



Political Organizations.

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mer of 1967 came in the aftermath of one of the most extraordinary periods of liberal legislation . . . we have ever experienced.") , for the Vietnam war ("Liberals have simply got to restrain their enthusiasm for civilizing others"), for the excesses of the New Left, which Moynihan regards as a liberal heresy, and even for drying up the "wellsprings of emotion" and the "primal sense of community." Says Moynihan, ". . . to the rational liberal, the tribal attachments of blood and soil appear somehow unseemly and primitive. They repress or conceal them, much as others might a particularly lurid sexual interest."

Moynihan never defines "liberal," except to say that liberals are "concerned with values" while conservatives "think about consequences"—which is not very enlightening. In some places "liberals" are intellectuals who do not appreciate the values of the working class. In others, "liberals" are labor union leaders unable to appreciate the virtues of the intellectuals' revenue-sharing proposals because they are blinded by the liberal myth that state and local governments are reactionary. Eventually the reader abandons the search for consistency and realizes that "liberal" is just a convenient designation for those whom Moynihan regards as muddle-headed or wrong.

This is a peevish review, but it is a peevish book. The individual essays have some interest for the intellectual history of our time, but the lessons that Moynihan draws from that history are mainly negative and singularly unhelpful for the future. There are no suggestions, no constructive proposals for better coping. He is just fussing at us all for not having been smarter and more realistic and more fore-handed. Perhaps there was a time when we all needed to be reminded that our system is not run by philosopher-saints, but that time is not now.

Alice M. Rivlin

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Political Organizations by James Q. Wilson. New York, Basic Books, 1973.—359 pp. \$10.95.

As we have learned to expect from James Q. Wilson, his latest book is full of insightful observations elicited from well-chosen empirical cases. The questions he addresses have long intrigued political scientists. For example, observers of the American scene since Tocqueville have noted that politically, Americans are a nation of "joiners." While typical contemporary interpretations revolve around political culture, Wilson discusses the larger question of the structural constraints which facilitate or inhibit formation of political associations. Comparing the political structures of England, France, and the United States with the number of politically active voluntary associations in each country, and then making the same kind of comparisons *within* the United States, between machine- and nonmachine-run cities as well as strong-mayor versus weak-

mayor cities, Wilson concludes that there is a direct positive relationship between greater decentralization and dispersion of political authority and the proliferation of voluntary political associations.

Wilson also explores how social structure limits or encourages associational possibilities, asking, e.g., under what conditions lower-class persons will join political associations. The economic, social, and psychological position of the lower-class person sets up a formidable barrier to his participation in political associations: "economically, he cannot afford to defer his gratifications, psychologically, he may be unable to do so, and, socially, he is uncomfortable with unfamiliar surroundings and unfamiliar with comfortable ones" (p. 72). The few political or related associations which have succeeded in inducing lower-class persons to join have had to operate within these tight constraints. The point is aptly illustrated by a case history of the Massachusetts Welfare Rights Organization, which at its high point in 1970 had enrolled approximately 4000 welfare mothers in its local chapters by promising—and delivering—to each a direct material benefit within a short time after she had attended her first meeting. Though ingenious in its details, Wilson notes that the MWRO's strategy was not without flaws: after obtaining their benefits or having complaints settled, members tended to drop out. Moreover, the strategy was peculiarly vulnerable to government action since it was based on the bureaucracy's own rules.

The difficulties of the MWRO in maintaining itself over time point to another issue. Why is it, Wilson asks, that some political organizations, like NAACP, can grow and continue to flourish for decades while others, like SNCC and CORE, fade quickly from the scene? The answer is to be found in examining the congruence between the incentives for participation the organization offers to its members, the degree of individual member commitment required to maintain the organization and achieve its goals, and the realism of an organization's goals and strategies. The NAACP has persevered so long because early in its history it developed a structure which required little of the average members, permitted flexibility in the incentives employed at the branch level, limited its purposes to fairly specific goals widely approved in the black community, and engaged in campaigns that made it possible to win some short-run victories. By contrast, the organizational features of CORE and SNCC manifested a built-in "suicidal" tendency. Both were "redemptive associations," orienting themselves toward goals which were virtually unattainable since they required a total transformation of society and a total commitment from each member. While for the NAACP, the narrower gap between expectations and payoffs and the higher ratio between goal attainment and personal commitment, produced a sense of ongoing success in the minds of members, the opposite situation bred feelings of frustration in SNCC and CORE members, culminating in a nihilism which destroyed their organizations.

