

assure himself that religion is nothing but a danger to liberty. Although he opposes totalitarian regimes, it does not seem to have penetrated to the intelligence encased in his thick liberal skull that these regimes have all been officially and zealously atheistic. It is therefore completely beyond his power to perceive that the confidence in progress which was originally American and has reappeared frequently in American "progressives" is in our day to be found most strikingly in Reagan and in his fundamentalist supporters, and hardly at all in liberals like Schlesinger.

Schlesinger's loss of confidence is on view in his chapter, "Why the Cold War?" In his younger days a "Cold War liberal" if there ever was one, he now seems to be revising his opinions in response to the revisionist historians who have put the blame for the Cold War on the United States. Schlesinger repeatedly attacks these historians for attempting to describe the Cold War as a conflict of interests between traditional states. On the contrary, he says

it is a clash of ideas between a messianic totalitarian state and a capitalist democracy. But this promising criticism leads him to conclude merely that assessment of blame for the Cold War is irrelevant. His indignation at the amorality of interests quails before his belief in the relativity of moral ideas. His liberalism is full of blame but silent on its own behalf. It is for "public purpose"—but which?

Schlesinger's partisan history is a refreshing change from the bloodless objectivity of many of his fellow-historians, and this book can be recommended for both its plain talk and its style. Schlesinger shows himself open to instruction from minds greater than his own, if they belong to the dead; and he reproves the vanity of historians who think they know better than the participants what the issues were. But on the whole one cannot recommend that his example be followed. If it were, we should have his shrillness without his felicity, his unfairness without his sophistication, and his vacant liberalism without his liveliness. □

an associate professor of political science and sociology at Northwestern University, writes that polls largely measure the support for an abstraction called "equal rights for women." Americans like the idea of equal rights. But the state referenda have measured something further—whether voters truly want to change women's role in this country. The answer is no. You have here what historian John Lukacs characterizes as a distinction between public opinion and popular sentiment. Public opinion is the formal, high-toned stuff. Sentiment is what people really feel. In a crunch, sentiment is what prevails.

Knocking down the myth of the ERA's overwhelming popularity is only one of the brave tasks that Mansbridge takes on in *Why We Lost the ERA*. It is an extraordinarily honest and insightful book, all the more so because Mansbridge is a feminist and a fervent backer of the ERA. The test for me of a political writer is the willingness to make tough, critical judgments about a politician or an issue that the writer supports. When Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. finds fault with President Reagan, that's no big deal. I'm waiting for a critical word about some Kennedy. Anyway, Mansbridge passes the test. She likes the ERA, but that doesn't bias her analysis. I'm only sorry that some readers may pass up her book to read Mary Frances Berry's on the same subject. Berry, a professor of history and law at Howard University, is well known as a liberal noisemaker on the U.S. Civil Rights Commission. *Why ERA Failed* is better than you

might expect from Berry—its history of the ratification process is useful—but Mansbridge's book is far superior. Mansbridge offers a fair and subtle account of why the ERA went by the boards, without the hysterical conservative-bashing that marks most feminist screeds on the matter.

Mansbridge denigrates neither the arguments nor the motives of opponents of the ERA. The strategy of the amendment's advocates was to talk highmindedly about equal rights, push the amendment through 38 states, and let the Supreme Court decide what it would mean in real life. For well-grounded reasons, Mansbridge writes, opponents were leery of leaving the issue in the hands of judges. "If 'equal protection' could mean busing white children to black neighborhoods, if 'due process' could bar punishing people who everyone agreed had committed serious crimes, and if the 'penumbra' of the Bill of Rights gave women a right to abortions, one did not have to be a certifiable paranoid to suppose that guaranteeing men and women 'equality of rights under the law' might turn out also to have substantive consequences that legislators who supported the Amendment had not anticipated and that many of them would have opposed," she says. "... It seemed, then, that the ERA would give the Court another set of words to work with." Conservatives didn't have to be male chauvinist ogres or housewives of the Marabel Morgan school to want to avoid that.

Even Phyllis Schlafly, the leader of the anti-amendment forces, gets respectful treatment from Mansbridge. "The Amendment would have been ratified by 1975 or 1976 had it not been for Phyllis Schlafly's early and effective effort to organize potential opponents," she writes. Schlafly shrewdly moved the argument from one over equal rights to one centered on the practical effects the amendment might have, such as requiring combat duty by women and weakening the family. "Once opponents turned public attention to the Amendment's effects, they were already well on their way to winning," Mansbridge says. "Their exaggerations, while incurring some costs in credibility, succeeded in making the substantive effects of the Amendment a central issue in the debate." That was enough. "Because the amendment process requires a near consensus, the opponents had only to create enough doubt about the Amendment to prevent a consensus from forming." Without Schlafly's intervention, the consensus would have formed.

