

Book Reviews

- ***Blazing the Neoliberal Trail: Urban Political Development in the United States and the United Kingdom.*** Timothy P. R. Weaver. 2015. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. ISBN 978-0-81224-782-4 (cloth).

How did supposedly politically liberal cities come to adopt market-oriented public policies for economic development and enhanced social welfare? In *Blazing the Neoliberal Trail*, Timothy P. R. Weaver answers this question through an ideational and historical institutionalist lens with case studies of the use of Urban Development Corporations in the London Docklands project and the City of Philadelphia's implementation of Enterprise Zones. In the process, he traces the history of these pronounced pro-market ideas through the highest levels of government in both the United Kingdom and the United States. Contrary to intuition, he shows that enterprise zones, also known as empowerment zones, were not a direct result of catering to capital; business was at first lukewarm, if not opposed. Similarly, the policy was fully embraced by President Bill Clinton's New Democrats and Prime Minister Tony Blair's New Labour.

Weaver defines neoliberalism as "a political-economic theory and rhetorical framework that rests on the notion that freedom, justice, and well-being

are best guaranteed by a political-economic system, undergirded by the state, which promotes private property (including via the privatization of state assets), open markets, and free trade and which privileges the interests of financial capital above all" (p. 11). Ultimately, the argument goes, the burden on business through taxation serves as the main driver of urban disinvestment, poverty, unemployment, and their attendant ills that befell cities from the 1970s onward. Like the mantra of the Republican Party today, tax cuts are the magic bullet for growth.

Of particular interest to readers of this journal will be the political-economic history of neoliberalism's progress in the City of Philadelphia. The discussion covers nearly one-third of the book, from 1951 and the takeover of city government by the reform Democrats from solid Republican control, to 2000, with particular emphasis on the administration of Mayor Ed Rendell in the 1990s. In its early stages, neoliberalization was "by default," whereas under Rendell, it was "by design." Weaver traces the causes through three channels: political economic trends such as federal trade policies, lowered aid to cities, and deindustrialization; demographic trends such as white flight and an influx of African Americans just as middle-class jobs for low-skill workers were disappearing; and a fiscal crisis due to increased pressure for public services and ballooning labor costs.

The Tate-Rizzo years (1962–1980) marked the "alienation of economic elites from City Hall" (through extreme tax hikes and public employee benefits), a unified black electorate, and a "solidification of the coalition" between business elites and African Americans. The logic of coalition politics also played a major role in setting the stage for neoliberalism's hold. From 1980 onward, each successive administration consolidated power through the alignment of African Americans, white liberals, and business interests. The limits of coalition politics, as well as severe cuts in federal aid, made Mayor Wilson Goode, the city's first Black mayor, neoliberal by default.

Under Rendell, "services were privatized, unions defeated, and deficits reduced," helping to make the city more appealing to developers and "business-friendly." The creation of the state-controlled Pennsylvania Intergovernmental Cooperation Authority (PICA) with its appointed, not elected, city budgetary oversight, and the implementation of the 10-year tax abatement on new construction further showed the triumph of capital over citizens. It was neoliberalism by design.

Despite the absence of evidence of its effectiveness, neoliberalism marched on under the Rendell administration with the creation of more empowerment

zones. Unfortunately, the empowerment zone tracts fared worse on measures of reducing unemployment than comparable areas of the city between 2000 and 2007. On income, the zones performed even more poorly, declining nearly 12%. For the city as a whole, between 1990 and 2000, median household income declined, the unemployment rate nearly doubled, and poverty rose by nearly seven points to 26.7%. At the same time, the city attracted more and more households making over \$150,000 per year. This number doubled between 2000 and 2010 to reach nearly 5% of the city. Philadelphia succeeded in attracting more rich people, but in the process created even more of the poor.

One does not have to guess that Weaver finds neoliberalism highly distasteful. In the case of the United States, the ideology ignores the structural and historical place of cities and their citizens in urban political development, while denying the forces of global capital, racism, and the unequal distribution of resources in favor of the embrace of “free-market” solutions and a pathology of the poor and working class. While Weaver does, at the end of the book, call for an alternative idea to take root in order for cities to grow in a more equitable fashion, the concluding chapter has no such vision. Given the constraints of rising conservatism and a growing distaste for redistributive policies in the United States and the United Kingdom, if not neoliberalism, what is a politically feasible alternative to bring balanced and sustainable development to urban areas?

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- **Gifford Pinchot: Selected Writings.** Char Miller, ed. 2017. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press. ISBN 978-0-27107-842-7 (paperback).

