

Power and Politics in California

Third Edition

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Preface

Increased participation in the politics of California by an informed citizenry is vitally needed. As public issues become more complex, and as campaigning techniques become more sophisticated, society's need for knowledgeable citizens becomes greater. When Californians do not contribute to the making of public decisions, crucial choices are likely to be made by a small number of activists for their own gain.

Effective involvement in public affairs is grounded in a realistic assessment of both government structures and power wielders. Power, politics, and government are intertwined. We employ the power concept to underscore the wide array of politically important forces which exist *outside* the three branches of government. The power theme stresses the vital role in California politics played by such people as pollsters, campaign consultants, journalists, entertainment celebrities, business executives, and professional lobbyists.

Several changes have been incorporated in the third edition of Power and Politics in California. Given the tremendous financial gain that favorable action by state government can bring, Chapter 1 in this edition contains an expanded discussion of the various economic sectors in California. In Chapter 3 of this edition, we provide an extensive treatment of the major industries that generate strong pressure on state officials. Despite widespread agreement that California's political parties are weak, state texts for many years have devoted as much, or more, attention to parties as they have to interest groups. We believe that more examination of group politics in California is overdue. To facilitate comparison with economic interests, we have moved forward to Chapter 4 our account of ethnic and gender politics.

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Earlier editions of this work overlooked the importance of news organizations. A new section in Chapter 5 argues that reporters and editors do much more than describe events; they influence the outcomes of political battles as well. Modern campaign practices in California have sparked considerable controversy, so Chapter 6 is designed to provide readers with the background necessary to understand the public debate on political reform that is likely to occur in future years.

Our chapters on the three branches of government have been updated, but otherwise not substantially altered. However, Chapter 9 on budgetary politics is a major addition to the present edition. The adoption of state and local budgets is a central political test each year. Should a budget become embroiled with reapportionment politics (1983) or with disagreements concerning spending limits and tax rebates (1987), government virtually stands still until a way around the deadlock can be found. We conclude by examining political change in localities throughout California.

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J.H.C. J.C.S.

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CHAPTER

California in Transition

I DIDN'T MEAN TO DO THIS, AND I'M LEAVING RIGHT NOW. These words, according to a special brochure by the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG), are to be yelled loudly by people hunting and fishing who mistakenly wander into marijuana gardens in ten "high-risk areas" in northern California. The pamphlet also warns the innocent intruder to watch out for miniature minefields, gun traps, bear traps, and fish hooks strung on fishline at eye level along hiking trails. Although local business leaders and residents acknowledge the existence of nearby marijuana plantations, they claim that the DFG language grossly exagerates the infrequent violence that sometimes occurs between pot growers, pot rustlers, and unwary hikers.

It is this type of story that makes non-Californians shake their heads in disbelief over life in the Golden State. Over the years, California has achieved a reputation as a place where oddballs, cults, and the bizzare are tolerated, where one can become rich overnight and where politics varies from the far left (Berkeley) to the far right (Orange County). California firsts include the invention of blue jeans (1850s), supermarket (1912), motel (1925), fast food resturant (McDonald's, 1948), the laser (1960), microprocessor (1971), and crash of the nation's first stealth aircraft in 1986 (denied by the Air Force since it did not admit to having any stealth airplanes in 1986). Above all, California is a land of contrasts, as we shall discuss momentarily. Whether or not Californians are a distinct race of people, as O. Henry concluded at the beginning of the twentieth century, depends on your perspective.

In 1850, only two brief years after the discovery of gold brought an influx of new citizens to the region, California achieved statehood. The population at that time was about 250,000. By the turn of the twenty-first century, California's projected 30 million residents will be celebrating the state's one hundred and fiftieth birthday. Clearly, much has occurred in the state during this time. Short of international war or a West Coast disaster of significant proportions such as the long-predicted "next" major earthquake along the San Andreas Fault, we can highlight some of the trends that will have an impact on the direction of state politics in the future. Moreover, as we look ahead, it might be wise to change the warning language in the DFG brochure to make it more generic and applicable to the conduct of business and politics from now to the year 2000. Perhaps the new yell might be, WE DIDN'T MEAN TO DO THIS, AND WE WON'T DO IT AGAIN.

Change and Contrast

The elements of change and contrast are always present, and especially visible, in California because of the political, social, and economic diversity found throughout the state. Change has come slowly to some areas in the state and quite rapidly to others. The first traffic signal in Lake County, north of the Bay Area, was installed in the 1970s; the city of San Jose had the dubious distinction of being the fastest-growing city (at 36 percent) in the United States between 1970 and 1980. A summary of the political, economic, and social changes that have occurred in the state since the end of World War II demonstrates the dynamic nature of life in California. These changes also serve as an indication of what lies ahead as we approach the year 2000.

