Louis D. Brandeis and the Making of Regulated Competition, 1900–1932

This book provides an innovative interpretation of industrialization and state building in the United States. Most scholars cast the politics of industrialization in the Progressive Era as a narrow choice between breaking up large corporations and regulating them. Gerald Berk reveals a third way, regulated competition. In this framework, the government steered economic development away from concentrated power by channeling competition from predation to improvements in products and production processes. Louis Brandeis conceptualized regulated competition and introduced it into public debate. Political entrepreneurs in Congress enacted many of Brandeis’s proposals into law. The Federal Trade Commission enlisted business and professional associations to make regulated competition workable. The commercial printing industry showed how it could succeed. And 30 percent of manufacturing industries used regulated competition to improve economic performance. In order to make sense of regulated competition, Berk provides a new theory of institutions he calls “creative syncretism,” which stresses the capacity of creative actors to decompose and recombine institutional parts.

Gerald Berk is currently Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Oregon. His first book, Alternative Tracks: The Constitution of American Industrial Order, 1870–1916 (1994), was awarded the American Political Science Association’s J. David Greenstone Award for Best Book in Politics and History. He is the recipient of fellowships from the American Council of Learned Societies, the Hagley Museum and Library, the American Philosophical Society, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. His work has been published in many venues, including Studies in American Political Development, Theory and Society, Politics and Society, the Journal of Policy History, and Social Science History.
Louis D. Brandeis and the Making of Regulated Competition,
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Acknowledgments

I was fortunate to begin and end this project with wonderful collaborators. My interest in Brandeis started many years ago in discussions with Roger Karapin, Tony Levitas, Gretchen Ritter, and Chuck Sabel. They moved on. Happily, I got stuck and now have a chance to look back with gratitude for their inspiration. This book also ended with two collaborators: Marc Schneiberg and Dennis Galvan. Marc’s passion for methodological rigor, rich data, and theoretical precision has had a profound influence on this book. Some of our collaborative work, previously published in Politics and Society, is reproduced in Chapter 6. Dennis’s commitment to understanding human resilience under the most challenging of circumstances prodded me to think more deeply and broadly about my theoretical commitments. Together, we have attempted to rethink institutions as usable instruments, rather than confining iron cages, which are played creatively by their inhabitants. This book is deeply indebted to that work.

I was fortunate to work on this project at the Hagley Museum and Library. Its archives, conferences, and people have been indispensable to my work. Phil Scranton has been a wonderful friend, supporter, and mentor, whose work blazed a path for this book. Carol Lockman and Roger Horwitz made my many stays in Wilmington enjoyable and productive. Michael Nash’s help in the archives was critical to the success of my research. Ken Lipartito and David Sicilia organized a terrific conference and edited volume, which gave me a chance to test Chapter 3 in a supportive and critical environment.

My colleagues at the University of Oregon have supported this book in countless ways – by listening to obscure stories about the history of cost accounting, by offering words of support when things weren’t going...
well, and by helping to sharpen weak prose and confused ideas. In political science, I’m especially grateful to Deborah Baumgold, Dan Goldrich, Dick Kraus, Ron Mitchell, Lars Skalnes, Julie Novkov, Lennie Feldman, Joe Lowndes, and Craig Parsons. In the department of history, I thank Jim Mohr and Jeff Ostler for welcoming me into their fellowship and generously reading the manuscript. One couldn’t ask for better colleagues and friends.

Anyone who knows the scholarship of Gary Herrigel, Chuck Sabel, and Jonathan Zeitlin will see their influence all over this book. I am grateful for their imagination, generosity, helpful suggestions, and friendship. They are models of creative and engaged scholarship, committed to a more just and emancipated world.

Stephen Skowronek and Karen Orren have been incredibly generous over the life of this project. It is a cliché to say that one criticizes the work that one admires the most. In this case it is true. I hope I have engaged their scholarship with the high regard in which I hold it and advanced the project that they have done so much to cultivate.

Many other people have read chapters or papers, listened to ideas, and offered help in conceptualizing tricky issues and conducting research. I am grateful to Steve Amberg, Chris Ansell, Richard Bensel, Amy Bridges, Coleen Dunlavy, Roy Edwards, Archon Fung, Mary Furner, Henrick Glimstedt, Terry Gourvish, Howell Harris, Ellen Herman, Richard John, Tom Johnson, Robert Johnston, Bill Keith, Lane Kenworthy, Bruce Kucklick, Naomi Lamoreaux, Walter Licht, Jim Livingston, Ned Lorenz, Chris McKenna, Chick Perrow, Dan Raff, Dave Robertson, Jeff Sklansky, Mark Stern, Philippa Strum, Fred Thompson, Jessica Wang, Kari Whittenberger-Keith, Frank Wilkinson, Jim Wooten, and three anonymous reviewers for Cambridge University Press.

I am also grateful to the participants in a number of small conferences and research seminars, sponsored by the following departments and programs: the Program in the History of Science at Oregon State University, the Institute for Governmental Studies at the University of California at Berkeley, the Department of History at the University of Pennsylvania, the Department of Political Science and the Atkinson Graduate School of Management at Willamette University, the Scandinavian Consortium on Organizations at Stanford University, the Center for Critical and Transnational Studies at the University of Oregon, the seminar on American capitalism in the Department of Sociology at the University of Arizona, the ESRC Centre for Small Business Research at Cambridge University, the Business History Unit of the Centre for Risk
Acknowledgments

and Regulation at the London School of Economics, and the Stockholm School of Economics.

In addition to the Hagley Museum and Library, I thank the American Council of Learned Societies, the American Philosophical Society, and the National Endowment for the Humanities for their generous support. I am also grateful to archivists and librarians in the National Archives, the Library of Congress, the Federal Trade Commission Library, and the University of Oregon Library.

Peter, Lisa, Stefan, and Emma Berg made it possible to spend long periods in Washington, D.C., archives without missing my family too much. I’m forever grateful for their friendship, humor, and support.

I am grateful to the editors and staff at Cambridge University Press – to Lew Bateman for his patient guidance, and to Emily Spangler, Ernie Haim, Mark Fox, and James Dunn for the creativity and hard work it takes to bring a book to life. I also thank Beth Morel, David Estrin, and Mary Harper for their terrific work in editing and indexing this book.

I’ve dedicated this book to my life’s spiritual partner, Karen Giese, who keeps me laughing regardless of the circumstances. More than anyone I know, she lives the aspirations spelled out in this book: self-reflection, craftsmanship, generosity, and deliberation in everyday life. My sons deserve special credit for their imagination and endurance. Adrian was present at the birth of this book; Jacob hardly knows life without it. Though animated by talents very different from my own, they both share the passion that went into this project.