

RESEARCH REPORTS

Reviews of new research by public agencies and private institutions

"The New Politics of Inequality."

W.W. Norton and Co., 500 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10110. 288 pp. \$15.95.

Author: Thomas Byrne Edsall

When Ronald Reagan won election to the White House in 1980, the nation seemed to have shifted to the political Right. Edsall, a *Washington Post* reporter, argues that the shift actually occurred by the mid-1970s. By then, he contends, both the Republicans and the Democrats had largely deserted the poor and the working class, increasingly favoring Big Business and the affluent.

Seen by Democrats as "the party of the rich," the GOP, Edsall says, moved further to the Right during the 1970s. Southern conservatives increased their numbers in the party's ranks, while well-to-do Northern suburbanites bolted to the Democrats. Sunbelt entrepreneurs and New Right activists also pushed the Republican Party further away from the center.

More surprising is the transformation of the Democratic Party, which long claimed to represent the interests of the poor.

Ironically, the 1972-74 Watergate scandal was one of the key causes of change. In its wake, voters in suburban districts that had long sent Republicans to Congress began electing Democrats. In 1974, some 75 freshmen Democrats were elected to the U.S. House of Representatives; another 46 came in 1976.

"By 1975," Edsall writes, "the goal of [liberal] reformers had shifted away from enactment of substantive legislation [to aid the poor]. The new aim was to clean up government." In alliance with the public-interest lobby Common Cause, the young congressional Democrats won a host of "procedural" reforms: a \$1,000 limit on

individual campaign contributions to a single candidate, a congressional code of ethics, and creation of the Federal Election Commission.

Though seemingly "neutral," many procedural reforms, Edsall says, actually exacerbated political inequality. The expansion of the presidential primary system (from 17 primaries in 1968 to 31 in 1980), for example, increased the influence of the well-to-do, who turn out for those elections in great numbers. In primaries, they are overrepresented by nearly 42 percent, while blacks are underrepresented by 36 percent.

These changes, combined with congressional disenchantment with the Great Society, the declining influence of labor unions, and the rising power of corporate political action committees, left the poor with a weaker voice in Washington—a fact that was plain even before the GOP seized the White House and the Senate in 1980.

In 1978, Congress passed a sharp cut in capital gains taxes and rejected labor laws sought by the unions. The Reagan administration's cuts in taxes and social welfare benefits, enacted with the help of many Democrats in Congress, left families earning between \$8,000 and \$13,500 a year some \$1,000 poorer during Reagan's first term; those earning more than \$200,000 gained \$17,000.

"As long as the balance of political power remains so heavily weighted toward those with economic power," Edsall argues, "national economic policy will remain distorted, regardless of which party is in control of the federal government."

"Injury in America."

National Research Council, 2010 Constitution Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20418. 164 pp. \$15.95.

Cancer, heart disease, strokes. Americans fear these killers most. But injuries—many of them preventable—are the leading cause of death among those under the age of 45.

Every year, more than 140,000 Americans die in car wrecks, fires, and other mishaps, according to the National Research Council's Committee on Trauma Research. Another 80,000 suffer permanently disabling brain or spinal cord damage. Injuries are responsible for about one-half of all deaths of Americans under age 15, and four-fifths of all fatalities among those between 15 and 24.

Not surprisingly, automobile accidents account for the majority of the fatalities—about 50,000 every year. Partly because they are involved in more car accidents than women, men are more than twice as likely to die of injuries. Asphyxiation (drowning, suffocation, hanging) causes some 13,000 deaths, chemical poisoning about 10,000, and burns roughly 6,000.

Contrary to the popular impression

that unavoidable mishaps are the cause of most injuries, the panel maintains that many accidents have "definable and curable causes." For example, researchers found that Utah suffered an above-average auto accident rate partly because the state paved roads with a material that became slippery in wet weather.

Despite the number of serious injuries that occur every year, the federal government does little to prevent them. Injuries add about \$100 billion to the nation's health-care bill, but only two cents of every federal health research dollar go to injury studies. Neither the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission nor the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration publicly single out consumer products or industrial machines that are frequently involved in accidents.

The panel argues that establishing a federal research and information-gathering unit, within the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, would be a first good step in fighting injuries.

"Spain's Emergence as a Middle Industrial Power."

American Enterprise Institute, 1150 17th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. 60 pp. \$4.00.

Author: Eric N. Baklanoff

When Spain joins the Common Market on January 1, 1986, its induction will be more than ceremonial. Thanks to high rates of economic growth over the last 30 years, reports Baklanoff, a University of Alabama economist, "Spain has become the most recent country to join the First World."

Indeed, in 1980, Spain's gross national product (GNP) hit \$207 billion—eighth among the 24 industrial-

ized nations that belong to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

Spain's economic boom began during the late 1950s, after it joined the OECD and the International Monetary Fund in 1958. (Western nations had long shunned Spain's dictator, Gen. Francisco Franco, because of his ties to Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy.) Both organizations helped Ma-

drid stabilize the currency, promote trade, attract foreign capital, and increase investment.

