

CURRENT BOOKS

FELLOWS' CHOICE

PRESIDENTIAL SPENDING POWER

By Louis Fisher
Princeton, 1975, 345 pp.
\$12.50 cloth, \$3.45 paper
L of C 75-4408
ISBN 0-691-07575-1
ISBN 0-691-02173-2 pbk.

Democratic control of government is impossible without widespread comprehension of governing technicalities. The federal budget overwhelms the citizen who would understand how the President manages the spending of some \$400 billion yearly. Since publication in 1975 of Fisher's overview, major changes have been incorporated in the bureaucratic-legislative processes he describes. Nevertheless, Fisher's work remains exemplary for its comprehensiveness, painstaking clarification of concepts, and avoidance of unnecessary jargon. The book is also an invaluable source on the conflicts with Congress generated by President Nixon. Among other matters, its author explains how Nixon's men contrived to impound monies in a "prospective sense" that "gave precedence to an Administration recommendation, not yet enacted, over a public law already on the books and funded by Congress."

— *Joaquín Romero-Maura*

ADVENTURE, MYSTERY, AND ROMANCE: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture

By John G. Cawelti
Univ. of Chicago, 1976
336 pp. \$15
L of C 75-5077
ISBN 0-226-09866-4

Can fiction ground out according to a formula (detective novels, romances, Westerns) have artistic merit? University of Chicago professor Cawelti, a founder of the Popular Culture Association, argues that the key to quality lies in the degree to which formula stories, like tribal myths, affirm things as they are; resolve tensions, conflicts, and ambiguities; permit fantasy exploration of taboos; or help readers to absorb changes in social custom. Viewed thus, early detective fiction supported the nineteenth century's bourgeois order. Later, mystery writer Dashiell Hammett's lone detectives symbolized the individual's resistance to the breakdown of morality in big cities.

— *Thomas Cripps*