

politics. George Wallace failed to affiliate with the burgeoning conservative movement but instead cast his lot with forces intent on turning back the clock of progress. To the extent that he had any liaison with conservatism, it was purely pragmatic and tactical, consistent with his career, and opportunistically designed to further his own political ambitions.

Now, did Wallace identify a new constituency to which contemporary conservatism could appeal? Yes, he did, but so did others in different ways. And long before Carter, other authors documented that constituency. Carter adds nothing new here.

Wallace identified a deep alienation from America's two major parties, especially among lower-middle-class and lower-class whites both in the North and South. His third-party candidacy in 1968, which received 13.8% of the popular vote, signaled to the major parties the depth and breadth of this alienation. Richard Nixon and the Republicans saw the signal first, but today both parties respond to Wallace's social agenda on welfare and other issues.

Despite these weaknesses, Carter's book is outstanding: especially well written and thoroughly documented. Carter captivates the reader with superlative integration of personality, family, politics, ethics, society, rhetoric, federalism, economics, tradition, religion, leadership, group dynamics, and history. A touch of intrigue and a dash of conspiracy sharply season the plot. Carter tells a good story, and political scientists would do well to return to the days when they told stories well. The resurrection of political biography, a lost art among political scientists, would expand our discipline's appeal and influence. The literature from such fields as political leadership, political psychology, and political sociology would strengthen the literature on political biography. As it is, political scientists leave historians to dominate this field of play. Perhaps that is why some political scientists now identify with a new and growing national scholarly organization, The Social Science History Association.

Label *The Politics of Rage* as "a must read" for anyone wanting to understand the transition of the Old South to the New South and for any political scientist desiring to resurrect the scintillating disciplinary interest of political biography! Should the American Political Science Association establish a new section on political biography?

**The Politics of Child Abuse in America.** By Lela B. Costin, Howard Jacob Karger, and David Stoesz. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996. 200p. \$29.95.

Douglas J. Besharov and Jacob W. Dembosky,  
*University of Maryland*

News stories daily remind us of the horrors of child abuse and of the seeming inability of public agencies to protect even the children already reported to them. What is to be done? After surveying the hundred-year history of child abuse programs, Costin, Karger, and Stoesz propose the creation of regional "Children's Authorities" to implement a rights-based approach to child protection. The chapter containing this policy recommendation is the weakest part of the book. But, overall, the volume is an honest, thoughtful, and informative recounting of how much mischief has been done in the name of protecting children.

Beginning with an analysis of the political culture that surrounds the child protective system, the authors argue that contradictions between myth and reality frustrate its efforts. They point out that many professionals in the field insist on viewing child abuse and child neglect as unrelated to social class, even though most maltreated children are poor—and

are members of various racial and ethnic minorities. Similarly, while the media and the public have become obsessed with sensational cases of sexual abuse, most cases involve moderate physical abuse or neglect. "Instead of sensitizing the public to the real problems of child abuse," the authors complain, "the media have used shocking details to transform child abuse from a social problem into a social spectacle" (p. 7).

The authors claim that the result has been a rapidly expanding "child abuse and neglect industry" (p. 23), consisting of high-priced lawyers, psychotherapists, and other specialists who cater to wealthy and middle-class children and adults who claim to have been abused. They argue that, "while poor children are forced to seek help in understaffed and underfunded public welfare agencies, middle-class victims are counseled by a growing cadre of mental health professionals who specialize in the trauma of sexual abuse" (p. 40). Here, the authors, like the media, may be overreacting to a few sensational cases. There is a child abuse industry, but it is fueled by government and foundation funding for services that go mainly to poor families. They are correct, however, to describe how polarized the issue has become, with those who lobby for system expansion (various child advocacy groups that benefit from increased spending) pitted against those who want to reign in the system (mainly an organization called VOCAL, Victims of Child Abuse Laws). So far, most politicians have not taken sides in the debate, perhaps because they do not understand what is happening.

