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**THE FAIRMONT PAPERS (Black Alternatives Conference)**

by Thomas Sowell and others  
(Institute for Contemporary Studies,  
260 California St., San Francisco,  
Calif. 94111)

174 pages ■ \$5.95 paperback

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*Reviewed by Allan C. Brownfeld*

ONE of the most interesting developments on the nation's intellectual scene is the turning away of many black Americans from the welfare state philosophy which so many embraced in the 1960s and early 1970s.

Black academicians and others have come to see that government intervention in the economy, rather than pointing in the direction of a solution to the nation's racial problems has, instead, locked many black Americans into a cycle of poverty. The best way to help minorities to advance, they argue, is through an expanding economy and an end to government regulations which make it difficult for those at the bottom to enter the market.

In December, 1980, the Institute for Contemporary Studies, a California-based public policy institution, sponsored a "Black Alternatives Conference" which brought together leading black conservatives, a number of white academicians, and representatives of a broad spectrum of black opinion. The papers presented at that conference,

plus the ensuing discussions, make up the present volume.

In many respects, this is an historic document. It marks, at last, a break on the part of a significant number of prominent black Americans with the liberal orthodoxy.

Thomas Sowell of the Hoover Institute writes that, "One of the things we need to focus on are facts about results—not rhetoric about intentions. We need to look not at the noble preambles of legislation but at the incentives created in that legislation. Very often, legislation intended to help the disadvantaged in fact pays people to stay disadvantaged and penalizes them to the extent that they make an effort to rise from disadvantage . . . The issue is not that the government gives too much help to the poor. The problem is that the government creates too much harm for the poor."

Sowell notes that, ". . . the greatest single loss is that the minimum wage laws promoted by labor unions protect their members by pricing black young people out of the market."

Professor Walter Williams, a Temple University economist, cites another example of a government policy which impedes black economic progress—the licensing provisions of the Interstate Commerce Commission. Jim Ward of Omaha, Nebraska, a black trucker bid the lowest price on a contract to ship

household goods of air force personnel. He was not awarded that contract, however, because he did not have an ICC license to move goods across state lines. The contract was awarded to another man who bid \$80,000 more. Dr. Williams observes: "Jim Ward did not need any 'equal opportunity' program; he did not need Small Business Administration loans. What he needed was to have government get off his back."

Black attorney Maria Johnson, discussing the negative effect of rent control, described the case of Washington, D.C. In 1974, in the first four months of the year rent control was enacted, there were 5,247 building permits issued for multi-family dwellings. In 1975 in the same four-month period one year after the enactment of rent-control, 375 building permits were issued—almost 5,000 fewer. Miss Johnson declares: "Rent control is the classic example of treating symptoms. The cities are dying inside. The disease is a shortage . . . of housing that is affordable to both low-income and moderate-income tenants . . . Rent control . . . does not help poor people; it does not help black people . . . under rent control you have a decrease in the housing supply."

Professor Martin Kilson of Harvard, who is black, expressed what seemed to be the consensus of black participants in the meeting when he said: "... the left/liberal axis no

longer has—if it ever did have—a monopoly on effective policy for black needs . . . It is now clear that there is too high a cost associated with black policy isolation from conservative initiatives in American political life . . . New coalitions are required by blacks."

The best way to bring minorities into the mainstream of American life is to remove politically sanctioned barriers that restrict market entry, thus permitting a genuinely free economy to flourish. ☯

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### THE AMERICAN DEMOCRAT

by James Fenimore Cooper  
with an introduction by H. L. Mencken  
(Liberty Classics, 7440 North Shadeland,  
Indianapolis, Indiana 46250)  
252 pages ■ \$9.00 cloth; \$4.00 paperback

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*Reviewed by Holmes Alexander*

Cooper's treatise, happily made available with an introduction by H. L. Mencken, amounts to being the 86th Federalist Paper. Thus we now have expert analyses of the American Constitution with 85 essays in the 18th century by Hamilton, Madison and Jay; Cooper's 46 brisk chapters in the early 19th century (1838) and Mencken's 11-page commentary in the 20th century (1931). Our cup runneth over.

Cooper (1789–1851) looks at the American experiment with the ad-