

BOOK REVIEW

The Government of New Jersey: An Introduction *Richard J. Connors & William J. Dunham* University Press of America, Lanham, Maryland, 1984. Pp. viii, 243.

Too often the structure of government is ignored. The media emphasizes the personalities who have shaped events but disregards the medium that allows those parties to effectuate their plans. Society, therefore, perceives through newspapers, television and books only those individuals who have reached the pinnacle of government's ziggurat. Most citizens fail to see those people as players in the structure of government. Richard Connors and William Dunham have written a book that emphasizes structure over personalities and gives the reader a clear picture of New Jersey's government.

The book is divided into eight chapters. The first, offers a broad overview of the land, people and economy of the state. In this chapter the reader discovers who were New Jersey's original inhabitants (the Lenni Lenape, a branch of the Delaware Indian nation), how New Jersey received its name (in honor of its first lord proprietor, Sir George Carteret, who defended the Isle of Jersey during England's seventeenth century civil war), and the percentage of Jerseyans of Hispanic origin (6.7%). Along with helping the reader win Trivial Pursuit, this chapter may dispel misconceptions about the Garden State. Connors and Dunham show that there is a lot more to New Jersey than belching smokestacks, oil refineries, railroad sidings, and auto graveyards. The state has forests, farms, small towns, and the unspoiled beauty of the Appalachian foothills and the Atlantic coast.

The second chapter examines the New Jersey Constitution. The authors present a history of New Jersey's two former constitutions, that of 1776 and that of 1844, and also of the deliberative process that led to the present Constitution adopted in 1947. The authors point out that the Constitution of 1947 is considered a model by experts on state government for the way it framed the articles dealing with the executive and the judiciary.

The remainder of *The Government of New Jersey* is dedicated to an examination of the major institutions of New Jersey's government. There are chapters on the legislature, political parties and

interest groups, the executive, the judiciary, public finance in New Jersey, and county and municipal government. Each of these chapters offers a brief historical background of its subject and then sets out the structure of the institution. Interspersed throughout this book are case studies that reveal the workings of the various bodies. For example, in the chapter "The New Jersey Legislature," the authors examine the history of a legislative proposal that established a study commission to investigate the feasibility of acquiring the battleship U.S.S. New Jersey as a floating museum. The use of these examples provides the reader with a better understanding of the subject.

Connors and Durham attempt to reveal the character of the legislative process by surveying the types of bills that the legislature has rejected. Among the rejected bills was a bill to outlaw motorized skateboards, and one requiring state regulation of all toilets on licensed boats. The book notes that one of the more exotic bills to be "dumped into the hopper" and forgotten was one creating a study commission to determine if the State could use left-over seafood as fertilizer. While this overview of rejected bills is interesting, it may misrepresent the real work of the New Jersey Legislature. The authors fail to emphasize the important environmental legislation enacted in New Jersey, such as the Environmental Cleanup and Responsibility Act.* Connors and Dunham all too often concentrate on entertaining subjects and forego discussion of current critical issues.

Furthermore, *The Government of New Jersey* is in some places outdated. For example, the authors use the actions taken by the 198th New Jersey Legislature, which covered the years 1978 and 1979, to reveal to the reader the workings of the legislature. This, however, does not pose a pervasive problem with the work. The authors use a recent article from the *New Jersey Reporter* to study the staff and style of Governor Kean. The interspersion of outside articles and commentaries does enhance the readability of this book.

A particularly interesting chapter of *The Government of New Jersey* is "Political Participation in New Jersey: Voting, Parties, Interest Groups." The makeup of this chapter is typical of the entire book. The authors begin with a broad overview of the

* See Note regarding this law in this issue.

subject, noting that thirty-one percent of New Jersey's voting population do not even register to vote. The chapter then focuses on political parties; their structure, influence and importance in New Jersey. The chapter ends with an analysis of political interest groups in New Jersey. This is one of the most edifying areas of the work. The authors set out the categories of interest groups: ad hoc, episodic, intra-organization, full-time, and intra-governmental, and analyze the purposes and influences of each type. The targets, strategies and controls of the interest groups are then viewed using historical examples of the typical pattern.

New Jersey has a problem with its image. Even presidential candidate Gary Hart chafed the state during his campaign. This negative picture may be dispelled if we know more about our state and how it works. Connors and Dunham have set into motion that educational process with *The Government of New Jersey*. This work, clearly-written and risible, will re-educate New Jerseyans to think positively about their state.

Thomas J. Hurley