Fiorello La Guardia Ethnicity, Reform, and Urban Development Book Review

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Summary

La Guardia was an ambitious person who desired prominence. However, he also advocated for the poor, oppressed and forgotten. He achieved both through persistence and hard work. The book Fiorello La Guardia – Ethnicity, Reform, and Urban Development Second Edition by Ronald H. Bayor examines the life of a mayor who became one of New York's many renowned leaders but who also facilitated some significant changes in the history of the region. The book focuses on the numerous events and instances of the mayor's life regarding his individual and professional downtimes, as well as his ultimate breakthrough and his acquisition of a place in the history of America. The book also explores the broader topics of towns during periods of stress, the capacity of the mayors to enhance and improve urban life, and the origins of public aid for the cities (Bayor, 2017).

The story covered in the book has significant features, such as the connection of the urban and New York story to that of the country and the subtopics of concern, such as Progressivism, the New Deal, the Depression, and World War II. It also features sixteen new images of the city shots, La Guardia, and his contemporaries, all spaced throughout the book. A timeline of significant dates in La Guardia's life provided the key to the crucial events that took place in the history of the city, state, and nation. Notably, the book contains the key terms as well as study questions for each chapter written, and last but not least, a complete and up-to-date bibliographical essay is also featured (Bayor, 2017).

Fiorello Henry La Guardia offered a distinctive response to the social and economic upheavals that took place in his time. Henry bridged the period between the early years marked by protests against the industrial sector and the later reform outbursts witnessed in the 1930s. He participated in all significant concerns and events in his periods, such as progressivism, immigration and ethnicity, the war against corruption, World War 1, the nativist and conservative reaction, the economic collapse in the 1930s, New Deal reforms by Franklin Roosevelt and World War II with its immediate results. The book also talks about his generational bridging role among reformers. He also acted as a link between the values of the Old and New Worlds, western and eastern America, and the native-born and the immigrants. Consequently, he also connected the reform of Middle America's farmer-labour unions with the New York City immigrant reform norm represented by the socialist-inclined garment groups (Bayor, 2017).

From the book, it is evident that America, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, had apparently intractable challenges ranging from high rates of poverty, political corruption, labour strife, ethnic and racial conflicts, and massive immigration to urban issues entailing inadequate infrastructure and housing. Additionally, the country's wealthiest individuals possessed enormous political and economic influence to the detriment of ordinary workers and citizens. A few people intervened in this situation with the aim of bringing positive change; La Guardia happened to be among these significant figures (Bayor, 2017).

Research Findings

Henry's intervention was timely and had the right background. As an urban reformer, a multilingual spokesman who had just arrived in town, a bitterly honest leader, a dynamic figure in Congress and a representative of the campaigns against corruption and reaching out to the poor and oppressed, La Guardia became a figure of his era as well as an illustration of an energized and honest politician who was capable of positively impacting the community as well as setting the pace and standards for future generations. He was a shrewd politician who was very well aware of the ethnic concerns in his city; he understood the winning concepts and used his power for the common good (Bayor, 2017).

Other than serving as a bridge between various generations of reformers, from the Progressives to the New Dealers, Henry also facilitated a better understanding and know-how of the significance of reforms in the United States and the campaigns that still shape the nation. Reaching his peak of power as the mayor of New York during the period of the Great Depression and leading close to another change-oriented force, President Franklin Roosevelt, Henry was able to establish a close New York-federal relationship, which improved the city greatly and became a guideline for further cooperation (Bayor, 2017).

At this stance, it is ironic that the program worked on the working-class blacks as a result of the persistent faith in the federal concepts that facilitated America's stability in racial cases. While the working and poor-class African Americans were concerned about jobs, education, decent homes and secure homes, they cared less about antagonism and racial discrimination. They offer a counterbalance in the social field to the culture and political vigour of the black middle class. La Guardia fought against ethnicity while embracing the massive immigrants into the city. As a mayor, he coupled up with the president and influenced some of the major reforms that took place during the era of Franklin Roosevelt. He fulfilled his personal desire to gain prominence while checking on the issues that concerned the general public in his area (Bayor, 2017).

Historical Background

The collaboration led to improvements in infrastructure, such as bridges, housing, roads, and parks. Notably, there were improvements in the labour sector as more jobs became available, hence

increasing employment levels. This was mainly due to the city leadership and federal largesse. The development of these, among many other sectors in New York City, enshrined Henry as the best leader the city ever had. He was elected three times and thus oversaw the region during the periods of Depression and War, when he found himself amidst other significant events of the times. Most historians claim that he is akin to the history of the first half of the twentieth century due to his considerable participation and involvement in numerous important issues and events in his lifetime (Bayor, 2017).

References

Bayor, R. (2017). *Fiorella La Guardia – Ethnicity, Reform, and Urban Development* (2nd ed., p. 224). New York: Wiley-Blackwell.