

BOOK REVIEWS

STEVEN J. DINER

A City & Its Universities — Public Policy in Chicago, 1892-1919
The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, North Carolina

By focusing on Chicago's first generation of academic professionals, this study illuminates how modern public policy evolved. In the 1880s university professors of social sciences began to assert the conviction that they possessed special scientific knowledge, which alone could solve the problems of a complex urban industrial society. Steven Diner describes in these pages the nature of their expertise, which they used to solve the problems of the cities and to strengthen their influence in a changing world.

By selecting Chicago as the city for this case study, the author indicates the significance of these early activists on the evolution of the modern bureaucratic socialist state. The nation's second largest city, Chicago attracted attention not only for the magnitude of its social problems but also for the dynamics of its reform movement. Many of the nation's most important social activists lived in the city of Jane Addams, and what happened in Chicago had ramifications for the rest of the nation. At the same time, the founding of the University of Chicago as a full-fledged graduate university brought to the city many of the nation's leading reformer scholars and produced several major intellectual movements. The author endeavors to compare the activities of Chicago's professors with those in other cities and university towns.

The activist professors, believing that their public service activities were selfless and in the general interest, used information networks and local institutions to unite and press their demands in education, "criminal justice", social welfare, and municipal administration. By banding together on the one hand to claim professional autonomy and on the other to offer their special knowledge to those interested in change — philanthropists, businessmen, and political progressives — they were able to establish themselves and the university firmly in American society.

Within twenty-eight years from the opening of the university in 1892 to the defeat of political science professor Charles E. Merriam in his bid for the mayoralty in 1919, a powerful political movement arose to demand control over the government of the city. Diner concludes that reformers, having failed to gain control at the local level, turned to the federal government in the 1920s in their search for influence and became a force in the bureaucratic welfare programs established during the New Deal years.

While revealing his personal bias in favor of these social activists, Steven Diner has nevertheless written an informative book that will appeal to historians, sociologists and political scientists.

RICHARD E. WAGNER

Inheritance and the State — Tax Principles for a Free and Prosperous Commonwealth

American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research
Washington, D.C.

Richard E. Wagner examines the function of inheritance in the social order and the impact of the taxation of transfers of wealth upon this order. The taxation of wealth transfers and socialization of inheritance are advocated primarily as a means of promoting equality. Yet, as Wagner argues, by harnessing the natural partiality of parents for their own offspring, inheritance plays an important role in raising material standards of living from generation to generation, a role that is weakened as the taxation of inheritance is strengthened. As he examines the social function of inheritance in maintaining and increasing the total wealth of society, Professor Wagner exposes the destructive tendencies of the egalitarian imperative that is so commonly articulated today. He also studies more specific topics, such as the effect of taxation upon total tax revenues, the liquidity problems of closely held businesses, charitable deductions, and the taxation of wealth transferred through trusts, discussing, where appropriate, the changes introduced by the Tax Reform Act of 1976.