

because they are nihilistically opposed to traditional bases of intelligible decision-making, are also ahistorical — that is, they take place *outside* history. He may, like Feuer, claim that student movements disrupt the generational equilibrium," and are *ipso facto* "a sign of a sickness, a malady in society." Distrusting the opinions of the participants, he searches instead for broader theories of precipitant cultural change.

It might be said that a struggle persists between these two points of view, but if so, it is clearly one-sided. In recent years the "political" approach has lost almost all the respectability it once had, and, though Lipset would dissent, the gist of the "non-political" mode has won near-unanimous approval from both laymen and academicians. One suspects that this shift of perspective has less to do with any scholarly, disinterested pursuit of truth than it does with the American public's own experience with

student movements. When old myths fell apart in the late 1960s, only analyses like those of Feuer and Nisbet were able to admit how much we did not know, ask the profound questions, and then present with clarity what little we do know.

The potential weakness of the "political" approach, specifically, a weakness that detracts from Lipset's book, is an overly optimistic faith in the reasonableness of people. Lipset emphasizes conscious, political decision-making to the exclusion of cultural normalities and abnormalities that are the very basis of politics. We should be skeptical, for instance, of Lipset's reliance on polls. Lipset cites numerous polls that affirm student confidence in the worth and durability of conservative social values and democratic political institutions. But to what extent will the sweet air of rationality which surrounds a poll-taker affect the behavior of an excited student engaged in a riot? Youth is notorious

for the gap between ideals and action, and even Lipset admits (quoting a study he himself inspired) that "leftists who have demonstrated intolerance and authoritarian behavior traits in practice may still give voice or pencil to liberal values in principle."

From the Fascists we learned that an unusual historical situation can make the whole idea of the "rational" decision — based on accepted political, social, or economic interests — superfluous. Feuer and Nisbet examine the historical situation prudently; Lipset does not. It may well be, as the public fears, that certain tendencies of the American student movement in the sixties were fundamentally new to the tradition of intellectual dissent. And perhaps these should be (or should have been) strongly opposed as destructive to liberal free inquiry.

Neil Howe

Book Review

The Case for American Medicine

by Harry Schwartz
McKay, \$6.95

Recent warnings about an alleged shortage of 50,000 doctors proves the point of a new book that "statistical myths die hard."

The book, *The Case for American Medicine*, is by Harry Schwartz of *The New York Times*. Himself a liberal, Schwartz demolishes the liberal myths upon which are built the campaign to destroy the private practice of medicine in the United States. The figure of 50,000, Schwartz writes, "has remained constant since the mid-1960s, though what factual base, if any, lies behind it is extremely obscure." But even accepting the fantasy figure for the sake of argument, "by the end of 1971 the number of physicians had already increased by more than 50,000, yet the talk about a shortage of 50,000 still went on as though nothing had happened."

In fact, the talk continues to this day. Dr. A.D. Cooper, president of the Association of American Medical Colleges, predicted this week that the shortage of 50,000 doctors can be eradicated only through a new infusion of federal funds into medical schools. AAMC has a financial interest in keeping the shortage myth breathing since, because of the alleged crisis, the Federal government pays bonuses to medical schools to enlarge enrollment and turn out more graduates.

In puncturing liberal mythology about the state of American medicine, Schwartz builds a formidable case for the continuation of private practice based on the traditional fee system. Contrary to the shortage fable, Schwartz produces statistics which demonstrate that the supply of doctors is increasing faster than the population. In 1950 there were 711 Americans for every doctor.

By 1965 when the shortage myth was born, the figure had dropped to 682. In 1972 there were an estimated 600 people per doctor, a figure likely to decline because of already higher medical school enrollment. Schwartz warns that an overall doctor surplus "would create the tendency to overtreat, overprescribe and overoperate" — all of which would make medical care more expensive. Critics claim that the alleged doctor shortage has already created the condition. At the same time, however, the myth-makers contend that doctors are overworked — which must make them a masochistic lot, indeed. Schwartz suspects there is already an oversupply of doctors in some categories. He points to an article by Dr. W.P. Longmire in the *American Journal of Surgery* as evidence. Back in 1965, Dr. Longmire wrote that "... in each community in our country there are a few surgeons who are doing all or more than they humanely can do. Many, though, are working at a pace far below capacity."

Schwartz says the biggest problem confronting health care is the distribution of doctors — too many in too few places. He adds, however, that this is a problem which not even socialized medicine behind the Iron Curtain has been able to solve. As a possible answer, Schwartz suggests tax incentives to encourage doctors to practice in small towns and rural areas.