Mansbridge tosses out an interesting vignette that certainly matches my experience. She found Schlafly to be very accessible. It took one phone call for

WHY WE LOST THE ERA

Jane J. Mansbridge/University of Chicago Press/\$9.95 paper

WHY ERA FAILED: POLITICS, WOMEN'S RIGHTS, AND THE AMENDING PROCESS OF THE CONSTITUTION

Mary Frances Berry/Indiana University Press/\$17.95

Fred Barnes

Prior to last November's election, polls showed that a state equal rights amendment was all but certain to be ratified by the voters of Vermont. Nothing shocking in that, right? Vermont is a state that's a lot more liberal than its Republican tradition would lead you to believe. Liberal Democrats routinely win there nowadays (governor, senator), and a self-described socialist is the mayor of the state's largest city, the People's Republic of Burlington. Feminists were poised to stage their first big celebration since Walter Mondale knuckled under to the National Organization for Women and named Geraldine Ferraro as his Democratic vice presidential running mate. Surprise, surprise. The amendment lost, in an election year that otherwise gave conservatives practically nothing to cheer about.

There's an old lesson, freshly told, in the Vermont result: polls about equal rights amendments lie. And they've been lying for years. In 1975, polls showed that a majority favored state

Fred Barnes is a senior editor of the New Republic.

ERA's in New York and New Jersey. But 57 percent voted against an amendment in New York and 51 percent voted no in New Jersey. Three years later in Florida, polls showed an equal rights amendment would win voter approval by two-to-one. It lost two-to-one. In 1980 in Iowa, a pre-election poll found that a state ERA was favored by 48 to 23 percent. On election day, it failed by 55 to 45 percent. In Maine in 1984, support for a state ERA was pegged at 62 percent in a poll taken one month before the election. But it turned out that 63 percent voted against the amendment. What happened in Vermont, then, should have been no surprise at all. It was part of a trend.

If you're following the drift, the next step shouldn't be too hard. When the national ERA was up for ratification by the states, the average poll result showed it was backed 57 to 32 percent, seemingly a rock solid majority. There was no national referendum, but it's now safe to say that the amendment wasn't really that popular. And this helps explain why the ERA failed to become the twenty-seventh amendment to the Constitution. Jane Mansbridge,



Mansbridge to reach her. But "when I tried to reach [NOW President Eleanor] Smeal, it took months." Mansbridge notes that Smeal was simply "much more inaccessible to the average member than Phyllis Schlafly was." Maybe there were reasons for that, but I always found inaccessibility to be an unattractive trait. So does Mansbridge, I suspect.

Unlike the ordinary run of feminists, Mansbridge insists that homemakers weren't merely fantasizing when they concluded that both the ERA and the women's movement were not out to aid them. The amendment, after all, was a product of the movement, and the movement "was profoundly opposed to traditional conceptions of how families should be organized," she says. Feminists, from the time the women's movement began twenty years ago, have opposed homemaking as a full-time career. Indeed, this created a "genuine conflict of interest" between feminists and homemakers, one that the ERA exacerbated. "The very existence of full-time homemakers was incompatible with many goals of the women's movement, like the equal sharing of political and economic power," Mansbridge writes. "Women can never hold half the economically and politically powerful positions in the country if a greater proportion of women than men withdraw from competition from these positions." I can't argue with that.

Because of the ERA's close tie to the women's movement, homemakers were automatically skeptical of it, the author says. Furthermore, they stood to suffer tangible loss. It would deprive them of "some traditional protections and benefits," Mansbridge says. "While feminists intended to raise new and presumably better protections in place of the old, these were not strictly mandated by the ERA." Finally, women who stayed home with the kids had begun to feel *declass  *. They had suffered, partly because of the women's movement, "status degradation." And the ERA would reinforce that. Small wonder homemakers haven't lined up behind Smeal to support it.

Berry raises the possibility that the insurance industry, worried about being barred from issuing policies that are actuarially sound but make gender distinctions, was the moving force behind the effort to kill the ERA. To her credit, Mansbridge knocks down this canard. State legislators voted against the ERA "not because of massive organized lobbying by the insurance industry or large corporate contributions to their campaigns but because the cumulative impact of many influences, including district-based

organizing by [Schlafly's] STOP ERA, had led them to believe that voting for the Amendment would cause them more trouble than it was worth." Mansbridge says she found "no evi-

dence of a conscious insurance industry conspiracy to stop the ERA." Imagine that: the ERA lost fair and square. You'll never hear Eleanor Smeal say that. □

