

# POLITICAL BOOKNOTES

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**A Better Fog: Herbicides and Human Rights.** Carol Van Strum. *Sierra Club*, \$14.95.

**A Piece of My Mind.** Andrew M. Greeley. *Doubleday*, \$13.95.

**America Wants to Know: The Issues and the Answers for the Eighties.** George Gallup, Craig Norback. *A & W*, \$19.95. Gallup's poll may have identified the 100 most burning issues of the '80s but this book quickly dulls the appetite for information. Four hundred-plus "experts," mostly college professors, repetitiously define and redefine the basics of inflation, non-cholesterol diets or the Supreme Court's certiorari process. Certain specifics discussed, such as tax law or Social Security, are already obsolete, overtaken by legislative events. But a patient reader will find some intriguing ideas clearly articulated, such as how government regulations, personnel requirements, hospital associations, and incompetent hospital administrators make health care more expensive.

—Pat Martin

**American Diplomacy and Emergent Patterns.** Kenneth W. Thompson. *University Press of America*, \$11.50.

**The American Opportunity.** Edwin Hartrich. *Macmillan*, \$17.95.

**The Bells of the Kremlin: An Experience in Communism.** Arvo Tuominen. *University Press of New England*, \$22.50.

**Capital Taxation.** Martin Feldstein. *Harvard University*, \$40.

**The Confidence Gap: Business, Labor, and Government in the Public Mind.** Seymour Martin Lipset, William Schneider. *Free Press*, \$19.95. Those who can withstand the unremitting parade of poll results will find this book a convincing and occasionally fascinating confirmation of Jimmy Carter's observation that there is a "crisis of confidence" in American

institutions. The authors conclude that Americans are growing increasingly upset with the "competition for power and profit motivated mainly by self-interest" among the leaders of business, labor, government, and other special-interest groups. That the public seems ready to reject the politics of interest-group lobbying, is a timely observation for the gathering horde of presidential candidates already paying their regards to everyone from the AFL-CIO to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

—Richard Meyer

**The Cuban Threat.** Carla Anne Robbins. *McGraw-Hill*, \$19.95.

**Dangerous Currents: The State of Economics.** Lester Thurow. *Random House*, \$16.95.

**Decadent Societies.** Robert M. Adams. *North Point*, \$15.

**Deduct This Book** J. Peter Segall. *Involvement Group Press*, \$6. Peter Segall shows how it's possible to coordinate liberal principles with financial well-being when filling out your tax form: not one cent of taxes for nuclear warheads, but thousands in deductions for solarizing your home. But the reverse of this argument is that if we endorse government policies like welfare, we should support it by cashing in IRA accounts prematurely to pump more tax revenue into the system. A noble idea, but one which most readers will balk at.

—James Gibney

**Distant Water.** William W. Warner. *Atlantic—Little, Brown*, \$17.95. For anyone who read *Beautiful Swimmers*, there will be no surprise in learning that its author has produced another fascinating and gracefully written book. What is surprising is that part of his tale is an unusual story of effective government action—how the Fishing Conservation and Management Act of 1976 rescued our fishing grounds from an imminent danger of depletion.

Another surprise is that among the fishing boats of different nations in which the author sailed during the course of his research, a Soviet ship and its crew turned out to be not only the most engaging but the most impressive, neither evil or inept, as so many of us in the West tend to imagine them.

—Charles Peters

**Doctor for the Prosecution: A Fighting Surgeon Takes the Stand.** Richard Chodoff, M.D. *Putnam*, \$14.95.

**The Good Years: Your Life in the Twenty-First Century.** Caroline Bird. *Dutton*, \$15.95. This is a rambling and unfocused pep talk for the elderly and soon-to-be that draws on personal reminiscences and interviews that elicit such pungent observations as, life is "a voyage of discovery through stormy seas." The book is described as a "realistic—yet optimistic—look at what the 21st century holds for the adults of the 1980s." But realism here is in short supply. Bird provides role models of the "ageless"—a parade of celebs like Bill Paley, Armand Hammer, and Eleanor Roosevelt that she admits are "a privileged lot."

—Nina Easton

**The Insanity Plea.** William Winslade, Judy Ross. *Scribner's*, \$15.95.

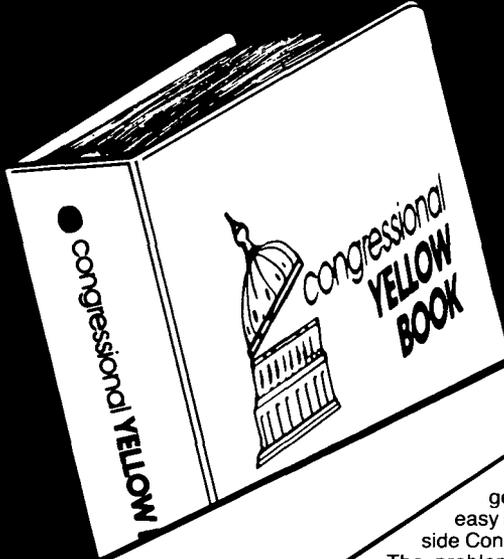
**Lowenstein: Acts of Courage and Belief.** Gregory Stone, Douglas Lowenstein, eds. *Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich*, \$18.95/\$9.95.