That myths about medical shortages have a way of generating real surpluses can be seen from the explosion of hospital construction as the consequence of an earlier "health crisis." As a result, Schwartz says, "in 1971 probably more than \$4 billion was expended on maintenance of empty hospital beds." That \$4 billion was paid by patients and non-patients alike through bigger hospital bills, increased insurance rates, and

higher government medical expenditures.

Schwartz notes that opponents of private medicine have themselves forced up medical costs, a condition they use to argue for nationalized health care. For example, most of these critics supported enactment of Medicare-Medicaid, embryonic socialized medicine whose massive expenditures "promptly pushed up prices for almost every element in the health care system. Since politicians dislike admitting their mistakes, scapegoats had to be found." They were — the very doctors who had opposed Medicare-Medicaid in the first place. As another example, Schwartz points to Leonard Woodcock, president of the United Auto Workers and major supporter of Senator Edward Kennedy's nationalized medical program. Woodcock condemns rising hospital costs while also demanding higher wages for union members who work in hospitals.

Schwartz saves his sharpest scalpel to expose the Health Maintenance Organization, pre-paid medical service which, to one degree or another, both President Nixon and Senator Kennedy endorse as a nationalized medical program. HMO, private versions of which have been in existence in this country for a number of years, is similar to socialized medicine. Under HMO the patient pays a direct fee which entitles him to "free" medical care. Under socialized medicine, the patient pays his fees through taxation. Examining both socialized medicine and HMO, Schwartz remarks on the similarity of defects: patient complaints about long waits, difficulty in obtaining medical attention in an emergency, loss of privacy during physical examinations, impersonal care, and the lack of a doctor-patient relationship.

HMO officials are not as enthusiastic about the system as are outside proponents. The president of what is considered a model HMO declares that "we ourselves don't see Kaiser-Permanente as a panacea." One of the K-P founders says that the elimination of fees "over-

loads the system" with hypochondriacs which "actually interferes with the care of the sick." The same criticism has been leveled at socialized medicine.

Proponents of a nationalized HMO claim, on the basis of the private HMOs, there would be massive savings in a large, unified system. Fact one: HMO expenditures are going up about as fast as costs for individual doctor service. Fact two: Private HMOs generally provide group coverage only for working people, which excludes the poor and elderly who frequently, however, obtain free medical care from private doctors. A Federal HMO would have to serve everybody, not just those who could

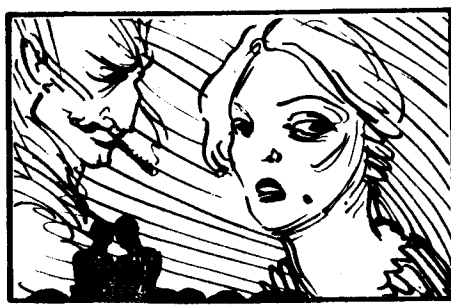
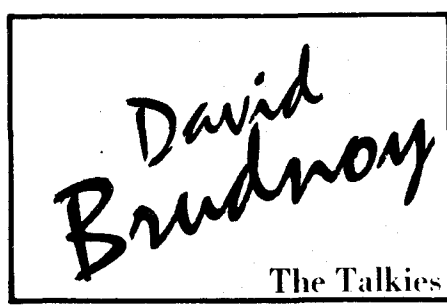
afford to pay. Fact three: Almost half of the people under HMO also use outside doctors, which at least suggests that HMO is not satisfactory as the only system of health care.

Perhaps the most damaging — and frightening — shortcoming of HMO is that while proponents claim it offers a financial incentive for the medical profession to keep people healthy, Schwartz finds that "HMO has an equally strong economic interest in having its seriously ill patients die quickly and inexpensively." In Great Britain, for example, there is medical support for mercy killing of old people with chronic illnesses in order to alleviate the tremen-

dous tax strain caused by socialized medicine.

"What is most astounding about the push for HMOs," Schwartz concludes, "is the insensitivity to the spirit of the times. We live in an age of alienation, when millions are suspicious of huge organizations which reduce them to numbers on punched cards. And nowhere are human contact and sympathy more important than in medicine." Unfortunately, "the political pressure is all the other way toward repeating errors of bureaucratic gigantism that have gotten us into the present mess in so many fields of American life."

