

# Political Booknotes

Public affairs books to be published in October

**American National Security: Policy and Process.** Amos A. Jordan, William J. Taylor, Jr., and associates. Johns Hopkins, \$30/\$10.50.

**The American People and South Africa: Publics, Elites, and Policy-making Processes.** Alfred O. Hero, Jr., John Barratt. Lexington, \$21.95.

**Before the Colors Fade.** Harry Reasoner. Knopf, \$10.95.

**The CIA Under Reagan, Bush, and Casey.** Ray S. Cline. Acropolis, \$12.50. The title is misleading, since the book, an updated version of the former deputy director's 1976 book, *Secrets, Spies and Scholars*, was written before there was anything to say about the new crowd.

Cline is a pro-CIA conservative, but he believes the Agency has often gotten in over its head. He contends that operations like the "secret" Laotian army and election-tampering in Chile were doomed from the start because they involved more secrets than could possibly be kept. Even so, the Agency itself doesn't come in for much blame. Cline is in "the president made us do it" school of ex-CIA officials.

—Larry Mahl

**The Decline and Resurgence of Congress.** James L. Sundquist. Brookings Institution, \$32.95/\$15.95.

**Do New Leaders Make a Difference?: Executive Succession and Public Policy Under Capitalism and Socialism.** Valerie Bunce. Princeton, \$22.50/\$6.95.

**Exploring the Johnson Years.** Robert A. Divine, ed. University of Texas Press, \$25.

**The Fish Is Red: The Story of the Secret War Against Castro.** Warren Hinckle, William W. Turner. Harper and Row, \$14.95.

**The Hidden Election: Politics and Economics in the 1980 Presidential Campaign.** Thomas Ferguson, Joel Rogers, eds. Pantheon, \$16. A collection of eight essays on the 1980 campaign that tries to be different but only partially succeeds. The editors believe most instant election analysis books fail because "they ignore or gloss over the candidates' links to the business community, sources of money, prominent (if unpublished) supporters, and affiliations with the traditional network of national policymaking." Given that ideological lens, it's not surprising we learn more about David Rockefeller, Henry Kissinger, and the Trilateral Commission than almost anything else.

Journalists Alexander Cockburn and James Ridgeway are the only contributors without academic pedigrees, and it shows. Their essay is the best. They interview supply-side apostle Jude Wanniski, who at the time of the interview had just finished a memo to Reagan on supply-side economics: "... I said to Reagan, no matter what sort of box you get yourself into, one thing you've got to remember is Be Stubborn."

—James Lyons

**How Courts Govern America.** Richard Neely. Yale, \$15. The author is occasionally pretentious, but as a fellow West Virginian I can sympathize with his need to identify with respectable institutions like Aspen and Yale. How else is someone with a mountain accent to be taken seriously? He is also, I think, wrong in the central importance he gives to the courts as what makes America work: all too often they are precisely what keeps the country from working. However, all that is wrong with *How Courts Govern America* fades into insignificance compared with what is good about it—the author's consistently candid and often quite funny anecdotes about

his experiences as a candidate, legislator, and judge make the book must reading for any student of government. Note: will some alumnus please bequeath a copy of Fowler to the editors at Yale University Press, accompanied by a request that they read the section on "that" and "which"?

—Charles Peters

**The Japanese Challenge to U.S. Industry.** Jack Baranson. Lexington, \$19.95.

**The Life and Times of Joe McCarthy: A Biography.** Thomas C. Reeves. Stein and Day, \$19.95.

**The New Kingmakers: An Inside Look at the Powerful Men Behind America's Political Campaigns.** David Chagall. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, \$12.95. Chagall tells us that one of the greatest pleasures a political media consultant can experience is a "virgin"—a first-time candidate. But watch out, warned one consultant, "once they get in office they become pains in the ass. Suddenly they become experts—they stick their noses into the ball game. That's when you get big problems."

Of course, consultants themselves are only as good as their batting averages, and if their magic doesn't work, they won't have the luxury of acting supercilious for very long.

Some consultants are very principled and will take only certain candidates and issues. But the vast majority take their own politics only as far as the party line. They "do" either Democrats or Republicans (or, in many cases, foreign politicians). Beyond that, all that matters is that the candidate has lots of money to spend.

Chagall isn't much troubled by any of this, and he finds a peculiar justification for the kingmakers' existence: "In a society that prides itself on openness and competition, the hired guns of politics are bastions of individual enterprise."

Sounds like a Reagan ad, and not a very good one at that.