Wilson also discusses contemporary theorists, Mancur Olson in particular, as well as classical thinkers such as Robert Michels. Wilson's chief quarrel with Olson's "logic of collective action" is that in explaining why organizations do not necessarily emerge spontaneously to represent any aroused or socially important interest, Olson's theory ends by being unable to account for much of the associational activity which does occur. According to Olson, men behave in a rational self-interested manner, which precludes their joining a large organization seeking either a "class" objective or a "public good" since (1) the potential contribution of any single member cannot significantly affect the organization's chances of attaining its objective and (2) should the benefits be gained, the nonmember will enjoy them equally with the member. Wilson points out that the flaws in Olson's argument lie first in his limitation of "rationality" to actions which are rational from the viewpoint of the organization's goals, rather than those of the individual, and second in his implicit characterization of the rational self-interested man as *homo economis*. In thus defining his terms, Olson overlooks such important "rational self-interested" motivations as the desire to augment one's prestige by joining an organization, the desire to fraternize with one's fellows, or the desire to perform acts which give one a sense of "personal moral worth." Theoretically one could broaden the model to include noneconomic motivations such as power, prestige, sociability, and moral purpose. However, while all the relevant parameters of economic choice can be stated in common terms—i.e., dollars—it is difficult to imagine how one could discover how many units of status a person would forego to obtain a unit of power, or what a unit of status is and whether it would remain the same from one person to another or for one person in different contexts.

Wilson's exceptions to Michels' "iron law of oligarchy" are similarly astute. He points out that labor unions are actually a special case of voluntary association: it is only in organizations where the incentives are primarily material—and especially where some form of coercion (such as the closed shop) prevents members from quitting—that leadership will tend to become oligarchical. Where the incentives offered to members are "solidary" or "purposive" either exclusively or in addition to material benefits, member commitment, hence participation, will be high and leaders will be constrained in their actions by the knowledge that disaffected members can always "vote with their feet."

Finally, Wilson presents evidence that far from becoming more conservative as the elites become more solidly established, and more bureaucratic, the converse is often the rule. A shift toward conservatism is likely to reflect a change in the organization's incentive system from "purposive" to "material." The point is underscored when one compares the political stance taken by American "bread-and-butter" unions today relative to more purposive British trade unions, which have managed to retain the aura of a social movement.

Wilson is explicitly wary of general theories since, as he puts it, they tend to

"overpredict the phenomenon in question." As we see it, however, his emphasis on the character of the inducements offered to participants in political organizations, as well as many other more specific points, could easily find a home in the compliance theory set forth in *A Comparative Analysis of Complex Organizations*.

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Impeachment: The Constitutional Problems by Raoul Berger. Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1973.—xii, 345 pp. \$14.95.

The Impeachment and Trial of Andrew Johnson by Michael Les Benedict. New York, W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1973.—x, 212 pp. \$6.95.

Once a subject that elicited only casual attention, impeachment has become a topic of intense journalistic and partisan discussion. It seems almost providential that long scholarly silence on impeachment should have been broken just before the first serious consideration of impeaching and convicting a president in over a century. These two books represent some of the best work done. The authors have set different tasks for themselves, but there are interesting similarities in the books as well.

The reader who is familiar with Raoul Berger's previous work will open the present volume expecting a deeply researched and carefully reasoned discussion, and he will not be disappointed. There is more sense in this relatively small volume than in a score of briefs and statements from the parties in and observers of our present controversy over impeachment. Berger has performed the thoroughly meritorious task of demonstrating convincingly the rich historical meaning underpinning the vague phrases found in the Constitution.

In the best tradition of American legal scholarship, he begins with British usage and traces the development of impeachment in both law and practice on both sides of the Atlantic. The second chapter, "High Crimes and Misdemeanors," struck this reviewer as the heart of the book. Berger argues that the ambiguity of that now famous phrase in the Constitution is merely superficial. In neither Great Britain nor the United States was it intended to be limited to indictable crimes. The fact that the first use of the phrase (1386) substantially predates the use of the term "misdemeanor" in criminal law together with the regular use of the impeachment process by Parliament to discipline servants of the Crown lead Berger to conclude that "high Crimes and Misdemeanors" composed a category of *political* crimes against the state. In the United States,