



## American Academy of Political and Social Science

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### Review

Reviewed Work(s): *The Political Authority and the Market System* by Robert A. Solo

Review by: William Spellman

Source: *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 420, Adjusting to Scarcity (Jul., 1975), pp. 234-235

Published by: Sage Publications, Inc. in association with the American Academy of Political and Social Science

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1041339>

Accessed: 26-03-2018 16:08 UTC

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High Dam contains detailed engineering information of little interest and relevance to a major part of the readership. However, a serious interest in Egypt's modern economy will benefit greatly from the book and should be sufficient incentive to plough through the detail.

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ROBERT MAYER, ROBERT MORONEY, and ROBERT MORRIS. *Centrally Planned Change: A Reexamination of Theory and Experience*. Pp. v, 230. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975. \$8.95.

This book arose from a conference held in 1972 to reexamine a subject on which a previous conference had been held nine years before. It touches on political processes in general, problems of planning and administration, and techniques of implementation of plans and policies on a very general level.

Three types of questions are addressed. First, there are a series of broad questions such as the interrelations between public consensus and governmental control, the advantages and disadvantages of incrementalism as a strategy of decision-making and governmental action, or the pros and cons of different types of governmental decentralizations. Second, there are a series of analyses on more specific topics—for example, the advantages and disadvantages of using voucher systems of allocation, the experience of the federal government with PPB and other policy evaluation techniques, or the use of market mechanisms to implement government policies. And finally, there are a number of case studies, some about ten pages long (for instance, federal planning and programs influencing the urban environment, federal full employment planning, and the creation of a system of mental health centers) and some 3 or 4 pages long (for example, Yugoslav worker self-management systems and the London two-tier government system). Since the participants to the conference in-

cluded city planners, economists, political scientists, sociologists, and policy analysts, the reader encounters many different viewpoints and many different kinds of examples of centrally planned change.

The authors view this study as a general synthesis of an extremely broad and diffuse field and hope to create a unified way of looking at widely diverse phenomena. But the danger of such an attempt is superficiality. Some readers may become impatient reading such conclusions as (p. 109): "In the last analysis, faith in the legitimacy and good intention of government will determine in large part the balance struck between consensus and control." And others may become discouraged in reading a round table discussion on two approaches (Machiavelli and Cellini) toward planning and administration that, in the end, are both adopted by a good planner.

It is most difficult to know for whom this book is written. A great many of the points in the book were well made, but I found little that was really new. Most of the book is a reformulation or rehash of general ideas about government planning and administration which have been around for some time. Perhaps students may find the book useful in sharpening certain issues, but specialists in any of the social science disciplines dealing with government activity or interested citizens may become impatient at the generality at which the discussion is conducted. It is the specificity of particular public issues, rather than their generality, which makes centrally planned change so difficult, and particular public problems so interesting to study.

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ROBERT A. SOLO. *The Political Authority and the Market System*. Pp. vii, 418. Cincinnati, Ohio: Southwestern Publishing Company, 1974. \$4.95.

In the Preface, the author proposes three goals: (1) to develop a theory of social change, (2) to explain the histori-

cal development of the organization and function of political authority, and (3) to evaluate current policy and propose reforms of public policy. Professor Solo utilizes an interdisciplinary approach to describe and analyze development of public policy. Although he does not produce a blueprint that is to resolve socio-political-economic conflicts inherent in public policy, he does achieve his stated objectives with superior results.

Solo's theory of social change is based on his concept of ideology. Ideology as used in this thesis is synonymous with *weltanschauung* or "an image-forming, judgmental process, a choice-making, problem-solving capability." The institutional forces determining the ideology of a society are both cause and consequence of choice and action. Ideological change is transformed into social change by political policy. The emphasis on organizational choice rather than individual choice based on self-interest may offend the neoclassical economist or ideological liberal, but it does give greater explanatory power to social change and public policy in the United States.

Solo emphasizes the impact of ideology on the distribution of power in the legislative process and economic policies that evolve from this action. Organizational choice may be either an authoritative decision or a composite choice. The former is based on the "ideology that connects political authority to those that accept the imperatives." Composite choice is the political response to the democratic demands of competing, conflicting interest groups representing individuals. Solo validates that the hypothesis of legislative and executive action is determined by composite choice or action based on expediency in reaction to a social crisis. The action of the Supreme Court exemplifies authoritative decision which is based on the existing ideology and a resistance to change and reform.

The bulk of the book is an evaluation of the development and effectiveness of economic regulation by political authority. The extensive summary of

anti-trust policy emphasizes the political hypothesis and the power of the *laissez faire* ideology in a corporate society. The ideological lag has left the political authority in the conflicting role of being either a giant-killer or a social engineer. This ideological "wasteland" since the New Deal has resulted in antitrust policy which has been a social detriment. Regulatory policy in energy, communication, and transportation has exhibited similar results and validated the dictum that "the road to hell is paved with good intentions."

The essence of reform is the need to develop planning and management capabilities in regulatory bodies. This requires competence and power for public administrators and a measure of evaluation to keep the political authority accountable. The establishment of national priorities and planning systems rather than relying on the offset function to react to a crisis export does not require a proliferation of agencies. Solo credits Nixon's "New Revolution" proposal of integrating governmental functions as a progressive step in the direction of a functional policy system, but even this reorganization "has a taxonomic character rather than a functional character."

Solo's work is not an ideological critique or defense of American Capitalism, but a balanced view of the social, political, and technological processes that have generated economic control and regulation. His planning and programming reform proposals are not extensive; however, his analysis of the problem and the need for reform should help develop the *weltanschauung* necessary to initiate the process of problem-solving via public policy.

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ROBERT J. YANCY. *Federal Government Policy and Black Business Enterprise*. Pp. 166. Cambridge, Mass.: Ballinger, 1974. \$12.50.

STEVEN M. GELBER. *Black Men and Businessmen: The Growing Aware-*