—Michael Hiestand

**Petroleum Politics and the Texas Railroad Commission.** *David F. Prindle. University of Texas Press, \$14.95.* A lively book about an obscure state regulatory body that, through an accident of geology and jurisdiction, wields enormous power in determining how oil and gas are produced and sold in this country. Prindle delights in pointing out the cozy relationship between the Texas Railroad Commission and the industries it regulates.

The Railroad Commission, besides having a misnomer for a name, is an odd regulatory bird because its members are elected in an at-large statewide contest. Beginning in the 1930s, the Commission exercised a distinct preference for oil and gas producers over consumers, but within that bias it preferred local, risk-taking independents to the major companies that came from out-of-state. This is important because the Commission has often served as referee between the majors and the independents on such issues as production levels, ownership rights, and market access.

Prindle, who writes with a fine ability to make technical and economic issues interesting, is appalled by the free-market rhetoric so often mouthed by producers in recent years. He documents 50 years of efforts by producers to maintain a web of price-support regulations that benefited them. "Debate over government regulation takes place in a twilight zone between outright propaganda and cherished myth," he writes, suggesting that members a bit more skeptical of industry might keep the Commission more balanced. (See *The Washington Monthly*, October 1980, for a first-person description by Democrat Jim Hightower of his nearly successful populist campaign for the Commission.)

—Pat Martin

**Portrait of an Election: The 1980 Presidential Campaign.** *Elizabeth*

*Drew. Simon & Schuster, \$14.95.* The author's articles for the *Atlantic* in the late 1960s earned her a respected place in the history of journalism. She may have been the first writer to make the operations of government agencies like the FCC and the Army Corps of Engineers understandable and interesting to people who were neither civil servants nor political scientists. In the early 1970s her program on PBS showed her to be a skillful interviewer, and as a panelist on "Agronsky and Company," where excursions into the unpredictable are rare indeed, she is seldom rigid and almost always sensible.

During the early seventies she began reporting for *The New Yorker*, and her writing came under the influence of its great editor, William Shawn. Shawn tends to favor a style that leaves analysis to the inferential powers of the reader. Sometimes this kind of writing simply seems mindless. This is why Drew is called Nancy by those at *The New Yorker* who do not share Shawn's enthusiasm for her.

Shawn's preference for simply laying out all the facts works best when the subject is underpublicized (e.g., how Robert Moses got things done), or when the writers themselves have some sense of selectivity about what facts they will present (e.g., Calvin Trillin). Neither of those is the case with Elizabeth Drew. Much of the time she is working with the most familiar of events—Watergate, national elections—without the ability to distinguish between significant and insignificant details. Thus even in her best book, *Senator*, she helpfully informed her readers that Iowa was a rectangular state in the Midwest. (In lower levels of the publishing world this approach would lead to the suspicion that the writer was being paid by the word.)

There is less of Nancy in this book than in her two *Washington Journal* volumes—*Portrait of an Election* is much closer to *Senator* in its overall quality. She is

especially insightful in her understanding of how Reagan the political leader was shaped by Reagan's career as an actor. Still, those who yearn for Nancy will not be disappointed. Here is her description of a church that Carter visited during the campaign:

"The church itself, a rectangular building, seems fairly new, and has white walls, blue-and-red-glass windows, and pale wood panels on the stage."

—Charles Peters

**The Road from Here: Liberalism and Realities in the 1980s.** *Paul Tsongas. Knopf, \$12.95.* A neo-liberal manifesto by the junior senator from Massachusetts. Flawed but important and well worth reading.

**Somoza and the Legacy of U.S. Involvement in Central America.** *Bernard Diederich. Dutton, \$19.75.*

**Tribes on the Hill: An Investigation into the Rituals and Realities of an Endangered American Tribe—The Congress of the United States.** *J. McIver Weatherford. Rawson, Wade, \$13.95.* The human mind can grasp some complex institutions; others are unknowable. You can get a handle on the AFL-CIO, Exxon, and the New York Yankees. Even the presidency is comprehensible if examined exhaustively enough. But some institutions simply defy any efforts to make them intelligible: the Saudi royal family, Tibetan Lamaism, and the Congress of the United States.

This barrenness of useful analysis is not for lack of effort. Journalists try their hands. Former members publish self-serving nostalgia. Political scientists bring to bear their "content analysis," "roll-call analysis," and "factor analysis" to reaffirm the same point that office-holding is delightful and eternal office-holding is eternally delightful. Sociologists have taken their cuts; so have psychologists. The one academic group that has been conspicuously absent is the anthropologists, who might have