



**Southern Political Science Association**

---

Labyrinths of Power: Political Recruitment in Twentieth-Century Mexico. by Peter H. Smith  
Review by: Karl M. Schmitt

*The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (May, 1980), pp. 626-628

Published by: [Cambridge University Press](#) on behalf of the [Southern Political Science Association](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2130500>

Accessed: 04/02/2014 13:41

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at  
<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Cambridge University Press and Southern Political Science Association are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Journal of Politics*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

count of situations in which individuals care about or are influenced by the behavior of others.

CHARLES E. LUCIER, *University of Iowa*

*Labyrinths of Power: Political Recruitment in Twentieth-Century Mexico.* By PETER H. SMITH. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979. Pp. xvi, 384. \$25.00 cloth, \$9.75 paper.)

The central theme of this work consists of a study of over 6000 office holders in Mexico at the national level. State governors are included because they represent national power rather than regional constituents. The several offices are ranked on a power and prestige scale of eight with the Chamber of Deputies ranked lowest (at one) and President and cabinet members ranked highest (at eight). Office holders are also divided for comparative purposes into three time periods: pre-revolutionary (1900-11), revolutionary (1917-40), and post-revolutionary (1946-71). Within this framework Smith asks the following questions: What are the social origins of office holders? Once having broken into the office holding pattern, what factors determine how high one rises within the system? Are there patterns in political careers? What are the rates of continuity and turnover among office holders? In a concluding section of four chapters Smith raises other questions. He asks if there is a power elite in Mexico, specifically if there is a Millian (C. Wright) connection between political and economic elites. He also investigates the relationship between official party sectors and the Chamber of Deputies, the enforced rules by which one "makes it" in the Mexican political system, and the process of choosing a president and transferring power from one regime to another. For the last he takes us through a fascinating account of the process by which Lopez Portillo succeeded Echeverria in 1976.

Smith's findings have confirmed many of our hunches, settled some of our uncertainties, and left some questions unanswered or only partially answered. Office holders in all periods have come primarily from the middle class, but the revolution opened the door slightly, and mostly at the lower levels, to the lower class, while it gradually shut out the upper class that had held important positions under the Diaz dictatorship. In all periods university education

and professional occupations (law and in recent years economics) have been vital to successful political careers. Given these factors, social and economic backgrounds have had little impact on relative success, once one is within the structure. The major change from the Diaz period occurred in career patterns. Under the dictator, turnover and movement became rare, but in the revolutionary and post-revolutionary periods turnover and movement from office to office have become normal. Smith argues that there has been a "rapid rotation of individuals" within the middle class, not a game of musical chairs as some observers have maintained, nor a circulation of elites in Pareto's sense of social mobility. As a consequence of the constant renewal, office holders after 1911 have been younger than the aged group under Diaz, most now being in their forties and fifties.

Smith also concludes that there is no power elite, because the political and economic elites not only come from different sectors of the middle and upper classes but they pursue different educational patterns, move in separate social circles, and demonstrate hostility and tension toward each other. He does not deny congruence on some basic economic policies, e.g., keeping the masses under control and pursuing economic development in capitalistic terms, but he argues that the political elites espouse these positions not on behalf of the capitalist class, but on behalf of national power and economic growth. He perceives the two elites as sharing some common interests, but locked into a struggle for supremacy in the country.

How can we evaluate the work? Smith makes modest claims for his findings, constantly warns the reader of the tentative nature of his conclusions, and insists on the need for further research. These caveats should be taken seriously. As he points out, there are gaping holes in the data base. For too many office holders we have almost no information except names. Despite these problems I believe that Smith has laid very solid foundations in some areas that further research on the whole will only refine and verify.

I have two problems, however. I have a feeling that an investigation of the economic elites beyond the industrialists that Smith examined will indicate closer ties between the two sectors. A fruitful area might be the banking and credit institutions, where there appears to be some movement of experts between the private and public sectors. If this should prove true, it could be a critical modification of Smith's thesis on the power elite, given the nature of economic *camarillas*. Second, from Smith's analysis I have trouble

understanding how the political elite with its enormous turnover in personnel maintains the stability of the political system. How is continuity in broad goals and policies maintained? Why has the flamboyant type of leader of the 1920s and early 1930s disappeared? I suspect that a study of political *camarillas* (an institution mentioned occasionally but never probed) and of the socialization process undergone by officeholders might give us some clues.

In sum, this a major contribution to our understanding of Mexican history and politics. It has not cleared up all the mysteries nor given us definitive answers. But it is a giant step in the right direction.

KARL M. SCHMITT, *The University of Texas at Austin*

*Air Pollution, Human Health, and Public Policy.* By CHARLES T. STEWART, JR. (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1979. Pp. x, 148. \$15.50.)

*The Social Gamble: Determining Acceptable Levels of Air Quality.* By RICHARD J. TOBIN. (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1979. Pp. xvi, 174. \$17.00.)

Tobin's book is an excellent and careful documentation of the administrative politics of air quality regulation. It "... examines and analyzes how the federal government, once it had decided to abate air pollution, has determined the risks associated with this pollution, and translated a vaguely stated preference for clean air into a precise definition." (xiv) The study is focused on the administrative and regulatory activities of the Environmental Protection Agency and its antecedents, and attention is confined to only one class of pollutants, the sulfur oxides.

Chapter 2 is devoted to the scientific problems of measuring air pollution and relating it to human health. Chapters 3 through 9 give a history of the politics of air pollution control, beginning with the 1948 Donora sulfur dioxide disaster and culminating in the Clean Air Act of 1963 and the Clean Air Amendments of 1970. EPA efforts to set up scientific criteria are described, leading to an important draft report in 1972. This report was followed by the 1972-73 gas crisis and energy emergency and a resulting attack by the coal industry and OBM on the EPA's SO<sub>2</sub> standards. The long struggle that ensued and its outcome in the Clean Air Amendments of 1976 and 1977 are described in detail.