

# POLITICAL BOOKNOTES

**Marked to Die.** Michael Brown. *Simon & Schuster, \$16.95.* This depressing story about a New Jersey thug-turned-squealer named Jerry Festa illustrates many of the reasons why the Justice Department's Witness Protection Program is an ongoing governmental morass. Unfortunately, the author does not examine any of them. He simply tells the squalid tale of a Newark low-life who burgled, swindled, strong-armed, and eventually murdered, until he got caught by the police, testified against a murderers' row of thugs and gangsters, and ended up hiding out under an assumed name, courtesy of the U.S. Department of Justice. But between the lines of Festa's saga is the more important tale of why New Jersey is still as racket-ridden as before, and why Festa ended up isolated and bitter, suing the Justice Department (unsuccessfully) for allegedly renegeing on its promises to create a new life for him and his family.

The book makes clear that gangsterism thrives in Newark because of police corruption and ineffective justice; that the criminality represented by Jerry Festa was essentially a local matter (despite some narcotics offenses), so that the Justice Department's intervention with its Witness Protection Program was fleeting and out of place; and that despite the string of convictions that Festa produced, the organized crime apparatus in Newark remained feloniously in operation.

It is easy to understand why Jerry Festa, like so many turncoat thugs who have joined it, later denounced the Witness Protection Program as a fraud. He complains about sloppy government documentation, uncaring Justice Department bureaucrats, and the problem of constantly hiding out. But Festa has never worked at an honest job. He is unlikely ever to be successfully "relocated" as a productive citizen, and if the officials of the Justice Department have been unenthusiastic in their efforts to try, that is possible to understand.

*Marked to Die* is the story of only one of some four thousand witnesses who have been relocated by the Justice Department. The book does not purport to draw generalizations from Festa's experiences to explain the shortcomings of the program as a whole. But Jerry Festa's story is a good yarn about the slimy side of life, and if the reader wishes to ponder how a government program could possibly succeed in taking responsibility for the lives of people like these, that could be time well spent.

—Fred Graham

**60 Minutes: The Power and the Politics.** Axel Madsen. *Dodd, Mead, \$16.95.* The author shows us roughly a dozen incidents in which the news judgment or techniques of "60 Minutes" have been questionable. (For a fictionalized account of how such decisions are made, see "Perfect! Beautiful! Now Zoom in Tight on the Blind Woman's Face," page 28.) On the other hand, "60 Minutes" has done more than a thousand shows. Not a bad batting average. If government and business screwed up only 12 times out of a thousand, journalists would be looking for other work. In fact, the bulk of the reports detailed in the book turned out just fine: many revealed corruption, righted wrongs, forced action. Falling in line with the same journalistic imperative that bedevils "60 Minutes" (and newspapers, and radio, and magazines, and all journalism), Madsen treats the successes as inevitable, the failures as symptomatic.

In recent years it has become fashionable for "print" journalists to flail "60 Minutes." The show asked for it by suddenly making, just as it hit number one, a regular event of fluff personality pieces. But you can't help thinking some of the reaction was plain jealousy. The reporters on "60 Minutes" are rich. They're famous. They fly around the world accepting honors, often for staging film versions of stories that poor, unknown, never-

mentioned print reporters actually dug up. Their reports reach millions and *get results*—which even the best print stories, even in the best papers and magazines, often do not.

Television's dilemma is that, even more than print, it must simplify. And, further, it must seek stories that can be filmed, especially those with the kind of face-to-face human confrontations that make for compelling, easily followed story lines. These structural requirements dictate certain types of stories—one wronged man systematically abused under weird circumstances is a perennial—that are valid and important in their own ways but pale before the large conceptual stories in which there isn't a simply filmable narrative, but where the destinies of many more people might be affected. Cases in which one party is clearly right and the other clearly wrong are the essence of drama. From the standpoint of society, however, they are not America's biggest problems: the cases in which reform is required but hard to specify with certainty are more numerous and generally far more lasting in significance.

How can such larger issues be filmed in a way that average viewers will watch? This is no small nut to crack. But watching "60 Minutes" you can't help feeling they have stopped looking: that they are willing to accept the constrictions of conventional "good television," and the accolades and profits attendant thereto. That's okay—it's still a fine show. But it might be great.

