



Left Coast City: Progressive Politics in San Francisco, 1975-1991

By Richard Edward DeLeon

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When Art Agnos campaigned for mayor of San Francisco in 1987, he articulated and defended the "left" isms—liberalism, environmentalism, and populism. He won.

Seeing Agnos as a defender of slowgrowth vs. progrowth, the city's progressives had high hopes. But to their disappointment, in the wake of the passage of Proposition M—the most restrictive growth control legislation of any large U.S. city—Agnos supported waterfront development and proposals to build a new baseball stadium in China Basin and a large residential and business development in Mission Bay. In 1991 Agnos ran for reelection. He lost.

Left Coast City provides insight into how San Francisco's progressive coalition developed between 1975 and 1991, what stresses emerged to cause splintering within the coalition, and how the coalition fell apart in the 1991 mayoral campaign.

Focusing on San Francisco's turbulent political history, non-conformist traditions, and ethnic and cultural diversity, political scientist Richard DeLeon analyzes the successes and failures of the progressive movement as it topples the business-dominated progrowth regime, imposes stringent controls on growth and development, and achieves political control of city hall.

Although the movement has achieved national recognition as a possible vanguard of social and political change in this country, DeLeon argues that a new progressive regime has not yet emerged to replace the defunct progrowth regime. Having helped to create chaos out of order, progressive leaders now face the task of creating order out of chaos.

"What the city has now is, at best, an antiregime, a transitional political order set up defensively to block the Lazarus-like re-emergence of the old progrowth regime," DeLeon writes. "Such an order cannot last." The key to survival of the progressive movement, he contends, is creation of a progressive urban regime, where public and private entities function together.

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Editorial Review

Review

"An outstanding case study of big city electoral politics that perceptively analyzes the nuts and bolts of constructing a progressive governing coalition and illuminates the dynamics and contradictions of contemporary urban liberalism."—**John Mollenkopf**, author of *The Contested City and A Phoenix in the Ashes* "First-rate. It's a winner. DeLeon is a skillful writer. His work is clear and uncluttered by jargon. At the same time, he displays a remarkable ability to integrate seemingly diverse theoretical strands. . . . His analysis of coalition politics and of the referendum process shows him to be a master of the regime concept and to be acutely aware of the tensions within populist alliances. He sees the business community as composed of diverse sectors, not as a monolith. And he puts the mobility of capital into perspective, acknowledging its importance but showing its limits as well—particularly in an advantaged location of the kind San Francisco enjoys. This is a very sophisticated work."—**Clarence Stone**, author of *Regime Politics: Governing Atlanta, 1946-1988* "DeLeon treats the process of regime formation as an open and contingent historical process—as it should be treated. He writes in a clear and lucid style. This book is a significant contribution to the literature on urban politics. Its audience will extend well beyond political scientists, encompassing urban sociologists, historians, geographers, political economists, and planners."—**Michael Peter Smith**, author of *City, State, and Market: The Political Economy of Urban Society*

From the Back Cover

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About the Author

Richard DeLeon is founder and director of San Francisco State University's Public Research Institute.

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