



The Dealmakers of Downstate Illinois: Paul Powell, Clyde L. Choate, John H. Stelle

Robert E Hartley

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Many people are unaware that from 1945 to 1975, downstate lawmakers dominated the Illinois political arena. In *The Dealmakers of Downstate Illinois*, Robert E. Hartley details the lives and contributions of three influential southern Illinois politicians, Paul Powell, Clyde Choate, and John Stelle. He describes how these “dealmakers” were able to work with Democrats and Republicans throughout the state to bring jobs and facilities to their region. Using a variety of coalitions, they maintained downstate political strength in the face of growing Chicago influence.

Hartley traces the personal histories of Powell, Choate, and Stelle, shows how they teamed up to advance a downstate political agenda, and reviews their challenges and successes. Beginning with an account of early experiences, including the battlefield courage that earned Choate the Medal of Honor as well as Stelle’s World War I experience and later entrepreneurship, the book continues with an exploration of the groundwork for their collaborative legislative agenda and their roles in the growth of Southern Illinois University and the passage of income tax legislation. Hartley reviews the importance of Powell’s relationship with Governor Stratton, Choate’s leadership of the 1972 Democratic National Convention and his relationships with Governor Walker and with Chicago interests.

The Dealmakers of Downstate Illinois is a vivid, straightforward tale of fighting in the legislative chambers, backstabbing behind the scenes, and trading special favors for votes in pursuit of not only personal gain but also the advancement of a regional agenda.

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