

Psychiatric social criticism, as I noted at the outset, is a remarkably powerful instrument of thought. It is also a powerful system of rhetoric. It can be used, in a debunking and disparaging manner, to reduce political movements to clinical pathology, as in last year's wilting theories of student protest as Oedipal rebel-

lion. And it can also be used, in reverse fashion, to elevate the sensibility of some group to the status of "psychobiological universals," to use one of Lifton's noble phrases. Perhaps because psychiatric criticism has the aura and vocabulary of science, it is the perfect refuge for both spleen and sentimentality.

## The Institutional Imperative

by Robert N. Kharasch

(Charterhouse; 258 pp.; \$7.95)

## Implementation

by Jeffrey L. Pressman and Aaron B. Wildavsky

(University of California Press; 182 pp.; \$7.50)

### Robert Lekachman

These quite different ways of looking at American public administration arrive at strikingly similar conclusions about the quality of government action (low) and the prospects of substantial improvement (dim). Kharasch's subtitle, *How to Understand the United States Government and Other Bulky Objects*, suggests the archness of his approach. After the fashion of Parkinson's laws and Peter's equally popular principle, Kharasch buttresses the institutional imperative to survive forever and ever with Three Axioms of Institutional Action, Five Attributes of the same, a Law of Attributed Importance, a Theorem of Irrelevancy of Attributes and so on. One might be annoyed by the gimmickry, except that the author, a Washington lawyer experienced in practice before regulatory agencies, has a substantial, though not entirely original, point to make and some grisly tales to illustrate it.

Kharasch's central proposition, reminiscent of Galbraith's argument that a technostucture of experts runs large corporations in its own interest, is that whatever a Washington agency *says* it is doing, its

real objective is institutional survival. The spread of drug abuse, for example, serves not as an argument for terminating or at least reorganizing the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, but as a case for enlarging its budget. Institutionally, nothing succeeds better than fifty years of failure. As for success: The March of Dimes did not self-destruct thirty seconds or thirty months after the manufacture of the Salk vaccine.

The pervasive aspiration of institutions to immortality possesses critically important implications in the realm of individual conduct. For the good apparatchik, personal success becomes indistinguishable from the financial health and public reputation of his organization. Acting out of *raison de bureau* as out of old-fashioned *raison d'état*, an otherwise honorable individual will lie, falsify reports and conceal damaging information. Presumably few of the hundreds of Equity Funding employees enmeshed in its gaudy frauds personally profited, except in the form of job security and occasional promotions. None of the Air Force officers who burned orders and faked reports made a dollar

*Sometimes I pray  
for nuclear war—  
But I've never yet  
said Amen\**

## A STRATEGY FOR PEACE:

Reflections of a Christian Pacifist

by Frank Epp

Will America go into another war?

In these stirring and searching essays on war and peace, Epp—a Mennonite pacifist—faces head on this and dozens of other questions that have been gnawing at the consciences of citizens not only in this decade, but for centuries. "Christian nations, such as America, easily go to war," says Epp, "because the churches lack a theology of peace. The peace movement of the early 60's faded quickly for this very reason: it lacked adequate religious foundations." Among the essays included are: \**Sometimes I Pray For Nuclear War—But I've Never Yet Said Amen, On Being Afraid of Communism, The Law Above the Law of the Land, The Unrealism of Militarism, The Unilateral Disarmament, and The Church and Nationalism.*

An eloquent attempt to reconcile the peace movement with American religion, A STRATEGY FOR PEACE is an appeal "to those who believe in a kingdom greater than America . . . in a King greater than presidents . . . and in a law higher than the law of the land."

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from their deceit. *All* government programs must either succeed or be made, by any means necessary, to look successful.

