

the book case

politics in their jockeying for position, in sensing where the power lies in a family or a schoolyard and going with the winner, and in evaluating parents and other kids in terms of dependability, duplicity, and possible benefits. If, in the educational system, "politics" ever becomes a description simply of the ways in which people negotiate relationships with their neighbors—rather than a way to rule the neighbors or glorify the nation—that too would presage a truly antiauthoritarian, antinationalist force. But the fact that this collection of interviews shows how the worship, literally, of the state is vitally alive in so many children

today, reminds us also of how very far we have to go before the individual takes precedence over the collective and before communities of assenting individuals take precedence over the coercive authority of the state.

The politics of children, we are usefully reminded, is, indeed, the root of politics, and of the warlike nationalism, of adults. Outside of that reminder, however, reading this book easily could be skipped and the time more usefully spent talking to your own kids.

Karl Hess, a former child and political speechwriter, is editor of the Libertarian Party News.

How to Spend a Trillion and Be Frustrated

By Bill Kauffman

Running in Place: Life Inside the Senate

By James A. Miller, New York: Simon & Schuster, 204 pages, \$17.95

Some of the wisest, most perceptive criticism of the American form of government is found in the sadly neglected writings of the Anti-Federalists, that large but disorganized band of men who opposed the ratification of a new Constitution in 1787. Consider Maryland's Luther Martin, a drunk and a wastrel, given to rambling, besotted speeches to his fellow Constitutional Convention delegates. Martin, who feared that the Constitution granted the central government excessive powers, described the likely fate of the U.S. Senate: "If he [a senator] has a family, he will take his family with him to the place where the government shall be fixed, that will become his home, and there is every reason to expect, that his future views and prospects will centre in the favours and emoluments either of the general government, or of the government of that state where the seat of empire is established."

Martin's words would doubtless draw blank stares from today's senators and their camp followers, whose historical memories seldom stretch back beyond passage of the Budget and Impoundment Act of 1974. The modern Senate's sole nod to the Founding Fathers is the annual reading of Washington's Farewell Address by some bored freshman to a nearly empty chamber. The poor fellow and his colleagues then spend the next 364 days repudiating every bit of advice old George offered in his splendid valediction.

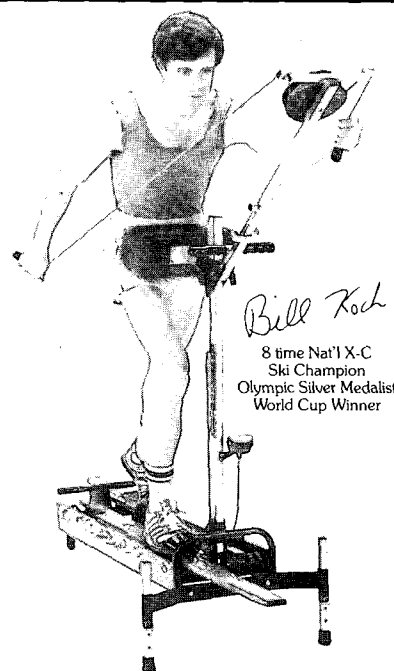
It's no surprise that James Miller is a former Senate staffer. For that same mad-

dening disregard for history taints his *Running in Place*, billed as an insider's diary of a typical week's work in the world's greatest deliberative body.

Miller's vantage point is ideal: he served as a special assistant to ex-Senate Majority Leader Howard Baker. Though this locus of Senate action affords a relatively panoramic view of the institution, Miller concentrates on five senators and their staffs: Baker, Budget Committee chairman Pete Domenici (R-N.M.), former Bianca Jagger escort Chris Dodd (D-Conn.), resident wit Alan Simpson (R-Wyo.), and nonentity Frank Lautenberg (D-N.J.).

The form is descriptive, occasionally colorful, never pedantic. But Miller's message is clear. Through alternately tedious and illuminating recountings of budget disputes, publicity seeking, and personality clashes, Miller paints a Senate paralyzed by inaction, much to the frustration of senators whose job becomes an exercise in "running in place." (Frustrating, yes. But note that 17 of the 18 senators first elected to the body in 1980 are running for reelection in 1986. The other one is dead.)

Miller's villain appears to be the breakdown of what political scientist Donald Matthews once labeled the Senate's "folkways." No longer are new senators content to serve a silent apprenticeship, imbibing wisdom from the body's elder statesmen. The relentless glare of the media, combined with a series of majority leaders over the last 20 years unable or unwilling to disci-



Bill Koch
8 time Nat'l X-C
Ski Champion
Olympic Silver Medalist
World Cup Winner

Scientific Study Ranks NordicTrack #1

In tests of exercise efficiency at a major university, NordicTrack burned more calories and provided greater aerobic workouts.

Rank of Exercise Efficiency

1. NordicTrack X-C Ski Exerciser
2. An Exercise Bike
3. A Rowing Machine
4. A Shuffle-Type Ski Exerciser

NordicTrack's higher oxygen usage test scores show that more muscle mass is involved in the exercise and more calories are being burned.

It's Only Logical that NordicTrack Would Get the Highest Scores

- because NordicTrack is more complete than an Exercise Bike.

Adds important upper body exercise. Provides more uniform leg muscle usage.

- because NordicTrack is more thorough than a Rowing Machine.

NordicTrack's resistance is proportioned according to the individual muscle strength—no major muscles are over-stressed or under-worked.

- because NordicTrack has inertial resistance not available on a Shuffle-Type Ski Exerciser.