CITIES ON A HILL: A JOURNEY THROUGH CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN CULTURE

Frances FitzGerald/Simon and Schuster/\$19.95

William Schambra

Frances FitzGerald's *Cities on a Hill* is, in a sense, the mirror image of her earlier, Pulitzer Prize-winning book *Fire in the Lake*. The latter volume—a major contribution to the anti-Vietnam war literature—argued that the war could be understood only as part of a larger process: the destruction of traditional, backward-looking, communitarian Vietnamese society by the forcible introduction of Western capitalism and technology. *Cities on a Hill*, by contrast, examines the reconstruction of communitarian society within that great bastion of Western capitalism and technology, the United States. FitzGerald approaches her new subject through four illustrations of community-building drawn from the American experience of the sixties and seventies: the growth of the gay community in the Castro district of San Francisco; Jerry Falwell's construction of a fundamentalist Christian enclave in Lynchburg, Virginia; the development of a retirement community in Sun City, Florida; and the rise (and sudden fall) of the notorious Rajneesh commune in Oregon. Although seemingly radically disparate, the four experiences, she insists, reflect essentially the same, uniquely American belief; that communities may be built, not necessarily on tradition or by looking backward, as the Vietnamese would have it, but precisely by shattering tradition and by looking forward to a dramatically new self and society.

This argument is, unhappily, only implicit in most of the book; the case studies appeared originally in the *New Yorker*, and so the author is permitted to meander amiably through her accounts, occasionally brushing up against substantive points, but never pursuing them with an intensity that readers of the magazine would have found unseemly. Only in the concluding chapter, tacked on to the original essays, does she develop fully her thesis.

William Schambra is co-director of constitutional studies at the American Enterprise Institute.

American society, she argues, is peculiarly unsettled, fluid, and atomistic as a result of modern capitalism, and therefore is constantly challenging established cultural and communitarian norms. Sometimes this challenge is particularly acute—she points to the period preceding the Second Great Awakening in the 1820s and 1830s, when technological advances disrupted established family and community customs. At such times, she suggests, we are likely to see an efflorescence of community-building efforts, all of them rejecting the old and now-discredited cultural ways, all experimenting with dramatically different and often wildly eccentric alternative cultures, but all characterized by a desire for cultural and individual regeneration and by the effort to re-establish communitarian control over social chaos. This, according to FitzGerald, explains the explosion of religious and secular communal movements during the Second Great Awakening—and, she argues, it explains a similar explosion among the American middle class during the sixties and seventies, in the wake of that period's economic, social, and political upheavals.

FitzGerald's book is a welcome rejoinder to one argument heard frequently today, that modern technological developments have rendered forever obsolete the small community. That argument is, of course, the basis for the derision that usually greets President Reagan's call for a regeneration of family, neighborhood, and local community. Although I'm certain FitzGerald would not be pleased at this suggestion, nonetheless, she shows us why Reagan's theme is by no means absurd. Communities in America, she demonstrates, form not in spite of, but precisely because of, the social changes generated by capitalism and technology. This, of course, is nothing more than a reiteration of a point made considerably earlier by Alexis de Tocqueville, who, as it turns out, visited

America in the midst of the Second Great Awakening. He understood that the forces of modernity had doomed traditional, rooted communities, and he was deeply concerned about the consequences of this for mankind. The American capacity spontaneously to generate completely new but nonetheless genuine communities, without traditions or roots and out of virtual strangers, quieted his concern.

Because FitzGerald believes that all four of her case studies are equally legitimate manifestations of the American communal impulse, she struggles (and largely manages) to discuss objectively a range of cultural practices and beliefs that would have severely strained the tolerance of a lesser journalist. When she errs in this respect, the sophisticated New Yorker slips through. She clearly enjoys her work on the Castro, for instance, as she follows its fortunes through the rise and murder of Harvey Milk, and the onset of the AIDS epidemic. From her account, it seems that she tagged along happily with her pals Peter, Ken, and Armistead to virtually every gay bar, restaurant, festival, and demonstration in the district during this period.

Her treatment of the retirement village, by contrast, is stunted, detached, and relatively unenlightening. And from her description of the fundamentalist enclave in Lynchburg, one might suppose she had been transported back to the inscrutable culture of Saigon. "One family," she notes incredulously, "had not only a living room but a family room with a Naugahyde pouf, a twenty-four-inch television set, and a sliding glass door looking out over a stone-paved terrace." And, of course, it is always "Falwell"—never "Jerry."

The deeper problem with FitzGerald's approach, though, is not her failure to be objective, but her reluctance to discriminate—to make some hard, interesting judgments about the nature of community to which her own evidence points. Until recently, for instance, it was widely believed that a healthy community (no matter how otherwise new or different) necessarily emerges from, and retains an honored place for, the traditional family. Her case studies give us an opportunity to test this proposition, for two of her communities reflect this conventional understanding, and two were founded explicitly on the rejection thereof.

The gays in the Castro, for instance, renounced traditional family values in the name of a radically individualistic, and usually quite promiscuous, sexual freedom. Their community seemed to flourish on this basis—until the onset