volvement with the social fabric. At this juncture Mr. Edwards's thesis takes an interesting turn. He argues that the Romantics tended to anesthetize their concerns for social change, finding the symbolic formulations, as in Blake's Prophetic Books, more congenial to the poetic temperament than the more direct confrontation of satire. To anesthetize mass suffering and political injustice is, Edwards charges, to anesthetize the immediate powers of the artist. After a brilliant reading of Blake's "The Human Abstract," where we are reminded that nature offers no better model for successful tyranny than the human brain's inclination to reductive, mechanical reason, Edwards presses the aestheticist argument by pointing out how the idiosyncratic exclusiveness of Blake's later work assures its unavailability to the ordinary intelligence. Edwards warns of a quality of self-dramatization that hampers Blake's genius (but isn't this obsessive sense of self, as in Whitman, the politically igniting value of the Romantics?), of a hermetic language of private symbol that contradicts Blake's early impulse to convert the world to simple truths.

Blake, of course, has been more important for our time than for his, and populist expectations of his poetry are barren. Edwards, while extremely sensitive to Blake's words and skillful in his poetic analysis, seems fundamentally wrong in a failure of sympathy with the intentions of poetry after 1798. While he reveals the artistic weakness of Shelley's "The Mask of Anarchy," he avoids Byron and Whitman and seems inconclusive with Wordsworth. He argues that the Victorians further the Romantic withdrawal into aesthetic pattern, but does not consider the implications of dogmatic statement in as political a poem as Tennyson's "Locksley Hall." The problem of statement, as in Pope's "Essay on Man," is the precarious edge dividing poetry and politics; modern poetry has relied on direction and the objective image in order to transcend statement, and Edwards interprets this as neutral uncertainty.

The chapter on modern poetry is the most flawed part of Edwards's book. He begins with a good essay on Yeats's "Easter 1916" that shows how the poet's characteristic argument with himself captured the complexity of response that the Easter Rebellion deserved. Edwards does not see, however, that the crucial third stanza—where the revolutionists' implacability is metaphorically represented as a stone to trouble the living stream—is what he has termed, in connection with the Romantics, "aestheticizing." Yet Yeats's complexity of response occurs precisely because of the animating imagination of this stanza. In the remainder of the chapter Edwards avoids Pound (surely the most political poet of our time, and the one who paid most dearly for his views) and decides instead to deal with Eliot's "Coriolanus" and Auden's "September 1, 1939." He reveals some of his own bias by admitting he selected Auden's poem to illustrate the difficulty the modern mind has with political subjects. The choice of Lowell's "The March" is a reflection of the "pathos of one's public impotence," and here again Mr. Edwards seems more determined to substantiate a thesis than to explore Lowell's art.

One wants to praise Edwards for often using poems that have been less in fashion, less exhausted by criticism, and this is especially true of the poets he treats with most command: Spenser, Marvell, Dryden and Pope. However, beginning with the Romantics, the poems discussed seem more suited to the theme of the political ineffectuality of the modern poet than to the broad scope of the relationship of poetry to politics. Still, if he is more successful with poets through the eighteenth century, at least that much has been mastered for us.

As Yeats once admonished Pound, poets are as uneasy with political life as "the first composers of Sea-chanties in an age of Steam." Those who reinvent the acts of mythical heroes can hardly be expected to offer more than tin wreaths to modern puniness.

Reinhold Niebuhr: Prophet to Politicians by Ronald H. Stone
(Abingdon; 272 pp.; $8.00)

Franklin Sherman

William V. Shannon of the New York Times has recently suggested that George McGovern's challenge to Richard Nixon's foreign policy may be viewed as a revival of the idealism of the Social Gospel, as distinct from the Niebuhrian realism that has governed U.S. foreign policy during the past twenty-five years. The suggestion has a prima facie attractiveness. In dealing with China and the USSR Nixon and Kissinger have indeed shown themselves masters of the balance-of-power game, and in the cautiousness of their plan for withdrawal from Vietnam have revealed their conviction that, however loud may be the domestic protest, international affairs cannot be made subject to moral considerations in any direct or simple sense. McGovern and his followers, by way of contrast, are fixed with moral indignation. America must cease the killing, must stop collaborating with tyrannical regimes. "McGovern," writes Shannon, "would bring to national leadership the energy, confidence, and moral determination of an earlier, less doubt-ridden, more innocent America."