Other ski exercisers use less efficient frictional resistance with a resulting calisthenics-like feeling. NordicTrack's unique flywheel resistance for a life-like feeling of smoothness and continuity is matched only by real skiing.

Burns Up To 600 Calories per 20 Minute Workout

Free Brochure. Call

800-328-5888

Minnesota 612-448-6987

NordicTrack

© PSI 1986

141RE Jonathan Blvd. N., Chaska, MN 55318

the book case

pline their troops, has produced a body of free-lancers who abuse the freedoms the Senate's lax rules provide them. (For instance, Senator Dodd forces the Senate into a rare secret session on Central America—a brazen ploy so contrary to the old folkways that it “would never have been allowed 20 years ago,” complains Barry Goldwater.)

Miller is also displeased that the dilatory tactic of the filibuster, or threat thereof, has

*There's so many
Senate staff,
scurrying about,
searching every nook
and cranny of the
policy universe for
schemes to advance
their boss's career.*

come into its own over the last decade. Its finest current practitioner, Ohio Sen. Howard Metzenbaum (D), uses the threat of a filibuster at the end of every Senate session to prevent the more egregious pork-barrel bills from slipping through. The Senate establishment (and, I take it, Miller) hates Metzenbaum. Yet in demanding debate on these foolish give-away bills, Metzenbaum is transporting the Senate back to the character the Founders desired for it—“the source of a more deliberate, more knowledgeable, longer-run view of good public policy,” in the words of the luminous congressional scholar Richard Fenno.

The strength of Miller's book is its emphasis on the enormous role that Senate staffs play in the governing of our nation. Since the first full-time clerks were hired in 1856, congressional staff size has increased exponentially—to 7,000 by 1960 and 18,000 today, a ratio of 33 Indians to every chief. Most of the Senate's important business occurs not on the floor but in its 15 committees, whose real work is done by a cadre of staffers. The committee staffs write the bills, compose the speeches, and orchestrate the hearings, often with minimal direction from senators. The groundwork thus laid, the Great Men show up; zap—they legislate; then down the hall they run, to another committee meeting or caucus or maybe just to catch 40 winks after a rough night.

Although Miller describes one staffer

who “hatches his own ideas and tries to force them on Baker,” factotums who work at cross-purposes from their boss seldom last long. The real problem with Senate staff isn't so much their independence; it's just that there's so many of them, scurrying about, searching every nook and cranny of the policy universe for schemes to advance their boss's career. The result is that a senator often tackles dozens of issues he knows nothing about, usually to the detriment of the liberties of the people.

Of course, being a Senate staffer is a heady job, the more so if one works for a powerful senator like Baker or Domenici. But the price of the ticket is steep. Staffers, notes Miller, quickly learn “to have no ideology at all, or to purge oneself of whatever ideology one does have.” Living testaments to this political abnegation stride purposefully through this book, ideological eunuchs who've sold their manhood for the chance to be a powerful man's minion. It's a pathetic sight, really, to see grown men and women drawing their own sense of worth from their employers' stature. (Indeed, it's striking how many House staffers refer to their boss as “my member”—though perhaps we're treading here on psychosexual ground best left untrod.)

At all events, Miller offers no solutions to Senate gridlock, his presumed purpose being simply to sketch the problem. The tepid reforms he touches on—restricting the right to filibuster, cutting staff size—miss the forest for the trees. The Senate is “in crisis” (as the book's flap warns us) because its purview has expanded far beyond what its creators ever envisioned. Raising and

spending \$1 trillion a year, determining which interests shall profit from the ceaseless plunder of the taxman, advising the executive in the bloody and byzantine affairs of the American Empire—these are jobs quite beyond the capability of a republican institution that places a premium on the prerogatives of individual legislators.

Two alternatives to the status quo recommend themselves: either adopt the drastic reforms that have given the Soviet Central Committee its crisis-free reputation, or return the federal government to its handful of original functions. The latter, though preferable, may be impracticable. As Luther Martin understood two centuries ago, the natural tendency of legislators is to identify their interests with the state's interest; the legislator's power increases as the individual's liberty decreases.

One hopes that *Running in Place* is the first droplet in a spate of books marking next year's 200th anniversary of the Constitutional Convention. No doubt we're in for one hellacious celebration, with the most-clamant cheering coming from that group of men and women whose prospects center in the favors and emoluments of an omnipotent government. Maybe the rest of us, though, can step back from the parade and do some good hard thinking about the state of the political institutions bequeathed us by our forefathers. We can try to figure out just what went wrong; and we can determine how we might go about setting things right again.

Former Senate staffer Bill Kauffman is *REASON's* Washington editor.

Individualist Feminism Under Fire

By Joan Kennedy Taylor

A Lesser Life: The Myth of Women's Liberation in America
By Sylvia Ann Hewlett, New York: Morrow, 459 pages, \$17.95

Social movements go in cycles, and the feminist movement is no exception. It began as a reaction to restrictive laws and customs and was associated with the abolitionist movement. But gradually, after the turn of the century, it became a battleground between forces advocating equality before the law (which social thinker F. A. Hayek has called “the only kind of equality conducive to liberty”) and forces that wished to use the law to create “equality” for women by compensating for their inferior strength and clout.

With World War II and the postwar years, feminism more or less disappeared. But then in the late '60s and early '70s a new women's movement swung the pendulum again toward equality before the law, with the strong push to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA).

But now, if Sylvia Hewlett's book *A Lesser Life* and the positive reception it is getting are any indication (the author was a guest on *Face the Nation* this past Mother's Day), the pendulum is swinging in the other direction again. The force of Hewlett's