

who cannot help themselves or are trying to do so and simply need an opportunity." While this is certainly true, the natural compassion of most Americans is deadened every time a healthy stranger thrusts a cup in their face and demands money or a politician calls for boosting taxes to help the homeless. As Marvin Olasky has shown, church-based groups do a much better job than government agencies in helping the homeless become responsible and productive. But Jencks conspicuously ignores the role religious groups and other private associations play in fighting poverty and homelessness.

While Jencks's conclusions do not stray far from liberal orthodoxy, his analysis of the nature and persistence of homelessness is fresh and interesting. Jencks does a great service in showing that many debating points used by homeless advocates to advance their agenda are either untrue or misleading. *The Homeless* won't end the debate about homelessness, but it could very well reshape it. **R**

*Contributing Editor Martin Morse Wooster is the author of Angry Classrooms, Vacant Minds (Pacific Research Institute).*

## Deregulatory Drivel

By William A. Niskanen

**Deregulating the Public Service, edited by John J. Dilulio, Washington: The Brookings Institution, 308 pages, \$31.95/\$12.95 paper**

**"C**AN GOVERNMENT BE IMPROVED?" asks the subtitle of this book. "Yes," say the 14 authors, if the government would only implement the standard reform from the public-administration literature: hire "the best and the brightest" and give them the knowledge and authority to do their jobs.

Hence, *Deregulating the Public Service* is about removing restrictions on public servants' authority that presumably prevent them from doing a better job.

As with Al Gore's National Performance Review, the unacknowledged perspective of this book is that of a government manager. Most men and women

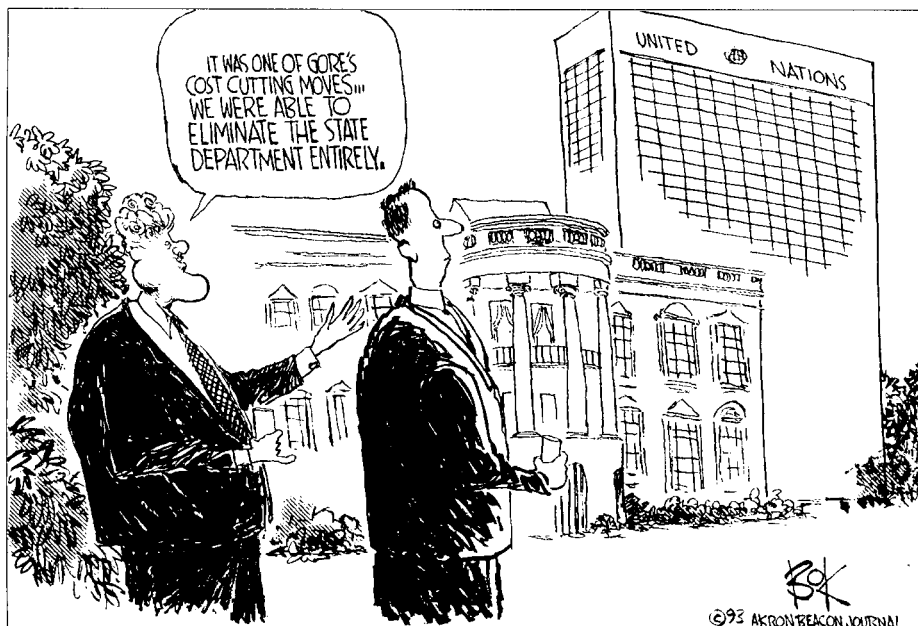
who serve in public-service positions have a focused perspective on the mission of their agency, are genuinely committed to that mission, and are personally honest and industrious. This outlook leads most government managers and public-administration scholars to conclude that government performance could best be improved by reducing the restrictions on government managers.

Maybe so, but analysts should reflect more seriously on the reasons why most proposals to reduce such regulations are rejected and why the scope and detail of these regulations continue to increase. The beginning of wisdom on these issues is to recognize that most regulations, like most other conditions perceived to be wasteful, are there because someone in authority wants them.

