battle over the Maple disposal site raises many questions of waste and environmental management.

While *Dirty Business* is not in the academic tradition of the volumes written by Martin Melosi,¹ it does describe contemporary organizations and issues. The scale of garbage generation, collection and disposal, especially in metropolitan regions, is now probably past the era of *laissez-faire*. Given the virtual monopoly power of large corporations in some cities, a measure of public supervision is necessary. The most controversial issues are those relating to the disposal of hazardous waste materials, mostly produced by the chemical industry. Southern Ontario's drinking water is threatened by inadequately treated toxic waste dumped in landfill sites. This major problem is being tackled by a provincial Waste Management Corporation, but no community wishes to have a disposal site. As with many contemporary urban issues, waste management is something much larger than the individual city. While private corporations have provided a larger scale of operation, their activities need to be supervised in the public interest.

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NOTES

1. Martin V. Melosi, *Pollution and Reform in American Cities 1870-1930* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979); Martin V. Melosi, *Garbage in the Cities: Refuse, Reform and the Environment 1880-1980* (College Station: Texas A & M, University Press, 1981).

Mollenkopf, John H. *The Contested City*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984. Pp. xii, 328. Tables, index. \$27.50 cloth, \$6.95 paper.

This compact book alters the fundamental equation that scholars, journalists, and politicians have used to explain American urban development of the past half century. John Mollenkopf, a political scientist and director of the Public Policy Program at the Graduate School of the City University of New York, accepts as a given the "second urban revolution," which has occurred since 1920. This revolution, the "dependent variable of the equation, has involved a post-industrial transformation of American cities, including disinvestment in old industries, growth of service sector institutions, diffusion of older urban populations, and central-city dominance by recently-arrived, lower-status minority groups." But instead of listing traditional economic forces — technology, land costs, personal incomes, labour costs, decisions by private firms, etc. — to explain the transformation, Mollenkopf asserts that "politics and government are independent driving forces which can override economic 'functional necessities' " (p. 8). Government intervention, he says, rather than private interests have been responsible for the urban patterns that have emerged since the 1930s.

Mollenkopf rests his thesis on two key concepts: "pro-growth coalition" and "political entrepreneur." The creation of progrowth coalitions, both national and local, originated with the Democratic party, usually during periods of economic and political crisis. These coalitions consisted of various public and private interests brought together by a government program which gave them all benefits and powers that none of them could have obtained or exercised on their own. The 1949 Housing Act exemplifies such a coalition-building measure. It won wide support with compromises and vague language that provided something for everyone. Political entrepreneurs are the architects of these coalitions; they are the people who gather and risk "political capital or support in order to reshape politics and create new sources of power by establishing new programs" (p. 6). Democratic entrepreneurs have succeeded in fashioning progrowth coalitions that changed the face of the urban environment, but their success generated conflicts that have undermined their effectiveness. First, federal programs initiated by Democrats provoked counter-movements from conservative

political entrepreneurs, mostly Republicans. Second, the Democrats' urban liberalism has failed to satisfy all disparate elements of the party's constituency; many programs have worsened rather than bettered conditions of poor, central-city residents, especially racial minorities. Third, private-sector decision makers have reacted against tax-heavy Democratic programs by shifting investment away from older cities to the Sunbelt, where a more conservative brand of progrowth politics prevails. Thus the problem facing urban America, as Mollenkopf sees it, is how to overcome these conflicts and reconstruct new coalitions.

Much of the book traces the course of federal urban policy from the origin of the Democratic-inspired progrowth coalition in the New Deal through the Fair Deal administration of Truman, the Great Society programs that emerged during the Kennedy and Johnson years, and the uncertain policies of the Carter administration. Counterbalancing the Democratic urban programs were the conservative responses of the Eisenhower, Nixon, and Reagan administrations, which Mollenkopf analyses in depth. He also devotes a fascinating chapter to the formation and consequences of progrowth coalitions at the local level, using Boston and San Francisco as case studies. He then presents his own version of a very hot issue, the Frostbelt v. the Sunbelt, and draws some surprising conclusions about the future of cities in both regions.

Mollenkopf's analyses are refreshing, measured, and provocative, and they are bound to kindle much controversy. Though he is convincing, a couple of nagging problems pervade the book. First, some historians would take issue with his assertion that Franklin D. Roosevelt "invented" national urban policy (p. 55). Such a conclusion, as well as others throughout the book, impute motives to individuals on the basis of outcomes of a complicated series of events and exigencies. Such reasoning fits Mollenkopf's thesis about political entrepreneurship but needs more direct evidence to be effective. Second, some readers will be disappointed by Mollenkopf's failure to make solid recommendations for overcoming the conflicts resulting from postwar urban policies. His identification of what has happened is strong, but his recommendation for a new consensus is a bit too simplistic and general. Nevertheless, *The Contested City* is the kind of book that deserves consideration by both specialists and general readers.

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Press, 1983. Pp. xviii, 335. Tables, maps, index. \$34.95 (U.S.).

This monographic study of a small English colonial village near what is now LaGuardia Airport was undertaken with two explicit goals. First, the author aimed to trace the changes in Newtown's political, social, and economic arrangements from its first settlement through to the American Revolution. Second, Kross intended to place these changes in a larger comparative context — the first such attempt, according to the author — in order to combat the tendency of colonial historians to claim uniqueness for their own small parts of the continent. Unfortunately, the author did not entirely succeed, and the book will be of limited use either to students or specialists.

Kross divides the 133 years up to 1775 into four periods. One chapter in each period covers the town's governmental institutions. Another covers social and economic life; the last period, however, requires two chapters to cover these topics. The first period, 1642-1664, Kross sees as characterized by the establishment of a typically English enclave on eastern Long Island, granted considerable liberty by the Dutch. The second period, from the English conquest up to 1692, saw the town's face-to-face communal structures of authority and discipline begin to erode, partly under pressure from the provincial and imperial governments and partly because of the influence of the emerging Atlantic economic net. In the third period, up to 1723, Newtown ran out of land to distribute, and its agriculture and land market settled down to an equilibrium. Residents also struck a balance between their own localistic interests and the requirements of the province, and between their individual interests and that of the community. This balance tipped in the town after 1724 as residents increasingly appeared willing to act as individuals distinct from the town, with ties to groups outside; Newtown was obliged to act as part of a larger unit in response to increasing provincial and imperial demands on its citizens and their resources. Change in all areas of life moved toward more complexity, greater specialization, and widening choice.

Kross's first aim, to delineate the process of change in the town's living arrangements, is carried out reasonably well considering that the sources used, along with Newtown's small size, do not seem to have allowed much room for aggregation. The book is best in dealing with the context within which the town's political institutions developed. It deals less successfully with factors behind social and economic changes, in a large part because small pieces of evidence had to be explicated by reference to the work on New England with which Kross's results were to be compared. The overall direction of change which Kross found does accord with other studies.

Kross's second aim is approached in detail using explicit comparisons throughout the book with several New England

Kross, Jessica. *The Evolution of an American Town: Newtown, New York, 1642-1775*. Philadelphia: Temple University