The suggestion begins to break down, however, when one recalls that many of the Niebuhrian realists—such as John Bennett among the theologians and Hans Morgenthau among the political scientists—were among the earliest and severest crit-
ics of U.S. policy in Southeast Asia, and that Reinhold Niebuhr himself clearly perceived the folly of our involvement in what he called the "quagmire" of Vietnam. True, Niebuhr was no isolationist, and in the years following World War II he urged America to exercise world responsibility commensurate with its power. But at the same time he warned against the imperial mentality: A statement he made in an essay of 1952 was to prove prophetic: "Nothing is more dangerous to a powerful nation than the temptation to obscure the limits of its power. It will be our undoing if we imagine ourselves the masters of contemporary history." Niebuhr was well aware of the point at which moral and prudential considerations coincide; and it is this point that McGovern has located and at which he is pressing his attack. Here the true idealism and the true realism converge.

The new book on Niebuhr by Ronald H. Stone, Associate Professor of Christian Ethics at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, gives special attention to this issue of idealism vs. realism in Niebuhr's thought, a problem which Stone sees rooted in "the tension in his own person between Christian perfectionism and political cynicism." Neither of these ever reigned unchallenged, but their relationship changed in different periods of Niebuhr's career. When he emerged from Yale Divinity School in 1915, Reinhold Niebuhr was a typical product of the progressivist Protestantism of the prewar period. Partly out of reaction to his own German-American background, he was a strong advocate of Wilsonian idealism and of America's entry into the war. But in the 1920's, disillusioned by the revengeful spirit of Versailles and instructed by his experience with the labor-management struggle in Detroit, he moved toward the realism expressed in his first widely read book, Leaves From the Notebook of a Tamed Cynic, and a few years later, in Moral Man and Immoral Society. On questions of international affairs he declared himself a pacifist, a position he gave up when Mussolini invaded Ethiopia in 1935. Niebuhr was fully aware of the threat of Hitlerism, and Stone cites a remarkable article published already in 1924, "The German Klan," in which Niebuhr warned of the Nazi menace.

During the 1930's Niebuhr's views both on world events and on America's domestic problems were deeply influenced by his appropriation of Marxist categories, especially the notion of the class struggle and the belief that progress could come only through catastrophe. But he was never uncritical either toward Marxist theory or toward the reality of Soviet communism, as Stone demonstrates fully. By the end of the decade the lineaments of his postwar left-of-center-but-anti-Communist position had appeared. During this same period, as he prepared the Gifford Lectures (The Nature and Destiny of Man), he was also working his way ever more deeply into Christian theology, and Stone sees these two developments as interrelated. For Niebuhr, he suggests, "Marxist realism had exposed the illusions of liberalism, and Augustinian realism exposed Marxist illusions."

The result was a mature position that Stone, choosing his words carefully, designates "a pragmatic-liberal synthesis in Christian political philosophy." It was liberal, in that the motives of freedom, human rights and a modest but sober hope for social amelioration came to the fore again; pragmatic, in that all ideologically consistent schemes for the achievement of such goals were rejected. Every political proposal was to be evaluated quite concretely, in terms of its likely results.

Such is the general development of Niebuhr's social and political thought presented in this very impressive interpretation. Stone gives careful attention to detail and draws on a multitude of sources, both familiar and obscure, extending throughout Niebuhr's career. Particularly valuable is Stone's tracing of what he calls "the rise and fall of the socialist alternative," as embodied in the Fellowship of Socialist Christians and the journal Radical Religion, later Christianity and Society. Also very illuminating is his analysis of the parallels between Niebuhr and William James, not only in their pragmatic views of ethics but also in their epistemology, their notion of verification, and their claim for a position midway between optimism and pessimism (described by James as "meliorism"). Stone presses a good point too far, however, when he attempts to show that even Niebuhr and Dewey were really brothers under the skin, that the raging battle between Columbia Teachers College and Union Seminary in the 1930's was nothing more than "an intramural affair." Surely this would be to empty the qualifying adjective in the phrase "Christian pragmatism," as a description of Niebuhr's position, of all meaning. When, in addition to their agreement on particular policy questions, the total context of the two men's thought is taken into account, the comparison collapses.