The strategy worked: Over the next 13 years, Spain's GNP grew by an average of 7.3 percent annually. Its industrial production increased fourfold, and its yearly volume of trade skyrocketed, from \$1.3 billion to \$13.7 billion. Suddenly, Spain was being compared with West Germany during its "economic miracle" years after World War II.

The Spanish miracle faded during the 1970s. Jarred by worldwide recessions, and by the 1975 transition to a constitutional monarchy under King Juan Carlos I following Franco's

death, the country suffered a long bout of stagflation.

Nevertheless, Spain emerged as a strong economic power. The country became a major exporter to Latin America; the annual volume of trade reached \$5.7 billion by 1981. Spain sells manufactured goods to the region, such as iron and steel products, and imports commodities, such as sugar, coffee, tobacco, and corn.

While the *madre patria*, Baklanoff notes, has been able to "make good on its quest for a special relationship with Latin America," the link may not last. When Spain joins the Common Market, it will have to do more of its trade with the Old World.

WILSON CENTER PAPERS

Summaries of key reports given at recent Wilson Center meetings

"Economic Relations between Nicaragua and the Socialist Countries."

A paper presented by Ruben Berrios at a seminar sponsored by the Wilson Center's Latin American Program on March 8, 1985.

In 1980, the total value of Nicaraguan trade with countries behind the Iron Curtain stood at \$14 million. Four years later, Nicaraguan trade with those same nations—Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, Rumania, and the USSR—had jumped to \$189 million.

Berrios, a New York University economist, asserts that Nicaragua has cultivated economic ties with the communist countries because of "pragmatic concerns" rather than "ideological principles."

When the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) first took control of Nicaragua on July 19, 1979, Nicaragua's major trading partners were the members of the European Economic Community (Common Market) and the United States—with whom Nica-

ragua exchanged roughly \$406 million in imports and exports in 1980.

Since then, trade with the West in general and the United States in particular has declined, primarily for two reasons. Worried about becoming economically dependent on one nation, the Sandinista regime, says Berrios, has been "seeking ties with a wider and more diversified range of trading partners," especially among the developing countries.

A souring of relations with the United States has also added urgency to Nicaragua's search for new economic allies. President Jimmy Carter, responding to Sandinista support for leftist rebels in neighboring El Salvador and the arrival of Cuban and Soviet military advisers in Nicaragua, suspended economic aid to Managua

in 1980. Four years later, Ronald Reagan first cut Nicaragua's share of sugar exports to the United States by 90 percent, then announced an embargo on U.S.-Nicaraguan trade.

The communist countries have moved in to pick up the slack. In exchange for coffee, sugar, and other exports, for example, the USSR supplies one-quarter of Nicaragua's petroleum.

Between 1979 and 1983, the Soviet bloc countries contributed some \$1.2 billion in donations, trade credits, and technical assistance.

Berrios believes, however, that communist support for Nicaragua is limited—by the Soviet bloc's own economic difficulties, its distance from Central America, and by "U.S. geopolitical primacy in the area."

"East Asian Lobbies in Washington: Comparative Strategies."

A paper presented by Youngnok Koo at a colloquium sponsored by the Wilson Center's East Asian Program on May 14, 1985.

"Lobbying, as a form of open participation in the political process, is a concept alien to East Asians," notes Koo, a political scientist at Seoul National University.

Yet there are nearly 300 registered lobbyists from Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan in the U.S. capital, as well as representatives from American law and public relations firms, that look after the interests of these countries. The Japanese alone, Koo estimates, spend between \$40 and \$50 million to maintain a Washington presence, which includes not only 182 registered lobbyists but also 80 embassy staffers and emissaries from more than 65 companies and trade associations.

The East Asian lobbies share a primary goal: to keep the American market open to Asian goods. Last year, the combined Japanese, Korean, and Taiwanese trade surplus with the United States was \$47 billion—about one-third of the U.S. trade deficit.

Each nation, Koo says, has its own lobbying style. Japanese firms like to hire "big gun" American lobbyists to make their case in government agencies and on Capitol Hill (where 20 House and 16 Senate committees deal, in some way, with foreign relations).

In recent years, their pitchmen have included President Reagan's former national security adviser Richard Allen (representing Nissan) and former CIA director William E. Colby.

Taiwan takes a different approach. To win friends, it sponsors touring "Buy America" trade missions that cultivate political and corporate friends in American states and cities by purchasing local products. Over the past seven years, nine such missions have bought \$7 billion worth of U.S. goods.

While strong, the East Asian lobbies have not been invincible. Japan, for example, was unable to prevent the United States' establishment, in 1983, of a 200-mile offshore "exclusive economic zone," from which Japan's fishing vessels would be barred.

Hindering the efforts of all three countries is a lack of what Koo calls "ethnic indigenous support"—substantial numbers of immigrants in the United States who provide grassroots political support for the old country.

In the absence of such support, a large lobby is all the more important. With the largest lobby in Washington, Japan, Koo says, "gets most of what there is to get in Washington."