

**CRISIS AND LEVIATHAN:
Critical Episodes
in the Growth
of American Government**
by Robert Higgs
Oxford, 1987
352 pp. \$24.95

Even the most casual observer cannot help noticing the expansion of American government. A promise to cut federal fat and take government out of the marketplace, after all, got Ronald Reagan elected president in 1980.

However, asserts Higgs, a Lafayette College economist, the vaunted "Reagan Revolution" has failed. Indeed, he devotes nine double-columned pages to listing the current federal agencies.

During political or economic crises, says Higgs, the public demands action and new agencies are formed. The crisis eventually ends, but the new agencies stay.

Documenting the growth of the American bureaucracy during the periods of 1916-18, 1930-33, and 1940-45, and the post-World War II era, Higgs shows how events affected government growth. The Progressive Era reforms of 1916-18, for example—the federal income tax and the Federal Reserve system—were reactions to government *inaction* during the economic crises of the 1890s. Franklin D. Roosevelt, on the other hand, modeled the emergency acts of his first 100 days on World War I precedents.

Each emergency, concludes Higgs, "sets in motion a variety of economic, institutional, and ideological adjustments whose common denominator is a diminished resistance to Bigger Government." Only a program of "individual rights, limited government, and a free society under a true rule of law," argues Higgs, will shrink the leviathan.

Arts & Letters

**EVELYN WAUGH
The Early Years,
1903-1939**
by Martin Stannard
Norton, 1986
537 pp. \$24.95

On September 29, 1930, Evelyn Waugh, having recently published two hilariously blasé novels (*Decline and Fall* and *Vile Bodies*) and one highly-praised biography (*Rosetti, His Life and Works*), took the most important step of his life: He entered the Catholic Church. Ever the self-publicist, Waugh explained his conversion in the daily press: "It is no longer possible, as it was in the time of Gibbon, to accept the benefits of civilisation and at the same time deny the supernatural basis on which it rests. . . ." To Waugh, Catholicism was simply the most effective barrier against chaos.

Of the latter he had intimate knowledge. Lei-