

of all Americans were living in "single dwellings surrounded by ornamental yards." Jackson, a Columbia historian, chronicles America's massive residential shift in illuminating detail, pointing to its effects, including the dispersion of work, family, and friends. Ironically, he observes, "the intelligent compromise" sought by 19th-century Americans—to live in a spacious, quiet neighborhood while enjoying contact with urban culture—has largely been replaced by a "general suburban resistance to . . . contacts with the larger society." Jackson notes the recent "re-gentrification" of city enclaves, but he predicts that energy shortages rather than fashion will eventually spell the demise of the suburban way of living.

**THE POLITICAL
MYTHOLOGY OF
APARTHEID**

by Leonard Thompson
Yale, 1985
293 pp. \$22.50

In 1686, the Dutch ship *Stavenisse* went down off the east coast of what is now South Africa. In three groups, the survivors set off for the settlement of Cape Town, encountering several African tribes on the way. Later, the Dutch reported that the natives they met were "civil, polite, and talkative," living in stable communities and engaged in agriculture. Twentieth-century archaeologists have established the presence of blacks in the south since about 300 A.D. Yet in 1981, one white South African neatly summarized the Afrikaner version of the region's early history: "There were only Bushmen in South Africa when the whites landed at the Cape. The blacks were in Rhodesia. Basically we came here more or less at the same time." This "myth of the vacant land" is only one part of the white South African political mythology explored by Yale historian Thompson. Forged by Afrikaners in their struggles against the English in the 19th century, this cluster of beliefs serves to justify apartheid and white dominance. All nations, Thompson notes, have their myths. But the Afrikaners' myth has become "an independent conservative force" that prevents the regime from making changes. It is even taboo to examine the old beliefs. As recently as 1979, a mob tarred and feathered an Afrikaner scholar for proposing to study the Covenant myth (according to which the Afrikaners' victory over the Zulus in 1838

was proof of a special compact made between God and the Dutch). Responding to this Afrikaner intransigence, South African blacks are now altering their own political mythology—from an emphasis on common humanity to a rejection of Western values and capitalism.

Contemporary Affairs

**HERE THE PEOPLE RULE
Selected Essays**

by Edward C. Banfield
Plenum, 1985
348 pp. \$39.50

The bane of democracy is the pursuit of perfection. That, in a nutshell, is the argument underlying these 20 sensible, often provocative essays by the author of *Unheavenly City* (1968). Banfield, a professor of government at Harvard, harks back to the Founding Fathers in his bedrock conviction that man is a "creature more of passions than of reason." Thus, certain things are inevitable, including, Banfield explains in a discussion of American federalism, the futility of trying to limit government to "some defined sphere." People simply "cannot be relied upon voluntarily to abide by their agreements, including those upon which their own political order depends." In a prescient essay written 25 years ago, Banfield sees the perfectionist urge to "clean up" political parties (and to make them more "democratic") as a threat to their continued effectiveness; a follow-up piece surveys the actual damages of subsequent reforms. Profiting from his experience on a White House urban task force, Banfield explores the contradictions of Washington's Model Cities program (1966–74), where plans quickly became "plans to plan," and shows how grant-in-aid projects aimed at social uplift can quickly run amok. He laments the legacy of President Woodrow Wilson: Trying to separate the administration of policy (clean and scientific) from politics (dirty and human), he only succeeded in producing a bloated, self-serving bureaucracy. In addition to his skeptical ruminations on topics such as urban crises, "public policy" studies, economic explanations of political behavior, Banfield offers some wry suggestions, including a plan for structuring public libraries to serve the serious reader rather than the consumer of pulp.