If E. Digby Baltzell’s assertion that “[t]he governorship of Pennsylvania has proved to be a political graveyard” (1979, 389) is correct, then Gifford Pinchot chose the right trajectory for his political career. He established a national reputation by being at the forefront of the conservation movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He was instrumental in developing programs to educate foresters and in creating national organizations dedicated to scientific management of the wilderness. Further, Pinchot was a close ally of President Theodore Roosevelt, who appointed him as the first director

of the United States Forest Service, where he served from 1905–1910. It was only after establishing his national presence as a conservationist and leading progressive that he decided to enter the “political graveyard” and was elected to nonconsecutive terms as governor of Pennsylvania (1923–1927 and 1931–1935).

Char Miller has written extensively about the legacy of Pinchot as well as the environmental movement. He draws on this background to provide a selection of primary writings from Pinchot that create a comprehensive portrait of concepts behind the conservation movement and the larger progressive political philosophy that housed it. *Gifford Pinchot: Selected Writings* is organized around five topics: forestry, war and peace, governing Pennsylvania, power regulation, and nature writings. Two primary themes emerge from these writings. First, Pinchot made a career of supporting reforms designed to make government operate in the public interest rather than on behalf of concentrated, private beneficiaries. He was a utilitarian who believed that private property should be subject to public control when individuals acted in their short-term economic self-interest at the expense of the long-term benefit of society. Unregulated monopolies and the political machines that protected them were Pinchot’s main targets. He argued that the United States would lose its “political liberty” if it could not create an administrative state that would ensure “industrial liberty.” This was the heart of his second main theme: scientific administration by a strong national government was the only way to protect the public interest. His conservation movement was not based on preserving pristine forests for their own sake. Rather, it was a tool to create an efficient and well-executed plan to ensure a steady supply of wood and wood products to advance the nation’s economy. Private interests looked for a quick profit without concern for replenishing forests. Pinchot believed only government could correct this market failure while at the same time keeping prices low and dealing with corollary environmental problems caused by clear-cutting forests.

Readers of *COMMONWEALTH* would be interested in how these themes applied to Pennsylvania and state politics in general. Pinchot viewed federalism as an impediment to achieving his goals. Almost half a century before E. E. Schattschneider coined the phrase, Pinchot argued that the only way to wrest power from economic interests and party bosses was by expanding the scope of conflict. States had three deficiencies from his perspective. First, they did not have the expertise or training to effectively administer programs in the national interest like forestry. A strong federal bureaucracy was necessary to train and guide subnational employees. Second, Pinchot believed that

many states, particularly in the resource-rich West, were dominated by the industries he sought to regulate. Absent a strong federal presence in fields such as conservation, some states would never adopt programs in the public interest, because their state legislatures were corrupt. Finally, Pinchot believed that there might be some instances in which states would pass good policy. However, given the lack of expertise on behalf of state bureaucracies and the corruption in legislatures, good policies would be stifled at the implementation stage. Pinchot saw a role for the states in issues like conservation as long as Washington, DC assumed the dominant role in the federal partnership. This philosophy extended into broader political questions of the early 1900s. For example, he argued that the federal government should be responsible for relief programs during the Great Depression because it had the power to redistribute resources through a progressive income tax. Again, Pinchot believed that moneyed interests could only be stopped at the federal level because state and local governments were too weak to challenge their power.

Gifford Pinchot used the same political philosophy in his eight years as governor of Pennsylvania. He supported the direct primary as a means to take power from party bosses and return it to average citizens. This worked to his benefit as he successfully ran as an “independent” candidate in the Pennsylvania Republican primary and was elected governor in 1922. He focused on balancing the budget, making government more efficient, and fighting corruption in his two nonconsecutive terms in office. In addition to supporting the direct primary, he advocated for campaign finance limits and “a general revision of election laws to make it harder for the gangsters of Philadelphia and Pittsburgh to steal votes” (p. 152). As governor he applied his centralizing tendencies by having the state assume control of a network of rural roads and assistance for the elderly. He argued that the Commonwealth could more adequately address these issues and administer them more efficiently than local governments. Pinchot’s most notorious act of centralizing power in Pennsylvania occurred after the repeal of Prohibition. An avowed “dry,” he sought to tightly regulate alcohol sales through state-run liquor stores whose proceeds would finance new social programs. However, regulation, not increased revenue, was the primary principle behind centralized liquor sales. Supporters of liquor store privatization will smirk at Pinchot’s claim that the system would provide “no artificial stimulation of demand for liquor. Whisky [*sic*] will be sold by civil service employees with exactly the same amount of salesmanship as is displayed by an automatic postage stamp vending machine” (p. 173).

Collections of speeches and writings often get mired in details that only appeal to true devotees of authors. Char Miller avoids this by providing just

enough detail to explain the rationale behind Pinchot's thinking without becoming repetitive. *Gifford Pinchot: Selected Writings* provides great insight into the conservation movement, Theodore Roosevelt-style progressivism, and Pennsylvania politics. It is well worth reading, if only for the last section where Pinchot shows a surprising ability to engross the reader in tales of the outdoors.

REFERENCE

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