Legislators and elected executives monitor agencies by several criteria, with preferences not just for an agency's primary output but also for how that output is produced. Regulations are the basic means by which politicians implement their various preferences. Government officials, for example, want to distribute employment, contracts, and grants by area, size of business, race, or some other politically meaningful criterion. Personnel rules reflect a preference to avoid the appearance of favoritism, ethics rules to avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest, transparency rules to avoid the appearance of ex parte deals. While many regulations seem inefficient to government managers (and others) who are most concerned about the primary output of an agency, they may not be wasteful in terms of a broader set of political preferences.

**T**HE BEST WAY TO MAKE A CASE AGAINST such stifling regulations, then, is to provide politicians and the public with information about regulatory costs in terms of increased spending or lower output. Unfortunately, this book, like all too much of the public-administration literature, provides little significant analysis or evidence on that key issue.

Paul Volcker and William Winter, for



example, call for "nurturing the pride and competence of men and women willing to devote themselves to careers in public service" by higher pay, fewer political appointments, and less regulation. Gerald Garvey and John DiIulio contribute a thoughtful article on the sources of public-service regulation without making an adequate case that such regulation has been excessive. James Q. Wilson criticizes both the Reinventing Government and the National Performance Review programs for not providing a theory about what government should do and for failing to address the incentives of government managers.

**Legislators and elected executives care not only about an agency's primary output but about how that output is produced. For example, they want to distribute employment, contracts, and grants by area, size of business, or race.**

John Burke concludes that government performance would improve if we all trusted government more, a thesis that seems to have gotten the equation precisely backward. Constance Horner and Steven Kelman suggest strategies for reducing personnel and procurement regulation. Richard Nathan makes a case for a strong executive leadership, and Neal Peirce documents the effects of strong leadership in Florida and Philadelphia. Mark Moore and Mark Alan Hughes, respectively, discuss the regulation of police and mass transit.

Melvin Dubnick contributes a thoughtful article on the three major challenges to the classical bureaucratic paradigm: the minimalists (Niskanen et al.), the reinventors (Osborne and Gore), and the de-

regulators (the authors in this collection). Dubnick concludes that the minimalists have the most sophisticated theory, the reinventors the most popular appeal, and the deregulators the most practical suggestions. Among them, Donald Kettl wins the prize for the most obtuse conclusion: "Reenergizing politics so that it drives the interdependent networks toward a new definition of the public interest is the ultimate key to relegitimizing government."

As the above summary suggests, this is not a very interesting or coherent collection. That is too bad, because several important patterns in public service need to be properly explained. Inefficiency in government is rather like bad weather; everyone talks about it, but no one does anything about it. Almost every federal administration has sponsored an efficiency commission, announced its findings with great fanfare, and then quietly walked

away from most of the recommendations.

The Clinton administration has dutifully completed the first two stages of this process, but what will happen next remains unclear. It may be telling, however, that soon after the publication of the National Performance Review, the official responsible for monitoring its enactment was reassigned. The vacancy has not yet been filled. Clinton seems to have decided that he has already made his mark on deficit reduction and efficiency in government.

My vision of purgatory is being forced to read the whole corpus of public-administration literature. Unless you face this same grim prospect and want to get ahead on such a joyless chore, there is little reason to read this book. **R**

*William A. Niskanen is chairman of the Cato Institute.*

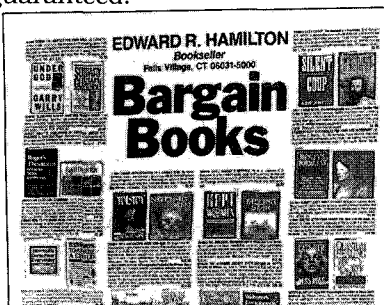
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# Goppycock

By Thomas W. Hazlett

## The Emerging Republican Death Wish

**I** TOOK SOME HEAT DURING THE 1992 election campaign for saying, and I quote, "If you desire to help your Republican friends, hold your nose double-tight and vote Clinton-Gore in '92." Fortunately, Republican heat was only about room temperature in those days. Now, with *The Economist* and other learned outlets calling 1994 the first legit shot for a Republican Senate since 1986, I humbly rest my case.