Stone discusses and, in many cases, attacks the interpretations of other scholars who have written on Niebuhr. Thus Eduard Heinmann and Will Herberg are adjudged wrong in finding a conservative strain in his political philosophy; Charles West in considering him a Barthian; Paul Lehmann in pointing to Christology as fundamental to his thought; etc. Probably some of these scholars will reply, a polemical exchange that Niebuhr would enjoy. Stone has the advantage of access to the writings of Niebuhr's last years, including correspondence between himself and Niebuhr dating to within a few weeks of Niebuhr's death in June, 1971. But the availability of this material may have been a disadvantage, too, since it seems to have tempted the author to try too hard to find distinctions between Niebuhr's views in these late writings and those in his earlier, classic works. Thus it is true, as Stone points out, that Niebuhr does not use theological language as freely in Man's Nature and His Communities (1965) as in The Nature and Destiny of Man (1941-43). But the purpose of the two works is
quite different, and Niebuhr had always shown himself able to use either theological or nontheological language as the occasion required; compare his articles and editorials in Christianity and Crisis with those in The Nation or The New Leader. It is true also that Niebuhr, in the 1965 volume, is deeply critical of the parochialism of the religious communities, especially Protestantism; but this is nothing new in Niebuhr. His appreciation of secular sources of wisdom, emphasized in 1965, was anticipated by his call in the Gifford Lectures for a supplementation and correction of the Reformation by the insights of the Renaissance, as well as by his appropriation of Marxism. The evidence, therefore, does not support the thesis that these features of his earlier works indicate a move by Niebuhr away from the specifics of the Christian faith, as Stone implies. Early and late, he showed an ability to combine the Christian and the modern, the religious and the secular, in a way that baffles even his best interpreters.

The author terms his work an “intellectual autobiography” of Niebuhr, and he offers sufficient detail to enable the reader to place Niebuhr’s developing thought against the background of his life, though for vividness of portraiture it can hardly compare with June Bingham’s The Courage to Care, which has just been reissued with an addendum on Niebuhr’s last years. Stone’s work is more an essay in conceptual analysis and clarification, and as such it deserves to be taken seriously by students of Niebuhr’s thought.

Political Hysteria in America:
The Democratic Capacity for Repression
by Murray B. Levin
(Basic Books; 312 pp.; $8.50)

Leslie J. Leopold

Most of us would prefer to forget about Red Scares altogether and if we are reminded, it is comfortable to treat them as an infrequent aberration from our otherwise decent social pattern. Pluralist intellectuals, like Richard Hofstadter, Daniel Bell and Seymour Lipset, have an even more comforting explanation. Red Scares are the price our system pays when the masses are inspired to deal with highly charged moral issues. In the pluralist view, we could best avoid political hysteria by allowing responsible leaders of interest groups to deal in the practical world of bread-and-butter issues, leaving aside the troublesome moral claims which leave no room for compromise and tend toward dogmatism and fanatic repression.

And then there is Murray Levin. Levin demonstrates that the great Red Scares were not odd exceptions to the rule, not the loss of some mythic pluralist balance, but an ugly symptom of a prevailing, continuing sickness in our political souls. American pluralism, far from curing the disease, is one of the causes.

In the Red Scare of 1919, for example, Levin finds that the turmoil was not created by a mass which ran amok but by a combination of various elite groups which saw their diverse interests best served by fostering an almost totally fantastic belief that America was threatened by a Bolshevik conspiracy. Big business, concerned about the growing power and militancy of organized labor after World War I (in 1919 there were 3,600 strikes involving four million workers), was in the forefront. The corporations seemed to sense, Levin states, that “organized labor was not only a major force for change, but a force that questions the sanctity of private ownership and the process by which wages, hours, and profits were to be negotiated.” So informed, the captains of the free-enterprise system, led by Judge Gary of U.S. Steel, went on a massive strike-breaking crusade. Using the backdrop of the Soviet revolution, they successfully portrayed organized labor as part of an international conspiracy that was set on destroying everything sacred to America, from sexual decency to motherhood.

Levin relates how these respectable business leaders used every deceptible tactic they could find to avoid negotiating the strikers’ demands for the right to collectively bargain to improve their wages, hours and working conditions. Labor spies and detectives were used to infiltrate and collect false evidence for deporting immigrant union men. U.S. Steel reproduced thousands of copies of the Communist Manifesto, in the name of the strikers, and then had them confiscated and displayed to the American public as proof of the conspiracy. And through these means U.S. Steel successfully smashed the strike of their 250,000 workers and dismantled their union for years to come.

But, as Levin points out, business could not have created such a myth without the help of other elements of the pluralist coalition. Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer, along with the young, energetic J. Edgar Hoover, immensely enhanced their careers by promoting the conspiracy through deportations, phony raids, illegal detainments and fabricated plots. They expanded their Justice Department empires by requesting and receiving congressional funds for additional personnel to fight the Reds. In addition, Palmer used the issue to catapult him to a possible presidential nomination.

Yet another willing partner was the American press, our “bastion of freedom.” With a keen nose for hot views and a sharp eye for increased profits from expanded circulation, almost every major newspaper hopped on the anti-Communist band-