

POWER AND POLITICS IN LABOR LEGISLATION. By Alan K. McAdams. New York: Columbia University Press, 1964. 346 pp., \$7.50.

As legislative case studies accumulate, it becomes harder and harder to remember who did what to whom with what effects, or who got what and when — never mind why. Thus, would-be beneficiaries of this burgeoning literature are entitled to ask of new legislative cases as they appear, "Why bother? What makes this particular case study worth reading?"

Perhaps it is especially well written, and can give laymen or the idly curious an intuitive "feel" for political processes or institutions. At least two recent studies of federal aid to education have had this distinction.¹ Or perhaps the author is concerned with theorizing, generalizing, and speculating. The little world of the case is exploited as a guide to the big world outside. One such study, ostensibly on reciprocal trade legislation, is actually a gold mine of general propositions on Congress and the legislative process.² Or, perhaps, the subject matter itself is of such great importance that the reader can be sure of finding something worthwhile in the study regardless of the explicit intentions of the author and almost regardless of his skill.

It is at this third point that a discussion of *Power and Politics in Labor Legislation* most appropriately begins. The Landrum-Griffin Act, which is the subject of this study, was a major event in recent congressional history. Many alliances and enmities within Congress date from the three-cornered struggle over the passage of this law. The student of Congress who tramps up and down the Capitol's endless maze of marble corridors today and tomorrow will have to know about Landrum-Griffin to catch the full flavor of congressional resentment at overenthusiastic attempts to persuade them from the outside. Landrum-Griffin did more than any other bill in the 86th Congress to solidify support for the Democratic Study Group, an informal organization of House liberals that over the last few years has grown in size and influence. Finally, Landrum-Griffin illuminated the beginnings of the presidential campaign of 1960. Newspaper readers will recall how Senator Kennedy unexpectedly lost control of his bill on the Senate floor, how his presidential rival, Senator Humphrey, flew back from the west coast to help bail him out, how Vice-President Nixon was forced to cast a tie-breaking vote against the wishes of organized labor. Certainly, in his choice of a case to write about, the author of this book did admirably.

On other counts, however, this study is less satisfactory. For one thing, Professor McAdams writes confusing prose. He uses the passive voice to excess; sometimes this makes it difficult to determine just which actors he is talking about. He uses unclear metaphors, including a pendulum that seems to swing only in one direction,³ and, at one point, a "sweetener" that is sup-

1. Price, *Race, Religion, and the Rules Committee*, in *THE USES OF POWER* (Westin ed. 1962); BENDINER, *OBSTACLE COURSE ON CAPITOL HILL* (1964).

2. BAUER, POOL & DEXTER, *AMERICAN BUSINESS AND PUBLIC POLICY* (1963).

3. P. 1.

posed to "purify the public perception" of a "collective moral aroma"⁴ — truly Herculean work.

The book sets forth a thesis which the case is supposed to illustrate, but the thesis is apparently not strong enough to order the various elements of the study. This can be observed first in the rough chronological arrangement of the narrative, but even more noticeably in the way in which irrelevant details billow and drift through chinks in the structure of the argument. Some of these details are inaccurate; others reveal that the author, a professor at Cornell University's Graduate School of Business and Public Administration, is well-versed in the internal politics of American labor organizations and in the specifics of the bill at its various stages. However, they are on the whole not germane to the book's main argument.

This main argument grows out of an interesting anomaly. How could the overwhelmingly liberal, Democratic 86th Congress enact a bill so distasteful to labor? The answer, says Professor McAdams, is that the general public — not interest groups, not internal congressional forces, but the "general public," consisting of "average citizens" — wanted a bill of this character. This made such a bill a "political necessity."⁵

In the present state of political science, this is an extremely unorthodox argument. The last quarter-century has not been kind to theories based on the presumed political alertness and maneuverability of "average citizens" of the "general public," as findings have accumulated that show how little they care about most political issues and how much of their political behavior is based upon stable and impervious habits. In the study of Congress two sorts of explanation have recently found favor: explanations emphasizing the power of interest groups; and those focusing upon the internal organization of Congress and the independent preferences of congressmen and senators. Interest group explanations seek to show how groups in society come to have preferences about public policy and how they go about obtaining the enactment of these policies by persuasion or pressure. Internal explanations regard legislators as somewhat more autonomous and self-directed, though bound in important ways by the rules and institutional practices of Congress.

In the present case, a purely interest group explanation would clearly be deficient. The author stresses the inability of labor organizations to get what they wanted and also, he charges, to formulate realistic goals. But it is not clear that the author exhausted the possibilities of the internal theory. He makes less, for example, of the presidential ambitions of senators intimately involved in the development of the bill than another observer might have. And his discussion of the Education and Labor Committee of the House could have been greatly enriched by reference to findings of Richard Fenno about the stresses and strains in its internal organization.⁶

4. P. 127.

5. P. 280 *et passim*.

6. MUNGER & FENNO, NATIONAL POLITICS AND FEDERAL AID TO EDUCATION Ch. V-VI (1962).

How would one go about substantiating an argument that the undifferentiated mass of citizens known as the general public was more influential than either of these other factors in the enactment of a bill? I think the best way would be to show an overwhelming sentiment for the legislation as expressed, let us say, in a public opinion poll. This would be necessary to show public interest though not sufficient to show public influence. In order to show influence, a thoroughgoing description of public representations to congressmen and a description of direct congressional responses would be in order. Frequent statements from congressmen that they were swayed by public sentiment or had changed their minds or had been activated by public opinion (not, as some were, by specific groups) would do nicely.

Yet, as a matter of fact, not a single poll or description of interaction between congressmen and public or statement of the kind I have indicated is adduced in evidence in this book. The facts are established by a method of demonstration which might be described as the method of reiteration. That is, from time to time in the course of his narrative the author says that congressmen or senators were doing what they were doing because of popular demand.

Under the circumstances, one cannot recommend this book to the "average citizen." It would be most frustrating and unfair to him to read how powerful he was in this instance, and yet to be unable to learn how he did it.

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TO PROFESSOR ARTHUR LINTON CORBIN
ON HIS NINETIETH BIRTHDAY WE DEDICATE THIS VOLUME
IN THANKS FOR HIS IMMEASURABLE CONTRIBUTIONS TO
THE YALE LAW SCHOOL AND THE YALE LAW JOURNAL.