

observing the boycott to register their observance; would prevent them from full observance; and would lay them open to civil-rights suits in a number of cases.

Note again, though, the use of the word "Jewish" in the quotation above. The complexities of modern industry and commerce are great. Few outside the ranks of the idealists would expect to find the majority of companies in an economy to be insensitive to informal pressure; or to even the wilder wishes of a good customer. In surveying the story of the Arab boycott it does not require a cynic to emphasize the fact that it is the mighty companies—Ford; or Hilton, which declined to accept the Boycott Office's prohibition on the construction of the Tel Aviv Hilton, and saw the Arab summit of 1974 nonetheless take place in the Hilton in Rabat—who most readily resist the importunings of Damas-

cus. But on the way to these successes small companies, and cowardly companies, have suffered; and individual citizens of third countries have suffered in unknown numbers. Lord Mancraft, a prominent British Jew, was driven from the board of the Norwich Union insurance company; and General Pierre Koenig, a French war hero, from the board of a major French company. If men of that eminence could be punished for their ethnic character or their sympathy, how many humbler citizens have been done down? And how many small companies, uncertain of government protection, have silently acquiesced under threat?

As things stand, the most powerful, and the most resistant, companies are American, just as the United States has been the foremost country in its refusal to comply with the injuries offered its citizens by the

Arabs. It is time—especially following the 1977 meetings of American and European parliamentary delegations—for the American government to give lead and sustenance to the less secure, less certain, European governments as well. With her enormous commercial power, the United States could enforce the sanction stated in international insurance conventions, to the effect that those observing trade boycotts automatically lose all insurance entitlement. Likewise, the U.S., which has engaged in a great deal of negotiation about the ethics of international trade with the EEC countries, could ensure their support for the anti-boycott provisions of various UN resolutions and of the OECD. It is a poor sham of a country that cannot protect its own economy and citizens; and the United States has been the first in any degree to act on that apprehension. □

BOOK REVIEW

The Abuse of Power: The Permanent Government and the Fall of New York

Jack Newfield and Paul DuBrul / Viking Press / \$12.50

Steven D. Lagerfeld

The notion of a "permanent government," a ruling elite drawn from sources as diverse as banking and party politics, is an enduring feature of populist reform ideology. This "elite" has always served as a convenient culprit for real and imagined ills, a role rendered superficially plausible by the ease with which the group can be identified and uncommon powers attributed to it. Jack Newfield, who over the years has exhaustively catalogued New York City's dirty political laundry in the pages of the *Village Voice*, and Paul DuBrul would have us believe that a ruling elite of no more than 2,000 men seeking personal gain was responsible for New York City's fiscal collapse. Such a misunderstanding of government powers does more than obscure the true nature of the crisis. It reveals the chronic self-deception of reform: the illusion that there exists an elite with enough power to create and perpetuate urban ills, and that reformers endowed with the same powers could therefore easily cure them after acceding to political office.

This was clearly the assumption in the first mayoral campaign of John Lindsay, who on his first day in office delivered an attack on the "power brokers" who had allegedly run the city. He quickly set out to humble the municipal labor unions, to tame the bureaucracy, and to pass ambitious legislation in the state capital, and he suffered quick defeats. The most notable

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was the crippling 12-day strike by transit workers, which began within months of Lindsay's inauguration. A similar disaster occurred when Lindsay moved precipitously to decentralize the school system and succeeded, unnecessarily, in alienating the teaching professionals and the middle class whose cooperation could have minimized the dislocation.

Lindsay's eight-year tenure brought a series of defeats at the hands of the forces he sought to subdue, which added to the city's fiscal burdens and impaired the administration's ability to address chronic urban problems. As a result of concessions made by Lindsay to prevent another strike and "buy" union support, or at least neutrality, wages in the transit system (to cite one small example) rose 117 percent in the decade before the recent agreement, and now make up over 82 percent of the mass-transit budget at a time when the system's physical plant is in desperate need of revitalization.

Lindsay's mistakes were not merely tactical errors—they reflected a profound flaw in reform ideology. In their rush to supplant the "permanent government," the reformers failed to recognize that it was one thing to win elections and quite another to govern. Lindsay adeptly put together an electoral coalition of upper-middle-class reformers and minority groups, but at the expense of support from the city's major political institutions and much of the middle class. These institutions, released from the constraints and benefits of participating in the governing

coalition, suddenly became outsiders, freed of the obligation to compromise and encouraged to pursue their goals more aggressively. The reform constituency, a loose and formless aggregation, did not provide the kind of organized support necessary to withstand these pressures. It raised instead its own chorus of inchoate and unrestrained demands for reforms and services.

Without the means to resist the demands of groups which were themselves without any incentives to exercise self-restraint, Lindsay caved in. The cost of social services, perhaps the leading example, more than tripled during the Lindsay years and was also the only major category to expand its share of the budget, growing from 14 percent of the first Lindsay budget to 22 percent of the last. And much of the increase went to the welfare bureaucracy, which consumes one of every three New York social-service dollars.