**Make Believe: The Story of Nancy and Ronald Reagan.** Lawrence Leamer. *Harper & Row*, \$14.95.

**The Media Monopoly.** Ben H. Bagdikian. *Beacon*, \$14.75.

**New Force on the Left: Tom Hayden and the Campaign Against Corporate America.** John H. Bunzel. *Hoover Institution Press*, \$6.95. Hayden deserves a weightier and fairer critique than the one provided by this short book. Its author can't

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seem to decide whether what bothers him is that Hayden is still a radical (fake!) or is genuinely mainstream (hypocrite!). Such a dilemma spawns sentences like this: "Hayden's arguments for the soundness of Economic Democracy rest on his conviction that what he proposes is right for the American people." About whom is this *not* true?

Bunzel sees Hayden's career as a straight line from New Frontier radical to Maoist to TV-age machine pol. What he misses is that in his Maoist period, Hayden, like so many others, was rushed along by events. The real connection is between the early Students for a Democratic Society and Hayden's current Campaign for Economic Democracy. SDS's 1962 Port Huron Statement is as hopeful and open a document as you'll find (if somewhat naive and snobbish). Both it and current calls for economic democracy fall within the indigenous American tradition of every worker dreaming to be his own boss, in control of his own life. Practical problems abound, certainly, but Hayden should be applauded for trying to translate his dreams into *electable* reality.

—Michael Waldman

**The Next Economy.** Paul Hawkins. *Holt, Rinehart, and Winston*, \$14.50.

**Paradoxes of Power: The Military Establishment in the Eighties.** Adam Yarmolinsky, Gregory Foster. *Indiana University Press*, \$15.

**The World After Oil: The Shifting Axis of Power and Wealth.** Bruce Nussbaum. *Simon & Schuster*, \$15.95.

**Risk by Choice: Regulating Health and Safety in the Workplace.** W. Kip Vicusi. *Harvard University Press*, \$18.50. Vicusi, the deputy director of the Council on Wage and Price Stability for Carter, is from the school of economist-regulatory reformers to whom cost-benefit analysis is the high totem of rational

decision-making. The flaws of that approach are graphically illustrated in his elaborate argument that workers pick and choose among jobs based on an assessment of the health risks they face (hence the title). The notion strains credulity, given an economy where high unemployment is endemic and information about the actual health risks workers face is routinely withheld by their employers, as was the case for decades with asbestos.

Still, the book is succinct and forcefully argued, and worth reading to gain a better understanding of the mind-set now governing regulatory policy in Washington.

—Ronald Brownstein

**The Next American Frontier.** Robert Reich. *Times*, \$14.95. The thesis of this important and provocative book is that America's major industries—particularly steel, automobiles, and other heavy manufacturers—are doomed in their current form, given a global economy in which countries with lower wages can duplicate our high-volume, standardized production techniques. Japan is not our only nemesis; Korea, Singapore, and other competitors wait in the wings. Yet rather than move toward a "flexible production" economy that emphasizes highly skilled workers and specialized products, Reich argues that America's business, labor, and government leaders are resisting the changes that could meet the challenge. Such recalcitrance is best illustrated by the efforts of management and labor in the steel industry to throw up import barriers rather than reinvest in new equipment or accept lower wages.

Reich excels in analyzing the reasons for our economy's predicament. His chapter tracing the rise of modern corporate management is a fascinating bit of social and economic history. The book's best chapter describes in devastating detail the proliferation of "paper entrepreneurialism," by which corporate executives have forsaken innovation and long-term investment strategies for mergers, ac-

counting tricks, and other non-productive means of impressing stockholders. Reich is not blinded by many traditional liberal prejudices; for example, he recognizes the contributing role unions have played in our economy's decline.

Nonetheless, Reich's triumph is a qualified one. While some of his policy prescriptions are ingenious, others are unsatisfyingly vague. More troubling are his occasional lapses into conventional wisdom. For example, his case for a new emphasis on "human capital" is compelling. But it's disappointing that in analyzing the failure of our education system Reich falls back on the old standby that we haven't given our schools enough money, even though educational spending has kept well abreast of inflation and some of the nation's worst schools are also the most expensive. Reich also shares a bias common among those on the left—manufacturing jobs are so "tedious and menial" that if workers can't be handsomely compensated, the jobs really aren't worth saving.

But Reich succeeds admirably in identifying our economy's underlying problems and the failure of current policies to address them, and he poses the central question: What must we do to make our economy grow and prosper in an increasingly competitive world? Protectionism is not the answer, nor is fine-tuning with monetary and fiscal policies. Reich is sublimely right that the key lies in politicizing the difficult economic decisions coming about sharing sacrifices and equitably parceling out the resulting benefits. A panel of "experts," something like a refurbished Reconstruction Finance Corporation, could make these decisions more easily than they could be made in the contentious arena of national politics. But Reich is enough of an optimist to believe that the democratic process can rise to the occasion—and enough of a realist to know that people won't accept those hard choices unless they've helped make them.

—Phil Keisling