Pressman and Wildavsky, two Berkeley political scientists, focus upon a single case in their own backyard, the attempt by the Economic Development Administration at the height of Great Society euphoria to increase employment in the depressed city of Oakland. Readers must ignore the political science jargon in order to feel the full impact of the authors' depressing message. They argue that even when Washington enthusiastically supports a program and local business and community responses are mostly favorable, even when financial support is prompter and more nearly adequate than usual, programs are still likely to fail for want of effective implementation. In Oakland there were simply too many actors, among them community groups, labor unions, local officials, the Navy, businessmen, the Department of Commerce and the Department of Labor. Many approvals and clearances were required, but interests were different, commitments varied in intensity, and time passed. In the end nothing much happened, and the ceaseless whirring of the bureaucratic wheels generated few jobs.

What is to be made of these sad tales from the bureaucratic front? The three writers seem to agree that it is astounding when a public initiative is reasonably successful. Since most private initiatives also fail, why, inquire Pressman and Wildavsky, should anyone expect more of government? The odds against success, always long, mount when, as in Oakland, much coordination of unwieldy agencies and many local approvals are necessary. The odds get longer still when the objective of additional employment is approached indirectly through subsidy of new business enterprises. Success is impossible when Congress instructs agencies to pursue intolerably vague objectives (such as operations of TV channels in the public interest) or inconsistent goals. Antitrust is an eighty-three-year-old

failure because the Department of Justice has been instructed to restore competition without annoying the major corporations which, directly or indirectly, finance both major parties. It is easy to predict that environmental protection will falter for much the same set of reasons. How can the air be cleansed without annoying either the auto producers or the drivers? In short, and on occasion, the institutional imperative serves public as well as bureaucratic ends. Any time the public and the politicians want to act against sin and at the same time leave the sinners in possession of the fruits of sin, they pass a resounding law and mandate vague aims, administered by a scantily funded agency.

Yet the argument implies a corollary. Government programs can be effective on two conditions. Congress must be in dead earnest, and it must approach its objective simply and directly. The New Deal's employment programs are a convenient illustration of both rules. During the 1930's Roosevelt and the rest of the country were deeply concerned about mass unemployment and serious in the determination to alleviate it. The Works Progress Administration (WPA) directly employed millions of men and women who otherwise would have rotted in idleness. The National Youth Administration kept students in high school and college with part-time job stipends. The Civilian Conservation Corps gave a decent occupation in wholesome surroundings to a small horde of youths. These were all straight paths to clear destinations. Paraphrasing Calvin Coolidge, the best way to give a person a job is to hire him.

Contrast this with Lyndon Johnson's "unconditional" war against poverty. First it is made clear that poverty is more than a shortage of cash. As Banfield has insisted, poverty may result from the inability of the lower class to defer gratification. After Moynihan, it may be the result of rickety family structure, a heritage of slavery. The cause, à la Jensen, may be located in weak genes. But poverty is *also* low in-

come. It is hard to believe that the culturally or genetically underprivileged will not bear their lot in better heart with a somewhat larger income. At any time in the last decade, financial poverty could have been eliminated by \$10-11 billion in subsidies to poor people, a third of the peak Vietnam outlays, an eighth of the current Pentagon budget. Yet OEO never spent more than \$2 billion in any one year, an uncomfortable proportion of it to support middle-class professionals. We could have won the War on Poverty; we didn't much want to do so.

Do I exaggerate in saying that government really *can* accomplish important things when enough of the population genuinely want them and accept their cost? Americans as a united people pursued World War II to ultimate victory. As a divided people this country has failed to impose its imperial will on Southeast Asia. When jobs were really wanted, the New Deal created them. If a time comes when most Americans urgently demand heavy taxes on inheritance and greater equity in the division of other tax burdens between rich, poor and middling, I deduce that government is entirely capable of achieving these simple ends by direct means.

Watergate furnishes a final moral. There are times when the institutional imperative protects liberty by impeding innovation. The Nixon White House gang was driven in frustration to create their famous plumbers' unit because J. Edgar Hoover, may his soul rest in bureaucratic peace, balked at sharing information and control with the CIA and other law enforcement rivals. Eager as the White House was to audit and tax its myriad enemies, the Internal Revenue Service resisted, less, one guesses, out of principle than out of the calculation that a permanent organization has to get along with Democrats as well as Republicans.

The bureaucrat's single ideology is the good and enduring health of his agency. In the era of Watergate such freedom from zeal is no bad thing.