

dream of deliverance and get down to some serious and explicit pie-slicing.

It's an intriguing theory, and it leads Harrington over all sorts of interesting ground, from the Federalist papers to populism to the formation of Carter's cabinet. And certainly the role of myth in politics, though hard to get at, is an important subject—if you don't believe me, ask your family next Thanksgiving dinner what they think the federal government spends more on, welfare or social security. The main problem is that Harrington's whole elaborate argument rests on the premise, which she presents as so obvious that it doesn't need to be argued, that only through economic planning can our problems really be solved. If you disagree, then this book will seem like a long fly ball that lands just outside the foul pole: impressive, but no score.

—Nicholas Lemann

**Witness at the Creation: Hamilton, Madison, Jay and the Constitution.** Richard B. Morris. *Holt, Rinehart and Winston*, \$16.95. At the *Creation*? We are used to "The Founding Fathers," whose title echoes St. Jerome and the Fathers of the Church. And when we call Hamilton, Madison and Jay "lawgivers," the ghost of Moses appears. But not even Moses, as he delivered his stony constitution, claimed to have been there at the Creation. What is being witnessed in the title of this book is a prophetic vision of what we are about to experience in the celebration of the Constitution's two hundredth birthday, namely the Founders as collective God and their product as the organization of Eden.

Two things are wrong with that. Sanctifying the two-legged landholders who marked out the Constitution tends to diminish by comparison the politicians of today who struggle to create broader unities than they were born into. Today's challenge is analagous but enormously more complex and intractable: nothing less than institutionalizing peace with justice in a world in which the depth of

political chaos matches the height of technical kill-capacity. Statesmen of today could well study these three men—but as uncles roughly like themselves, not as deified grandpas.

The second problem follows from the first: if God made the Constitution, as Morris seems to believe, then it must be holy—maybe even omnipotent. The lesson for aspiring democracies is that if you get your constitution right, the rest will work out. The Constitution "has functioned and endured longer than any other written constitution of the modern era... a living functioning reality touching every person's life." Now a piece of paper may endure, but how it "functions" is mysterious. What actually happened was that leading politicians of the day agreed to act within certain boundaries they specified. Since then, brilliant and blundering politicians, their efforts significantly supplemented by brilliant and blundering judges, have shaped and reshaped those

boundaries, sometimes for better, sometimes for worse, but nearly always without much help from the letter of that law. That the original Constitution was born flawed is obvious. For example, the procedure for electing presidents never worked as designed, and the procedure for choosing vice presidents was ridiculous from the start.

But the larger point is that democracy is not established or sustained by some sacred gimmick, but by people. For all its glamor and glory, the Constitution did not prevent repeated violations of the right of free speech, invasion by the British, mayhem and murder on the frontier, hideous war within the federation, deep and wide corruption of government by corporate power, the wounding and scarring of generations of blacks, fantastic government irresponsibility in managing the economy, subversion from within the White House itself, or the failure to institutionalize peace—just to touch on the lowlights. It was not the Constitu-

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tion but a series of living leaders and followers who plunged us down and dragged us up through the checkered terrain of American history.

The book's strength is stimulation rather than demonstration; it is too short to develop what it suggests. The accounts of Hamilton's sex life, Jay's "conspicuously aquiline nose," and Madison's erudition in the classics are left unlinked to their arguments in *The Federalist* and elsewhere. It is hard to tell whether certain unfootnoted passages of dialogue were written by the authors or the subjects; they sound pretty televisiony. Too often the arguments are presented in such truncated form as to suggest that their mere formulation or statement carried the day, like some epigram of King Solomon. The debate among the Framers themselves is barely dealt with. Anyone who wants the story of the argument about this or that provision of the Constitution should read another book.

Far more intriguing is Morris's peek at the bigger picture. He is amazed that *any* real national government was constructed. The "Nation" had been at war against a common enemy for years when, in 1781, the Articles of Confederation set up what amounted to not much more than a diplomatic conclave. Congress, under the Articles, was so puerile that John Hancock, elected its president in 1785, took the title but not the trouble to attend any sessions. Despots took American hostages without fear of retaliation. Well after the victory at Yorktown, John Adams wrote from London that he was "regarded by the British court as a cipher." In 1786, postwar depression hit hard. Hamilton described the years 1784 to 1789 as "almost the last stage of national humiliation." George Washington was still there as the nation's hero, but he was a strong, silent type; no Teddy Roosevelt was there to whip up nationalism. Morris's trio comes through, in his account, not as public leaders but as

wheeler-dealers continually tap dancing around their own convictions as they sensed what was possible in the shuttered-up sauna of the summer convention. They were pragmatists. No prophet was on hand.

The simple answer may be the right one. Desperate debtors in Massachusetts shut down courts and burned up records. The anarchy spread. That scared the creditor class into law-and-order action in Philadelphia. Even so, it is hard to explain why the folks back home were willing to buy into this novel scheme, even with its appended Bill of Rights. Characters such as Benjamin Franklin and George Mason, Morris's account suggests, may have had a good deal to do with seeing to it that America did not wind up as a jumble of Lichtensteins and Czechoslovakias. That large story, so often obscured by the relative itsy-bitsies of the Constitution, needs a new telling for a new age.

—James David Barber

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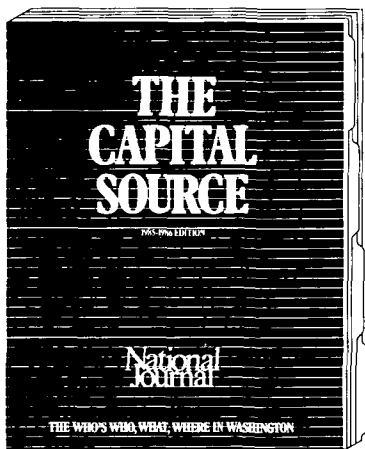
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**What the Leaders Read.**

A Commentary from  
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# WITHOUT REAL STANDARDS, AN APPRAISAL IS ANYBODY'S GUESS.

Many factors have contributed to the current crisis in real estate finance. One is faulty appraisals. This problem has a readily available remedy.

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No industry-wide standards of professional practice have ever been established for real estate appraising. No laws require appraisers to belong to a professional certifying organization. In fact, in most states a person can merely print some business cards and profess to be an appraiser, without any real qualifications or training whatsoever.

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There is a solution to all of this: the adoption of national legislation establishing uniform qualifications

and standards for appraisers. This would be reinforced through periodic re-certification and continuing education requirements. Encouraging appraisal clients to understand what constitutes a proper appraisal would also go far in assuring that these standards are followed, and would assist users in evaluating the appraisers they hire.

The Appraisal Institute has offered its own standards, certification bill, and education programs as models for nationwide appraisal legislation and training. Since 1932, we have continually refined our Code of Professional Ethics, Standards of Professional Practice, and course offerings to reflect the latest advances in appraisal methodology. We believe our standards are the best available measure of how professional real estate appraisals should be developed and communicated.

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