

Issues in Iowa Politics, edited by Lee Ann Osburn and Steffen W. Schmidt. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1990. viii, 262 pp. Illustrations, graphs, notes, index. \$28.95 cloth.

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Lee Ann Osburn and Steffen W. Schmidt have edited twelve essays variously related to issues in Iowa politics in the 1980s. Like many such collections, the book is useful, interesting, and lacking in coherence. The essays range from Hugh Winebrenner's well-argued piece on recent Iowa caucuses (except 1992's) as media events to Robert Ross's impressionistic account of the distaste for politics in most small-town communities where few issues seem capable of arousing attention, let alone action. Dorothy Schwieder's brief introductory essay on "historical perspectives" traces the traditional one-party Republican domination of the state without exploring the ethno-cultural, religious, class, or ideological base of such domination. She does note that Iowa finally became a two-party state in the 1950s and 1960s, a change that contributed to the problems of Iowa politics in the 1980s, when for most of the time the Democrats controlled the legislature and the Republicans controlled the governor's office—a recipe for inaction.

Chapters on "The Iowa Constitution" by Jerry Stubben, "The Iowa Judicial System" by Jerry Beatty, "Iowa's Changing Population" by Willis Goudy and Sandra Charvat Burke, and "Iowa and the Federal System" by Ardith Maney only indirectly touch on political issues: A constitutional amendment in 1962 deliberately took judges out of politics, and the Iowa Supreme Court in 1972 merely followed United States Supreme Court guidelines in implementing a reapportionment amendment to the constitution first initiated by the Iowa General Assembly in 1965. Court guidelines created the most equitably reapportioned legislature in the nation, with far greater representation for urban counties. That gave the Democratic party the potential for control of the legislature in the 1980s. Just what issues that control would deal with depended in part on the social and economic realities of Iowa's changing population and in part on the role and responsibility of the federal government in recognizing those realities. Yet Goudy and Burke's statistical study of population trends scarcely deals with the political issues raised by a population that is growing poorer and older; nor does it address the political effects of migrations out of the state or from farms and small towns to Iowa's larger cities. Maney's discussion of the federal system's impact on Iowa political issues evades the Reagan administration's ideological commitment to "get government off our backs" by reducing taxes (and increasing

budget deficits). The 1980s placed greater responsibilities of governance on the states, including Iowa, and created challenges for Iowa political leaders, especially Democrats now in control of the legislature. Thus, attention to issues in Iowa politics depended above all on the quality of political leadership in the state, both in the General Assembly and in the governor's office.

How Iowa's political leaders responded is a theme in two of the most interesting essays in the collection—Charles Bruner's "Lobbying, Interest Groups, PACs, and the Iowa General Assembly" and James Strohman's case study of the sometimes silly politics associated with John Ruan's idea of "The Iowa World Trade Center." Politics is about individual actors and groups seeking solutions to issues that touch on private and public interests. Bruner and Strohman are the only two contributors who deal with politics this way. Bruner does so from his experience in the legislature and his observation of how private interests and their lobbyists tend to influence, if not dominate, the political agenda. He notes that in 1977 the compensation for lobbying programs for thirty-one public interest groups as a whole "was less than that for just one of the more highly compensated private interest groups, the Bankers Association" (86). Strohman's case study is an entertaining narrative that treats the up-and-down history of the World Trade Center and the issue of just how much public money should be committed to Ruan's (and Bill Knapp's) private pipe dream solution to the issue of Iowa's economic development. It is also a case study of the influence brought to bear on legislators and the legislative process by private Des Moines interests, including what Steffen Schmidt in his concluding essay, "Challenges for the Future," calls the "Knapp Democrats." Nowhere in this book are these Democrats identified. One might think, based on Strohman's sketch, that they are the Democrats who achieved power in the legislature in the 1980s and, along with an equivocating Governor Branstad, failed to meet the challenges of that decade: they let state deficits increase, cut budgets, and created a state lottery and accepted riverboat gambling to avoid increasing taxes, all the while enjoying racing at Prairie Meadows (or after the session at Ruan's Grand Prix) and dancing with lobbyists at Mingo. Some legislators became lobbyists themselves for untrustworthy private causes. There are a lot of interesting issues in Iowa politics in the 1980s not discussed in this book.

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