Political Culture

California's unique style of politics dates back to the Progressive Era of the 1910-1920 period. As a result of reforms enacted during that decade, political parties are relatively weak in comparison with other states such as New York, Illinois, Indiana, and New Jersey. Neither the Republicans nor the Democrats have been able to put a lock on state politics for the last 30 years. Indeed, much to the consternation of political analysts who like to characterize states as either Republican or Democrat, California voters are apt to vote for both Republicans and Democrats, and for other

parties as well, in the same election. The number of voters who identify themselves as independents has been on the increase for the last 20 years. Where Democrats once had a substantial edge over Republicans among registered voters, now that gap has narrowed and public opinion polls show defections from both parties.

Since 1958, the state has seesawed between Democratic and Republican control of the governor's office. Edmund G. "Pat" Brown (D) served for two terms (1958-1965), Ronald Reagan (R) for two terms (1966-1973), Edmund G. "Jerry" Brown, Jr. (D) for two terms (1974-1981), and George Deukemijan (R) for two terms (1982-1989). During Governor Jerry Brown's second term, his lieutenant governor was a Republican (Mike Curb), and Democrat Leo McCarthy is serving in that capacity during Republican George Deukmeijan's administration. Although an incumbent governor can serve an unlimited number of terms in office, only the popular, and generally nonpartisan, Earl Warren (R) has been elected to three terms. Warren served from 1944 until 1953, when he was appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court. In general, however, contemporary governors are aware that after eight years in office. the voters want to turn the reins of government over to a different person.

In the 10 presidential elections since the end of World War II, California has voted for the winner eight times. The exceptions occurred in 1960, when state residents went for Republican candidate Richard Nixon (John F. Kennedy won), and in 1976, when the majority of the ballots were for Gerald Ford, the Republican incumbent (the contest went to Jimmy Carter). California has been reluctant to have two U.S. senators of the same party in Washington at the same time. Democrats have fared a bit better overall than Republicans in capturing congressional seats.

County and municipal elections are nonpartisan and in general the party affiliation of candidates is not as important as the candidate's personal capability to influence voters. There are exceptions. Democrats have had a hold on Bay Area local elections for a number of years while Republicans retain control of many Southern California cities. Republicans did dominate Los Angeles until the early 1970s, but Democratic Mayor Tom Bradley has run successfully for four consecutive terms.

Aside from voting on candidates, Californians also decide a number of public policy issues in the form of initiatives and propositions on the ballot. In recent years, voters have passed statewide initiatives to restrict development of the coastline (1972), to cut property taxes (1978), to strengthen the criminal justice system (1982), and to make English the official language in the state (1986). Voters have defeated efforts to restrict tobacco smoking indoors (1978, 1980), to require deposits on beverage bottles and cans (1982), to build a peripheral canal to carry water from northern California to the Central Valley and southern California (1982), to regulate the sale and possession of handguns (1982), and to place restrictive conditions on individuals suffering from AIDS (1986). Although Chapter 6 carries a detailed discussion of the initiative process, the point to be emphasized here is that issue voting is important not only in terms of the measures themselves, but also because it provides voters with "cues" on how to vote for candidates they may know nothing about other than the candidates' stands on important initiatives.

It used to be commonplace for observers of California politics to emphasize the political distinctiveness of northern California, the Central Valley, and southern California. In general, northern California was Democratic turf, a refuge where tolerance and sensitivity to the environment were evident. This was in contrast to the Republican southern California, a bastion of pro-business attitudes and pro-development entrepreneurs. The Central Valley would vote for a mixture of Republicans and Democrats, but those officeholders would be true to traditional agricultural values. Although regional political and cultural values are still present, they may be less pronounced overall than they once were.

For over 75 years, Hollywood has played a variety of roles in politics and in defining California culture. The first filmmakers moved to the area in 1907, and by 1920 the film business was the leading industry in Los Angeles. The motion picture industry is not as economically significant today as it was in the 1930s. but together with television production it employs some 230,000 Californians and pumps \$5 billion into the state's economy each year. Perhaps more important than its financial size, however, has been the image of California that Hollywood has given the rest of the nation, first in movies and later through television shows. This image, generally a positive one, emphasizes the state's favorable climate and the health, vigor, and beauty of its residents. Part of the Hollywood mystique lies with its celebrities, whose lives fill the gossip pages with tales of glamour, wealth, sex, and drugs. And it is this mystique that has long attracted young men and women to find their place in the Hollywood sun. Today, much of the glitter of old Hollywood has faded. Young male and female prostitutes mingle with tourists on Hollywood Boulevard and sex shops are prevalent in the city, but the image of Hollywood lives on.

