

*An Elusive Unity*

*Urban Democracy and Machine Politics in Industrializing America*

By James J. Connolly

(Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2010. Pp. xiv, 264. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$39.95.)

James J. Connolly's *An Elusive Unity* considers a topic that has been examined frequently by specialists in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era: the rise of political machines in an America being rapidly transformed by industrialization and urbanization. With a nod to Robert Merton, Alexander Callow, Amy Bridges, Bruce Stave, and an assortment of political scientists and historians who have written perceptively about the big city bosses who dominated the urban scene for decades, Connolly retells the stories of New York City's Boss Tweed, Chicago's Johnny Powers, and other notorious local political leaders. Despite traversing much familiar ground, the author manages to enrich our understanding of machine politics through his creative use of primary sources (including novels, memoirs, journalistic accounts, political cartoons, and photographs) and careful examination of the relationship between political parties and other groups that played important roles in elections and local governance in American cities. Chapters dealing with workingmen's organizations and reform-minded clubwomen explain cogently how crafty bosses withstood challenges to their party dominance, just as another chapter recounts the ways that professional politicians used newspapers, popular

magazines, and other media to mount an effective defense of their value as brokers between competing interests in polyglot urban settings. A brief epilogue discusses the enduring popularity of Edwin O'Connor's *The Last Hurrah* (1956) and assesses that novel's importance in shaping scholarly and popular perceptions of bosses and machines.

Connolly situates his analysis of bosses and machines within a larger discussion of the tensions that have characterized American politics for more than two centuries. His examination of competing interest groups in a small sample of big cities suggests that similar developments occurred throughout industrializing America. Thus, the rise of big city bosses reflected a rearrangement of local institutions and the transformation of political practices, signaling the triumph of pluralism over a republicanism based upon civic virtue and moral order. According to the author, the American politics that developed after the Civil War—seen first in the political machines that gained control in large eastern and midwestern cities—reinforced masculine leadership, rewarded party discipline, and recognized ethnic and class differences, while business leaders, women, and labor leaders raised objections to the emerging political order. The

rejection of socialism and an inadequate attention to class interests in the cities led to a reform politics limited to structural changes and efficient management of resources. The rise of political machines, which proved to be imperfect tools for reconciling diversity and representative government, constituted the acceptance of a flawed pluralism and the loss of a republican ideal. As Connolly reminds us in this thoughtful reconsideration of machine politics, Amer-

icans' chronic disaffection with American politics and government reflects both a lingering romantic reverence for republican ideals and a determination to nurture a more open, inclusive political order.

ROGER BILES is professor of history at Illinois State University. His most recent book is *The Fate of Cities: Urban America and the Federal Government, 1945-2000* (2011).



### *Ohio's Kingmaker*

#### *Mark Hanna, Man and Myth*

By William T. Horner

(Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010. Pp. xi, 367. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$60.00.)

William T. Horner's detailed portrayal of Mark Hanna aims to correct misperceptions of Hanna's role in both Ohio and national politics during the closing decades of the nineteenth century. These misperceptions are the result, the author contends, of inadequately researched contemporary news coverage repeated without investigation by modern journalists, as well as of intentional misstatements by the Hearst newspapers and other political opponents of Hanna.

Hanna has been portrayed as the puppeteer controlling the actions of Republican presidential candidate William McKinley in 1896. Horner shows, however, that Charles Dawes and other major campaign funders also played major roles in McKinley's

campaign and that the candidate made several important decisions against Hanna's advice, including the decision to run a "front porch" campaign. The author notes as well that Dawes and others "were far more influential than Hanna once McKinley became president" (p. 307).

Another often-repeated misperception, Horner tells us, is the notion that Hanna created the assessment method of campaign funding, a practice by which the campaign told corporations what proportion of their corporate assets they must contribute in order to stay in the administration's good graces. The author shows that this method had already been used in the Benjamin Harrison campaign and argues that the large sums Hanna