—Gregg Easterbrook

**The Willowbrook Wars.** David J. Rothman, Sheila M. Rothman. *Harper and Row, \$25.* This is a very good book, another indignant indictment of how bureaucracies (in this case the State of New York) fail to provide basic, humane care for the mentally disabled (in this case the retarded).

The Willowbrook Wars took place in the 1970s, when public exposure and court decree forced New York to shift the warehoused re-

tarded to small group homes. The authors, an historian and a social worker, have an outsider's eye and ear for the bureaucrat's response to criticism: one hand instinctively covers the gluteus maximus while the other passes out the press release saying yes, there have been problems but they are all taken care of now.

The question posed by the book is whether reform of human services can be effected by litigation. The Willowbrook Wars were a qualified victory, but in large measure because of the outstanding leaders (e.g. Barbara Blum, Bill Bronston, and Bruce Ennis) on the side of good. The cobwebs were cleared away, but one senses that if dusting does not take place every two weeks they will rapidly reappear.

In the most poignant passage in the book, a group of blind and deaf retarded children are taken out for a walk for the first time. It begins raining, and they instinctively take off their clothes because they think they are in the shower. They have never felt rain before. Is this the best we can do in the richest nation in human history?

—E. Fuller Torrey

**Restoring Our Competitive Edge: Competition Through Manufacturing.** Robert A. Hayes, Steven C. Wheelright. *John Wiley, \$19.95.* This book is attracting serious and positive attention. It should. Manufacturing has for too long been regarded with indifference by the academic, the executive, and the bright young man or woman on the make.

Hayes and Wheelright take the view that (1) "manufacturing can be a positive part of a company's arsenal" (where previously the view had been, at best, "minimize negative impact") and (2) "management is the issue: our position is that productivity decline in the U.S. has been more a management problem than a government problem."

The book is unabashedly a text, and suffers from too many charts, graphs, and tables. However, many a point is worth the dig. They

discuss economies of scale, and then devote substantial effort to the long-neglected diseconomies of bureaucracy and confusion. Problems with vertical integration are likewise dealt with at length and thoughtfully.

Their one deficiency is, however, monumental. People are absent from their equation for achieving manufacturing distinction. Early on Hayes and Wheelright acknowledge that they are dealing with "issues of structure" (facilities, location, technology, sourcing arrangements) and ignoring issues of "infrastructure" (organizational policies and attitudes) because, they say, changes in the former can be effected more rapidly than changes in the latter.

The irony of their oversight is most apparent in their commanding chapter on learning from German and Japanese manufacturing successes. They attribute German success to an attitude of "Grundlichkeit" ("getting everything just right"), extensive and widespread apprenticeship programs, an abiding focus on quality, appreciation of low-level con-

tributions, and valuing incremental (shop-floor driven) improvements. Japanese success, they suggest, starts with an appreciation of "cleanliness and order," care for equipment, "quality consciousness" and "supplier-partner" relations. In other words, the German and Japanese successes stem almost entirely from factors ignored in the technique sections of the book.

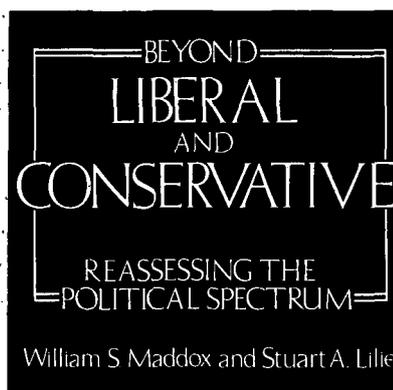
—Thomas J. Peters

**The New Politics of Science.** David Dickson. *Pantheon, \$22.95.* Scientists braced for the worst when Ronald Reagan took office. They knew how true conservatives felt about letting private enterprise pay for research. The lean years under Nixon had been bad enough—and now critics like Milton Friedman were seriously proposing the abolition of that sacred dispensary, The National Science Foundation.

But the Reaganites smiled on science once they realized how useful it could be in building corporate profits and military hardware. Researchers have positively prospered from the Reagan budgets

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—Alan Baron  
*The Baron Report*



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