What followed had been foreshadowed during the administration of Lindsay's predecessor, Robert Wagner, who, after two terms in office as a Tammany Hall Democrat, unfurled his colors and ran as a reform Democrat in 1961. Wagner managed to retain much of his original support, particularly among the municipal labor unions, on the strength of past allegiances and his administration's equanimity. Yet his switch to reform politics marked the beginning of the fragmentation of the city's politics. In the final year of Wagner's tenure, the first in a long series

of deficits appeared in the city's budget. During the Lindsay administration, deficits grew steadily and were passed from year to year, resulting in an accumulated deficit of \$2.3 billion for the final Lindsay budget. When the crisis came in 1975 during the Beame administration, the accumulated deficit had reached \$3.3 billion, which had to be financed in a national short-term municipal securities market of only \$11 billion.

Newfield and DuBrul focus their criticism on the activities of the "permanent government" during the Beame years, ignoring the fact that most of the deficit was amassed prior to his administration. They are good reporters—the corruption they document is certainly real—but poor theorists. Their facts do not add up. Beame did indeed attempt to rebuild the Democratic Party organization, but the cost of patronage was relatively low compared to the persistent escalation in substantive budget areas. Nor was it a particularly wise investment, since years of exclusion from the center of government had left the party a weakened, inadequate power base. When the crisis finally struck, Beame, though a creature of the party, was

in essentially the same position as his predecessors and therefore without the support to carry out effectively the necessary cutbacks.

The inevitability of the crisis is something the authors prefer not to address. But a city cannot long continue to practice deficit finance, the equivalent of inflation, without printing its own money—a measure which even the boldest New Yorkers failed to consider. Newfield and DuBrul instead attribute the onset of the crisis to the machinations of a bankers' cabal, thus seeming to relieve New York's upper-middle-class reformers of their responsibility for the city's plight.

Those bankers, along with state and federal officials and representatives of the business community, did come to have a lot to say about the institutional arrangements established to oversee retrenchment. Through the Municipal Assistance Corporation, the Emergency Financial Control Board, and the apparatus of the federal loan program, they intervened to change a variety of the city's policies, from imposing tuition at the City University to raising subway fares. In an attempt artificially to impose restraint upon the muni-

cipal labor unions, they demanded and won extensive union pension-fund investments in city securities, thus linking more closely the fate of the unions with that of the city.

Many of the changes made under the aegis of these institutions have been unfortunate, but more importantly, many would have been unnecessary had the city's government been able to control the growth of its budget to begin with. It is hardly instructive to label the present arrangement undemocratic, much more useful to recognize that for more than a decade the city's government had already been less than democratic. That government withdrew recognition of the needs of the large middle-class and ethnic populations, and failed to make coherent the needs of its remaining constituency. Yet democratic government depends upon the restraint of its participants and the articulation of a meaningful order of public preferences which reflects the citizenry's desires without distorting them. The government in New York City that fostered the destruction of democratic practices was hardly a permanent one, it was simply unworkable. □

BOOK REVIEW

Dispatches

Michael Herr / Knopf / \$8.95

George S. Patton III

Dispatches by Michael Herr is an account of his experiences in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam war. As one who spent nearly three years of his life in Vietnam, in various capacities, I must say that I found Mr. Herr's book interesting. But, for the record, he gives little credit to any of the magnificent personalities I served over, with, and under during that period. According to Herr, very few of us there had much of a sense of pride, patriotism, or duty, virtues once considered the foundation of our country.

Mr. Herr speaks frequently of the "bone dumb grunts," and by this "handle" we must assume he is talking about the infantry. This characterization is entirely mistaken, and I doubt that our infantrymen would accept it. I think it is particularly tragic when one who has been called "the Stephen Crane of this century" describes infantry—especially Vietnam war infantry—in such a manner. Indeed, these soldiers were trying to fight a primarily infantry kind of war under some of the

most difficult battlefield and political conditions ever faced by American fighting men. They were confronted with a terribly difficult job: fighting for a confused and frustrated America in a war they were not permitted to win. By and large they performed well.

I believe that I speak for many commanders in that war, colonel and below, when I say that the fighting soldier was a "winner" in our books and not a "bone dumb grunt." The next time Mr. Herr writes of Vietnam, he should remember to research the local rules of engagement. As I recall, these included such constraints as "don't fire until fired upon," as well as free-fire zones. These rules, peculiar to the Vietnam war, restricted the ground combat soldier and, in several instances personally observed by this reviewer, cost him life and limb. The "bone dumb grunts" Mr. Herr speaks of generally complied with the rules and frequently paid the price. It was my lasting impression that their sense of duty confirmed General Douglas MacArthur's description of the American soldier as one of the world's noblest figures.

Throughout his book, Mr. Herr writes of his personal use of drugs and about

"getting stoned" while in the field. I would guess that his various "trips" may in some ways have affected his journalistic credibility. Herr's statistics on losses (both the enemy's and ours) are his and his alone (at least he identifies no source for them) and are of doubtful accuracy. His references to ".30 caliber automatic fire" are simply incorrect unless he is alluding to ARVN or Special Forces units. There was no such weapon used by the conventional units of the United States Army or Marine Corps in the Vietnam war.

This is a cynical, shallow report replete with most of the well-known four-letter words used in armies worldwide. In *Dispatches*, those who were against the war will find more grist for their mill. No one had much dedication, according to Mr. Herr. In my opinion, this is blatantly untrue. There was plenty of dedication at all levels within the uniformed services throughout the Vietnam war.

Despite the author's cynicism, there are parts of *Dispatches* which are quite well done; for example, Mr. Herr's description of Saigon:

Beautiful for once and only once, just past dawn flying toward the center of the city—at 800 feet.

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