

THE ECONOMIC ILLUSION: False Choices between Prosperity and Social Justice
 by Robert Kuttner
 Houghton, 1984
 308 pp. \$19.95

"The pursuit of equality," observed Britain's prime minister, Margaret Thatcher, "is a mirage." The conventional wisdom among many U.S. and British government leaders today is that well-intentioned state efforts to promote citizen equality—through public spending and progressive tax policies—merely stifle the individual initiative, personal thrift, and productive investment that produce greater overall wealth. "Inequality," the argument runs, "is good for everyone." Kuttner, a contributing editor of the *New Republic*, weighs such "theoretical claims" against the "practical policy experience of different nations." He compares the actual tax, welfare, labor, trade, and capital formation practices in Western nations. He shows that, in such states as West Germany and Norway, prosperity and relative equality *do* coexist. Between 1970 and 1980, for example, Austria enjoyed not only the highest growth rate per capita of all Western nations—including Japan—but also a relatively egalitarian distribution of income, a generous social-welfare program, low inflation (peaking at 6.8 percent in 1981), and low unemployment (never over four percent). Kuttner does not recommend wholesale U.S. adoption of the policies that have simultaneously increased wealth and equality in other nations: There is no single "right" mix of policies, and "these issues," he knows, "are deeply political." His aim is merely to question the economic assumption of the day—that "social justice is bad for economic growth."

Science & Technology

THE APOCALYPTICS: Cancer and the Big Lie
 by Edith Efron
 Simon & Schuster, 1984
 589 pp. \$19.95

"Apocalyptic chic," as Efron sees it, describes the fashionable belief that virtually every synthetic substance causes cancer. It is environmentalism pushed to its absurd limit. Yet, to the American scientific community currently involved in cancer research, being chic is no laughing matter. Efron, a research associate at the University of Rochester, charges foul play and foul science, and backs up her