

Contemporary Affairs

**SOUTH AFRICA:
Time Running Out**
The Report of the Study
Commission on U.S. Policy
Toward Southern Africa.
Univ. of Calif., 1981
517 pp. \$8.95

Financed by the Rockefeller Foundation, this report dispels any doubts about the arbitrary limits upon civil liberties, the dislocating and contradictory effects of "homeland" policies, and the suffering of the black majority in South Africa. Most compelling are 19 vignettes by individual South Africans (blacks, coloreds, Indians, and whites) that vividly convey the enormous human variety and vitality that exist in this multiracial republic. The commission argues for a keener awareness among U.S. businessmen of their potential influence: Fewer than half of the American companies in South Africa now adhere to the "Sullivan Principles" on the fair treatment of black employees. Rejecting proposals for U.S. boycotts and disinvestment, the commission calls on the United States to adjust its military, economic, and diplomatic relations according to Pretoria's willingness to share political power among all its people. The United States should offer educational assistance to South African blacks, increase economic aid to South Africa's neighbors, and decrease its dependence on South Africa's strategic metals by stockpiling. There is still time to create a "new political system in which all races share political power," the commission believes. But against this scenario, it balances another: "intransigence by the government, leading to major violence."

**HOW COURTS GOVERN
AMERICA**
by Richard Neely
Yale, 1981
233 pp. \$15

The judiciary is the central institution in the American political process, according to Neely, chief justice of West Virginia's Supreme Court of Appeals. But court intervention in such political controversies as abortion, criminal law reform, and voter redistricting is in no way usurpatory, he argues. Nor are courts taking up duties neglected by the other branches of government. Rather, the judiciary, as the most nondemocratic of

political institutions, is uniquely qualified to correct social and political imbalances, whether they stem from the excessive influence of a party machine, the reluctance of a legislature to touch a volatile issue, or the illegitimate demands of a majority. Claiming that it is "no more theoretical than plumbing," Neely insists that "constitutional law is *only* about correcting flaws in the other branches; it is basically about balance." Acknowledging a debt to Yale law professor Michael Reisman, Neely maintains that all governments exist on two levels—mythical and operational. When the discrepancy becomes too great, it is incumbent upon the judiciary to act but never to acknowledge its mediating role in the political process.

**CONSERVATIVES IN AN
AGE OF CHANGE:
The Nixon and Ford
Administrations**

by A. James Reichley
Brookings, 1981, 482 pp.
\$29.95 cloth, \$13.95 paper

The term "conservative" entered the American political lexicon with the first platform of the National Republican Party in 1832. Over the next century, conservatism in America acquired such tenets as free enterprise, decentralization of government, nationalism, and moral traditionalism. Looking at day-to-day policymaking in the Nixon and Ford administrations, Reichley, a Senior Fellow at Brookings, shows how each President's background, interests, and tactical sense determined how firmly he adhered to the conservative ideology he espoused. An advocate of "conservative internationalism" (itself a deviation from orthodoxy), Nixon pursued détente with the Soviets, while opening relations with mainland China to widen the gap between the two communist powers. Ford proved the more consistent conservative. Pushed to the right by Ronald Reagan's 1976 challenge for Republican leadership, he abandoned Salt II. He also declined to increase federal spending to stimulate prosperity in an election year—unlike Nixon in 1972. Nevertheless, he spurned Reagan's 1975 proposal for a \$90 billion cut in social welfare. The strength of Reichley's book lies in his scrutiny of the chronic tensions between ideology and reality in politics.