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BOOK REVIEW

PENNSYLVANIA AND THE LIQUOR BUSINESS By M. Nelson McGeary, Penna. Valley Publishers, Inc., State College, Pennsylvania, 1948.

This is an interesting and friendly story of the organization, development and operation of the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board, which the writer correctly describes as "one of the most important public bodies in Pennsylvania" and "the largest purchaser of liquor in the world".

The author acknowledges his indebtedness to the "many of the Board's staff who helped him collect material", and therein, it seems, is one of the defects of the book. It seems to be too much of an "inside job". The book would have been much more interesting and at least just as accurate if the author had, more often than it seems that he did, consulted the vendors and the licensees. They frequently have knowledge of the Liquor Board's operation and suggestions as to its improvement which are very much worthwhile.

It is rather astonishing to read in a book written by one who has made such a careful study of the organization and operation of the Liquor Control Board the statement that "the quota law is rather ambiguous in its reference to clubs". There is nothing ambiguous in the quota law as it was passed by the legislature. It is just unfortunate that some judges have declared that the law in the districts over which they preside shall not be what the legislature declared it to be but what they (the judges) think it ought to be or perhaps, desire it to be.

The author has also failed to discover or at least to record that the Liquor Board has "an atmosphere" which, during the existence of the Board, has been changed completely for the better and for the worse. The "atmosphere" of the Board has a subtle and powerful effect upon the efficiency of its enforcement and the fairness of its dealings. The character of the Board's atmosphere is determined largely by the character, attitude and personality of the members of the Board.

It is surprising to read that "only rarely are the heads of bureaus and main divisions brought together for a general staff meeting". At one time such meetings were held regularly and frequently and the most important policies of the Board were determined as a result of such meetings.

The author complains that the secretary of the Board is merely a secretary and recommends that he be given the power and authority of "executive director". This is not a new idea but its age has not rendered it less sinister and pernicious. It is attended by the imminent danger that the affairs of the Board would be con-

trolled by a political axe man operating behind a front of respectability afforded by the members of the Board.

The "executive directors" of the Board should be the Board members. The supervision and control of the operations of the Board are full time jobs for three men. The members of the Board should be men who will devote *all of their time* working tirelessly, fearlessly and fairly for the control of a "socially hazardous business."

The Liquor Control Board conducts one of the largest businesses in Pennsylvania and is one of the state's largest and most powerful law enforcement agencies. It is the agent of the people, and the people should know many things about it. The best way to learn these things is to read this book.

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