petitive practices. In fact, says *National Journal* correspondent Wines, the policy changes may be more psychological than legal.

The government's two chief antitrust watchdogs, the Justice Department's Antitrust Division and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), have cut back their prosecutions for vertical concentration (when a manufacturer owns the companies that supply components of its products), as well as for "predatory" price-cutting and conglomerate mergers.

Administration spokesmen argue that certain forms of price-fixing are acceptable. Consumers, they say, are not hurt when a manufacturer fixes the retail price of its products. Those who disagree point to the Levi Strauss Company's 1978 agreement to allow blue jean retailers to set their own prices, which has saved consumers some $75 million a year, according to the FTC. Yet the Reagan antitrusters have stepped up prosecutions for such "hard core" anticompetitive practices as horizontal price-fixing (where several firms collude to set prices). Assistant Attorney General William Baxter maintains that his Justice Department Antitrust Division has put "three times as many businessmen in jail for price-fixing" during the Reagan administration's 18 months in office as in any comparable time since the 1890 Sherman Act was passed.

Nevertheless, critics charge that the administration has curtailed attacks on illegal industrial concentration. Last year, for example, the FTC dropped an antitrust suit accusing the three top breakfast cereal makers of operating a "shared monopoly."

Yet, Wines notes, while some companies undoubtedly have too much clout in particular fields, overall industrial concentration in the United States has probably declined since 1972. The number of corporate acquisitions dropped from 3,031 in 1972 to 1,223 in 1980 (though the capital involved climbed from $16.7 billion to $44.3 billion). The share of all U.S. profits reaped by the top 1,300 companies declined from 76.6 percent to 75.6 percent.

"Many experts do not view the Reagan policy shifts as revolutionary," says Wines. But the rhetoric of federal antitrust officials has left the impression that almost anything goes. And that, Wines argues, invites a public outcry and corporate abuse.

An Embargo That Worked

"The 1807–1809 Embargo Against Great Britain" by Jeffrey A. Frankel, in *The Journal of Economic History* (June 1982), Eleutherian Mills Historical Library, P.O. Box 3630, Wilmington, Del. 19807.

Amid all the debate today about U.S. embargoes on grain and technology, it may be useful to consider one of America's first embargoes—how it succeeded, and why it ultimately collapsed.

In December 1807, President Thomas Jefferson convinced Congress to bar all trade with Britain, then at war with France, to retaliate for

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seizures of neutral American ships. According to Frankel, a Berkeley economist, British imports from America dropped 73 percent the following year; exports fell 56 percent. Some trade continued because the Embargo Act was at first loosely enforced and because some ships had already embarked on their long Atlantic crossing when the Act was passed. Smugglers also accounted for some trading.

But not much, says Frankel. Cotton was the chief U.S. export to Britain, accounting for as much as 65 percent of sales. In 1808, British imports of cotton from all sources other than North America remained at the 1807 level, 31 million pounds, suggesting that little U.S. cotton was smuggled through third countries.

The embargo affected the two countries quite differently. In the United States, New England shipbuilders and seafarers were hit even harder than were cotton and tobacco farmers, who at least retained their domestic markets. But the cost of nails, glass, and other imported manufactured goods changed very little, as domestic entrepreneurs moved rapidly to meet demand. Britain, deprived of key raw materials, suffered more. Total production fell by 4.8 percent in 1808 according to one index, and textile output dropped by 33 percent.

In March 1809, Thomas Jefferson left the White House. Arguing that the embargo was damaging the American economy more than the British, Federalists led Congress in lifting the ban. But the real movers behind the turnaround, notes Frankel, were New England's shippers, the Federalists' chief backers. In the end, observes Frankel, it was not national economic considerations that brought down the embargo, but "a lack of political will."

SOCIETY

Blacks Win Better Jobs

"Blacks in the 1970s: Did They Scale the Job Ladder?" by Diane Nilsen Westcott, in *Monthly Labor Review* (June 1982), Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.

During the 1960s, a thriving economy and new civil rights legislation helped black Americans make strong economic gains. Three recessions slowed progress during the 1970s, says U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics economist Westcott, but blacks continued to climb the job ladder to more skilled and more lucrative employment.

Overall, blacks earned 81 percent of what whites did in 1980, up from 79.6 percent in 1973. Yet that small change conceals significant movements within the job market. Black employment in white-collar professions grew by 55 percent between 1972 and 1980, compared to 27 percent for whites. But for many blacks, the move into the white-collar