

CURRENT BOOKS

FELLOWS' CHOICE

Recent titles selected and reviewed by Fellows of the Wilson Center

**HAVEN IN A HEARTLESS
WORLD: The Family
Besieged**

by Christopher Lasch
Basic Books, 1977
230 pp. \$15
L of C 77-75246
ISBN 0-456-02883-7

Historian Lasch, author of *The New Radicalism in America* (1965), is impatient with the quality of discussion provoked by today's changing family. Happily, his reaction has not produced yet another set of panaceas, either so incremental as to be insignificant or so utopian as to discourage action. Instead, he trenchantly dissects the theories developed by social scientists and professional counselors to explain the American family's past and current ordeals. Too many of these "experts," he says, rely on misinterpretations of Freud and fail to note that "the family has been coming apart for a hundred years." With impressive scholarship, Lasch (himself a strong pro-family man) links the decline to the growth of Western capitalism. His book raises the level of discussion about the American family, but he may take too parochial a view. A look at the troubles of the family in Soviet society—noncapitalist and Freudless—might yield additional explanations.

—Bernice Madison

**AFFAIRS OF STATE:
Public Life in Late Nine-
teenth Century America**

by Morton Keller
Harvard, 1977
640 pp. \$17.50
Lof C 76-21676
ISBN 0-674-00721-2

Writers on the period 1865–1900, even when portraying its virtues, usually repeat its pejorative designation as "The Gilded Age." They also tend to rely upon the testimony of imaginative writers such as Mark Twain and William Dean Howells. Morton Keller of Brandeis prefers a view of history that achieves freshness by being deceptively old-fashioned. Though his range of inquiry is wide, he ignores scandal, anecdote, and the familiar cast of characters (Robber Barons, New York society's Four Hundred) and looks instead at public issues as articulated in courts, legislatures, books, or journals of opinion. He does not glorify the spokesmen of the era. Yet he conveys an informed sympathy in his picture of Americans grappling with