But I am not here to crow, cackle, or guffaw. (Much.) While the pundits were trumpeting the demise of the Republican Party, the Clintonites were pulling all-nighters to put its pieces back together again. In response to the stunning GOP victories of recent months, the president insists on calling newly elected Republican senators, governors, and mayors simply a sign of the "change" vote which elected Mr. Clinton in the first place. By this logic, a vote against Mr. Clinton in 1996 will be a vote for the policies of change which Mr. Clinton stood for in 1992. Finally, a clear Clinton mandate!

That the administration megadoses daily on both government and governmental incompetence (complementary outputs, as economists say) should make the task of the opposition party both fun and profitable. This allows the nominally anti-government party yet another chance to get its act together. Theoretically.

The Republicans have been on the precipice of real power before. Following the collapse of the Great Society, party strategist Kevin Phillips was hawking "The Emerging Republican Majority." By 1974, the Democrats—enjoying an unlikely windfall from Watergate (who'da guessed that the party of Lyndon Johnson

would regain power on voter reaction against the abuse of power?)—were propelled to commanding congressional (and, two years later, presidential) victories by the howling winds of Republican scandal. The same gale drove Ronald Reagan's two-term tenure to an ending disappointment with Iran-contra. Finally, the ultimate botch: George Bush.

Today we may observe The Emerging Republican Death Wish. The party's suicidal tendencies are on neon display in Virginia, a state which hopes to host a new Disney theme park and is gearing up politically with a gaggle of Goofys. Oliver North, the duly nominated GOP candidate, personifies the problem of runaway government. He lied to Congress, illegally diverted U.S. funds, and made mincemeat out of statutory law by engaging in rogue foreign-policy gambits. Yet Republican conservatives adore Ollie because he brags about defying Congress and taking the law into his own hands. He was on a mission from God.

What a perfect mirror to the left! No petty bureaucrat ever screwed some innocent taxpayer out of his/her rights without some high-falutin morality play to trumpet, and no Democratic politician ever bloated the federal Tyrannosaurus on the premise of personal greed. I warn you so-called conservatives. Do not get into an "ends justifies the means" contest with these people. They are the Superbowl champions of mega-justifications for huge state action.

Today the GOP platform could be most aptly described as Reaganesque—Nancy Reaganesque. "Just say no to Bill Clinton," and you've covered 90 percent of the GOP's intellectual turf. It was, in fact, one of the GOP's relative geniuses—Bill Kristol—who instructed the party bigwigs to fight Bill and Hillary by denying a health-care crisis exists. OK, crisis may be a bit strong—but the reason people in

politics exaggerate like this is that tough talk conveys that you care. You ought to care—about the myriad regulations and taxes and restrictions on competition that drive medical costs up. Not a crisis? If you don't want to play the game, why'd you bother to dress up so funny at your convention?

**F**OR ALL OF BILL CLINTON'S FOIBLES, fabrications and failings, you have got to hand him this: He's dominating the debate. Simply put, Bill Clinton is the man with the plan. That sets the agenda. I have actually heard conservative leaders say that they "oppose health care"—inadvertently but revealingly ceding Bill Clinton the authority not just to define a policy but to homestead an entire sector of the U.S. economy. (Unless they really do oppose health care, in which case I was confusing the views of Christian Science with those of the Republican right.)

The Republicans cannot set the agenda in the manner in which the Democratic president has. After all, Clinton didn't have the agenda set (at least this agenda) prior to occupying the White House. By the same token, the Republicans never did get around to this crucial task through 12 years of Reagan-Bush. The world still awaits the Republican Agenda—a broad set of limited-government solutions to the problems of health care, welfare, and slow economic growth. Waiting for a rational and persuasive party platform to magically materialize from a cabal of anti-abortion fanatics in 1996 would constitute an exceedingly generous contribution to Mr. Clinton's re-election campaign. Quantified, the amount easily exceeds \$1,000. That is a clear violation of federal law—for no higher purpose whatever. ✻

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