RESEARCH REPORTS

Reviews of new research by public agencies and private institutions

"The Costs of Protectionism: Estimates of the Hidden Tax of Trade Restraint."

Center for the Study of American Business, Washington University, St. Louis, Mo. 63130. 39 pp.
Author: Michael C. Munger

The United States champions free trade in international markets, but Washington has been busily erecting some protectionist barriers of its own.

Munger, a researcher at the Center for the Study of American Business, contends that the cost to U.S. consumers is staggering. In 1980, he estimates, U.S. tariffs and quotas on foreign goods snatched $58.4 billion from Americans' pocketbooks—$255 for every man, woman, and child.

Tariffs (direct taxes on such imported goods as shoes, jewelry, and copper) did most of the damage ($45.8 billion). Quotas and other restrictions accounted for the rest.

In part because their costs are "hidden," quotas are coming into wider use today. Most outright quotas are now prohibited by international treaty, but "orderly marketing agreements" and "voluntary" quotas have the same effects. In recent years, Washington has imposed such de facto quotas on imported autos, cement, and certain kinds of steel.

Ironically, says Munger, quotas are more harmful than tariffs. Foreign manufacturers faced with a tariff can still compete with U.S. manufacturers by cutting costs. But quotas offer no such incentive. Japanese automakers, limited by a 1981 "voluntary" export quota of 1.68 million units to America annually, have shipped fewer economy cars, more luxury models, in an effort to keep profits up. Thus, Detroit feels less pressure to keep prices down.

The costs of other trade barriers have not been calculated. Federal and state "Buy America" policies, for example, mean that domestic producers can submit bids for government work up to 50 percent higher than foreign competitors' and still win contracts. Taxpayers make up the difference.

Business and government backers of protectionism argue that it is necessary to save U.S. workers' jobs. But in many cases, Munger believes, it would make more sense to pay workers to stay home and do nothing. Proposed "domestic content" legislation for the auto industry, for example, would impose costs of $85,000 a year for every job preserved by increasing auto sticker prices; Detroit's average worker now earns $24,000.

Rather than build a higher protectionist wall around the United States, Munger asserts, Washington should fund job retraining for workers in industries hit by overseas competition.

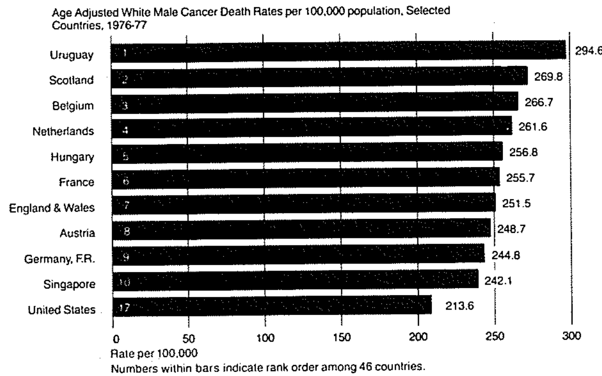
"Cancer in the United States: Is There an Epidemic?"

American Council on Science and Health, 47 Maple Street, Summit, N. J. 07901. 31 pp. $2.00.

In 1983, about 855,000 Americans will learn they have cancer, and 440,000 will die of the disease.

This chilling estimate may not be quite as ominous as it seems. While alarmists have stirred popular fears of a new cancer epidemic in the United States caused by food additives and air and water pollution, the American Council on Science and Health (ACSH)

The United States is not No. 1 in cancer incidence but 17th, a 1983 American Cancer Society survey showed. (Not shown are those ranked 11 to 16, all Third World nations.)



maintains that there is no evidence of a significant *increase* in the disease.

Data adjusted for demographic changes —most recently, the aging of America—show that the incidence of cancer (number of new cases discovered per 100,000 people) dropped from 289 in 1947 to 278 in 1971 and then climbed by about 1.3 percent annually until 1976, the latest year for which figures are available. Among white women, for example, incidence fell from 305 in 1947 to 256.8 in 1971, then rose to 301.2. Overall, women and those under age 45 fared best during the 29-year period.

Among men, lung cancer has the highest incidence, followed by cancer of the prostate and of the colon or rectum. Breast, colon-rectum, and uterine cancers take the lead among women.

Lung cancer showed the biggest 29-year increase for both sexes—and its causes are hardly mysterious. Due in large part to the spread of smoking among women, the incidence of lung cancer among white females jumped from seven per 100,000 in 1947 to 24 in 1976. For white males, the figures were 30 and 78. (In most categories, nonwhites recorded sharper changes, chiefly because of improvements in diagnosis and care for minority groups.)

Indeed, when bladder, mouth, and throat cancers are included, ACSH notes, tobacco use is chiefly responsible for about 30 percent of all cancers in the United States.

Other big changes occurred in cancers of the prostate (up) and of the stomach and cervix (down).

Improved detection and treatment techniques, meanwhile, have pushed cancer *mortality* rates down slightly for men and women under 65, although the disease remains the nation's second leading killer behind heart and circulatory ailments. Again, only lung cancer, which now accounts for 26 percent of all cancer deaths, has increased markedly over the years.

Despite massive increases in air and water pollution and the widespread use of chemical additives over the past several decades, the United States has not suffered a major increase in cancer. (Cancer epidemiologists Richard Doll and Richard Peto estimate that such sources are responsible for about two percent of all cancers.)