W.J. Griffith, III



Last Brando on the Reservation

Her \$850 brushed suede-skirts and \$400 primitive Oglala beads and complete Max Factor facial were, of course, perfect. Little Princess Littlefeather, the (perhaps partly) Indian professional girl despatched by Don Marlonone to the late Oscarfest, looked splendid, lacking only a few puffs of smoke to telegraph her message from the Don: "Me mad 'bout flick not-niceness to Indian; me no take little gilded man called Oscar; me speak with straight tongue, commune with Indian brothers at Wounded Knee." Me want to vomit that night, watching Don Marlonone's hoked-up little hooker doing her number for the greater glory of the Don and the delinquents avenging Geronimo in South Dakota. I had thought that the Prairie Avenger's imposition of himself on us throughout the 1972 campaign sufficed for South Dakota's impudence this decade; I erred.

How to get Don Marlonone's tinsely gesture out of mind and Marlon Brando the splendid actor back into focus? "Taint easy, McGoo. Left and Right, the commentators won't divorce the activist from the actor. For example, Mr. George Frazier, resident style-arbiter in the liberal *Boston Globe*, practically suffered seizure in a recent column as he licked the teepee floor on which Marlon Brando trod that Oscar-eve; of his "beau geste," Mr. Frazier could say only good; of Brando, Frazier acknowledges that he is "awed" by "our greatest actor"; of those that night and thereafter who nay-say the Brandoesque gesture, Mr. Frazier could only sputter insults that make mine of him seem like love bubbles. On the other side, Mr. Buckley reminds us (and saves me the bother of having to remind us) that Marlonone

has found the most ingenious ways of justifying his *Godfather* role — "I think *The Godfather* is about the corporate mind," Brando declares. "In a way, the Mafia is the best example of capitalists we have. Don Corleone is just any ordinary American business magnate who is trying to do the best he can for the group he represents and for his family" — then he casts stones at Hollywood's glass houses for Hollywood's mistreatment of the Indian.

Not that a glib disregard of the legitimate plight of the Indian is intended by these remarks. (A gentle reader wrote to tell me, after deep study of my output in this and other magazines over the past six months, that if I could "find a fag nigger Injun to defend" I'd "be in seventh heaven.") It's just that I do not particularly like to take my political cues from racy show folk, and wish very much that they'd behave like cab drivers and opine in small audience situations instead of unburdening their guilt on us in public. Well, the Brando play will long be remembered, and surely little Ms. Littlefeather is on her way to a glorious career in show biz. As for Brando himself, his politics is on about the level of sophistication of Shirley MacLaine and Joanne Woodward and probably deserves no more comment.

But let no one gainsay the Brando achievements: Stanley in *Streetcar Named Desire* (1952); Antony in *Julius Caesar* (1953); Sakini in *Teahouse of the August Moon* (1956); *Sayonara* (1957); *Mutiny on the Bounty* (1962); at least ten minutes of *Reflections in a Golden Eye* (1967); and his physical presence, if not his spoken scenes, in

The Godfather (1972). By any standard, that's a record of no little significance.

Now, Brando as Paul in *Last Tango in Paris*, the current Bernardo Bertolucci film that Miss Pauline Kael almost single-handedly made into a sensation months before it opened, merely by devoting about eight million words of adulation to it in the October 28, 1972 issue of *The New Yorker*. With a build-up like that, and the promise that Brando would bare his behind for all the world to see, *Last Tango* could not fail.

Add 1 to that the *Playboy* magazine out-takes in gorgeous living color, the *Time* and *Newsweek* stories on *Last Tango* (and is it really true that somewhere in Spraypaint Village — New York to you — there's a computer designed to turn out virtually identical stories for the two great weekly newsmagazines on the same or adjacent Mondays?); add all that to the reserved seat treatment, and to those full-page ads of Brando buff playing toesies with Maria Schneider, and you've got yourself one hell of an advance sale.

Yet the film has its moments, largely Brando's, though Stanley Kauffmann makes a good point in *The New Republic*, observing the physical fakery of this "art" film masquerading as porn masquerading as art. "Porn" lifts sex out of context and is effective solely to the extent that it arouses sexual yearnings; "art" is supposed to transcend that. Let's be frank and admit once and for all that what people call "art" when differentiating it from film "pornography" is usually merely less explicit sex; somehow implicitness spells "art" to some

Author's Query

I am writing an ethno-socio-history dissertation on "The Place of the 1953 Buick in Afro American Cultural Life," and I would appreciate the assistance of any brother or sister who could put me in touch with beautiful stories relating to 1953 Buicks.

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