When Upton Sinclair ran for governor in 1934 on a "quasi-socialist" platform, several prominent Hollywood moguls sought to organize movie stars to support the Republican candidate, Frank Merriam. Although Merriam won the election, many stars were irritated by the actions of the their bosses to support him. The production of several socially oriented movies in the 1930s and 1940s, and the founding of several liberal organizations by movie actors and directors, led to charges that the motion picture industry was influenced by communists. In 1947, the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) identified a number of writers, producers, and actors as being pro-Soviet. The notoriety resulted in their being blacklisted (i.e., not being considered for jobs in the entertainment industry).

Ronald Reagan is not the only Hollywood actor to gravitate from motion pictures and television to politics. In 1950, former actress Helen Gahagan Douglas challenged Republican Richard Nixon for the U.S. Senate. Nixon, a former member of HUAC who labeled Douglas the "pink lady," won. Douglas's advocacy on behalf of migrant laborers led Nixon to use the lighter shade of red in reference to her liberal politics. In 1964, actor George Murphy was elected to the U.S. Senate, two years before Reagan won the California governor's post. Shirley Temple Black was unsuccessful in her bid for a congressional seat in 1967, but she later served as ambassador to Ghana from 1974 to 1976. Most recently, Clint Eastwood became mayor of Carmel in 1986.

Republicans are confident that Charlton Heston could defeat any Democratic officeholder if they could just persuade him to run. In addition to seeking office themselves, the list of celebrities who actively campaign for candidates and causes is almost endless. Republicans can count on Bob Hope, Heston, Eastwood, Lee Majors, Frank Sinatra, and Lucille Ball to support their nominees. Democrats rely on Michael J. Fox, Loretta Swit, Alan Alda, Jane Fonda, Jack Lemmon, and Jack Klugman, among others, to campaign for their candidates.

Economic Change

California's economy has been a highly diversified one for some time. Unlike the situation in some states where the economy is heavily dependent on one industry (i.e., automobiles in Michigan, timber in Oregon, manufacturing in the northeastern "rustbelt" states, and, to a lesser extent, petroleum in Texas and Oklahoma), California traditionally has been able to weather economic downturns that adversely affect much of the rest of the nation.

The state's economic gross product is large enough that California would rank sixth among the world's top 10 economic powers if it were a separate nation. By the turn of the century, the state's economy is predicted to surpass that of France, which has the world's fifth largest gross national product. If the predictions of bankers hold true, the state's economic growth will mean 6 million new jobs, with the majority of these in the service, retail, and manufacturing sectors of the economy.

California's economy is based on a foundation of aerospace-high-tech industry, tourism, agriculture, international trade, entertainment, oil, construction, and manufacturing. Although agriculture may be the state's most well-publicized industry, it was surpassed economically by defense-related work in the 1970s. In 1984, defense, aerospace, and high tech work amounted to some \$50 billion, tourism produced about \$25 million, and agriculture produced about \$14 billion. The value of California's imports and exports for 1985 was \$85 billion.

In addition to problems in the agricultural sector of the state's economy, there are other indications that the rosy financial picture for the state as a whole is not spread evenly throughout California. The mining, timber, and oil industries have been in a slump since the early 1980s. Moreover, the much publicized high tech businesses face stiff competition from foreign markets. Silicon Valley is not about to become a ghost town, but California will have to outhustle other nations such as Japan and South Korea, as well as other states including Texas and Massachusetts to remain strong in the business.

Agriculture. Over 250 crops are grown in the vast Central Valley. The state is the primary producer of a number of commodities including nuts, olives, apricots, broccoli, grapes, lettuce, and tomatoes. California is second in the nation in the production of rice and citrus fruits. The diversity in the state's agricultural production has saved many farmers from the hardships that result from inadequate rainfall or depressed prices for specific crops. However, the economic problems faced by farmers in the "grainbelt" midwestern states in the 1980s have affected California growers as well.

Over 25 percent of California farms were close to bankruptcy in 1985, the number of cotton growers receiving federal subsidies (in return for taking land out of production) is above the three-quarters mark, and 121 dairies in 3 central California counties were bought out by the federal government in 1986 for \$70 million under