Little is known about the causes of most cancers, ACSH concludes. But one thing is certain: The best preventive step against cancer now known is to stop smoking.

"Covering Congressional Campaigns: Journalism in Congressional Elections."

Stanford University Press, Stanford, Calif. 94305. 151 pp. $17.50.
Authors: Peter Clarke and Susan H. Evans

Voter turnout in midterm elections for the U.S. House of Representatives has reached abysmal lows in recent years. Only 41.9 percent of the voters went to the polls in 1982. Such apathy among the electorate is often cited as a symptom of American political malaise, but its source remains obscure.

Clarke and Evans, both of the University of Southern California's Annenberg School of Communications, assert that an anemic local press must share part of the blame.

They studied 82 newspaper reporters' coverage of 86 congressional elections in districts across the country during the last six weeks of the 1978 campaign. (Radio and television newscasters virtually ignore such contests.) Their chief findings: Local newspapers pay scant attention to elections, skew what coverage there is in favor of incumbents, and do little "digging" or reporting that enhances public debate.

Covering his district's congressional election is only one of the typical political correspondent's assignments: He spends only one of every six working hours on the campaign beat, the rest on other political stories. Routine election coverage rarely lands on page one.

Moreover, few reporters live up to the image of the intrepid newshound. "They generally work hard when they know that usable copy can be easily mined," observe the authors. "They slack off in the face of difficulty." (Indeed, in 20 percent of the races the authors surveyed, neither candidate was contacted by any reporters.)

Such habits contribute to a decided "tilt" towards the incumbent in news coverage of most races. The authors found that even during the last week of 14 tight races, the incumbents were mentioned in 92 percent of the stories, the insurgents in only 78 percent.

The reason: The incumbent congressmen's records, professional campaign staff, and everyday involvement in newsworthy legislative issues make them easier subjects for reporters.

For challengers, the critical variable was money. Insurgents with respectable campaign war chests ($65,000, on average) were mentioned in the press nearly eight times more often than their poorer counterparts. (Nationally, *winning* challengers spent an average of $250,000.) A well-heeled challenger can hire regular press aides who provide newsmen with information and, just as important, informally hobnob with them.

Even so, the challengers faced long odds. Clarke and Evans broke down news coverage by paragraph in 14 close races. They found that while the underdogs stressed "the issues" in their campaigns, newsmen devoted, on average, only 12 paragraphs to challengers' positions on policy questions, 29 to incumbents'.

House members up for re-election enjoyed an even bigger advantage in coverage of such political assets as experience in office and service to constituents: 49 paragraphs versus only four for their opponents. Almost half (27 paragraphs) of the relatively skimpy political coverage of the latter group was devoted to the effectiveness of their campaign organizations.

Since 1960, 95 percent of House incumbents running for re-election have come out on top—a sure sign that new blood does not easily find its way into Congress. At the local level, the authors conclude, "press coverage provides a meager base for fueling vigorous public debate."

"Black Solidarity: The Tie That Binds."

National Urban League, 425 13th St. N.W., Suite 515, Washington, D.C. 20004.
33pp.
Author: James D. McGhee

Have some black Americans found success, only to turn their backs on the impoverished majority of their race? According to James McGhee, research director at the National Urban League (NUL), income, education, and employment trends of the past two decades confirm the emergence of a "black elite." But McGhee rebuts the view of some conservative scholars that class divisions are polarizing the black community.

Since 1950, says McGhee, economic and educational progress among blacks has been real, but neither as great nor as divisive as is often assumed. The proportion of black families earning at least $25,000 (in constant 1981 dollars) increased from nine to 23 percent between 1960 and 1970, but this percentage has since remained unchanged. And gains have not been made at the expense of poorer blacks: In 1960, over half of all black families earned less than $10,000 (in 1981 dollars); today, the figure is 38 percent.

Nor, says McGhee, have wealthier blacks cornered the booming college education market. While black enrollment grew 93 percent in the 1970s, two-thirds of black college graduates were from working-class families.

According to McGhee, a 1979–80 NUL survey of 3,000 black families of widely varied economic and social circumstances showed a remarkable consistency in black attitudes. Respondents in all income categories cited unemployment most often as the major difficulty confronting members of their race. Among households earning over $36,000 annually, 12 percent felt that racial prejudice was the most important problem for blacks; 10.5 percent of those earning less than $8,000 thought so.

Lack of racial unity was mentioned as a serious problem by 15 percent of blacks in the highest income bracket, compared to only 6.1 percent of those in the lowest bracket. McGhee interprets the heightened concern of wealthier blacks to mean that they are *more* committed to racial solidarity.

The NUL study shows that, in fact, the *most* militant attitudes are found in black households with $30,000 to $36,000 annual incomes. Frustration over the slow pace of progress in achieving equal rights was expressed by 83 percent of respondents in this relatively successful group (versus 73 percent in the lowest income bracket), and 76 percent (versus 62 percent of low wage earners) noted "a great deal" of racial discrimination.

A 1979 survey by researchers Kay Schlozman and Sidney Verba uncovered other evidence suggesting that successful blacks' social attitudes correspond far more closely to poorer blacks' than to whites' of similar occupational levels. While 82 percent of white professionals surveyed believed that their children had a chance to succeed, only 46 percent of their black counterparts–and 55 percent of unskilled black laborers–so believed.

As long as blacks continue to perceive that their progress is being blocked by discrimination, says McGhee, "race will continue to be the tie that binds."