Ironically, the first child savers were deeply aware of the relationship between poverty and maltreatment. In the late nineteenth century, middle-class reformers tried to alleviate such social problems as poverty and crime (and child abuse) by removing poor, immigrant children from dangerous homes and neighborhoods. This early movement gained strength from intense media interest in the Mary Ellen case (the first highly publicized case of child abuse), growing public support for government intervention into "underclass" family life, and the backing of the women's rights and animal rights movements. In the Northeast, especially, private charities known as Societies for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (SPCCs) became responsible for child protection. The SPCCs successfully justified their interventions into family life with the notion of "child rights."

During the Progressive Era, child maltreatment receded from the public agenda. It was not "rediscovered" until the 1960s by physicians, who, with the aid of X-rays, became more adept at diagnosing nonaccidental injuries. A new paradigm emerged that cast maltreatment in medical terms, signaled by the emergence of the now familiar medicopolitical term, the "battered child syndrome." Over the next decade, a group of physicians led by C. Henry Kempe persuaded key members of Congress, including then Senator Walter Mondale, to enact the 1974 Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA). It established a National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect and awarded states special grants if they adopted common standards for defining, reporting, and investigating child maltreatment. As a result, all states now have mandatory reporting laws that require, under threat of civil and criminal penalties, most child-serving professionals to report suspected maltreatment. Most communities now also have specialized child protective agencies to investigate reports.

These reporting laws and associated public and professional awareness campaigns have been strikingly successful. In 1963, about 150,000 maltreated children were reported to the authorities. By 1994, the number reached more than three million, a twenty-fold increase. As a result, many

thousands of children have been saved from serious injury and even death. The best estimate is that over the past two decades child abuse and neglect deaths have fallen from more than 3,000 a year—and perhaps as many as 5,000—to fewer than 1,300 a year. Despite this progress, substantial problems remain. As the authors describe, many endangered children continue to go unreported. Studies suggest that professionals fail to report more than half the apparently abused and neglected children they see. At the same time, however, agencies are being inundated by inappropriate reports. Since 1975 the proportion of cases substantiated after an investigation has declined from about 65% to as low as 25%. This flood of inappropriate reports is overwhelming the limited resources of agencies, and may help explain why 25–50% of child abuse deaths involve children previously known to the authorities.

The authors also complain about the weaknesses of research on the subject and inadequate funding for services, which lead to poorly trained staff, high turnover, poor working conditions, and insufficient screening and investigative procedures. Finally, and most important, they argue that the current “psychotherapeutic” paradigm, which stresses the psychological attributes of abusers, distorts public and professional responses. This explains the public’s obsession with sexual abuse and the mistaken belief that child maltreatment is an “equal opportunity disease” (p. 150), affecting all social classes equally. To the authors, “ignoring the connection between socioeconomic class and child abuse does an injustice to the victims of child abuse, because it undermines the development of effective approaches for dealing with the problem” (p. 151). Thus, we should not be surprised that current approaches based largely on a psychological understanding of child maltreatment fail to help most families who pass through the system.

We are particularly sympathetic to this last point, having argued it ourselves. That is what makes the authors’ policy recommendations all the more perplexing to us. They propose a new “paradigm” that reconceptualizes child abuse as a “public safety issue” (p. 165). Child protection would be “predicated on the rights of children to receive the same level of protection afforded other members of society” (pp. 10–1). “In order to provide children with safety, it is necessary to criminalize child abuse and neglect” (p. 181). To implement this new paradigm, they would create regional “Children’s Authorities” to replace existing protective agencies. Similar to local school boards, these authorities would have an elected board of directors and an executive director overseeing all services for maltreated children. The authorities would screen all reports, investigate accepted reports, prosecute perpetrators, place children in protective care, conduct research, and provide various social services (mainly through contract), such as family support, foster care, and prevention and community education.

Most significantly, investigations would no longer be conducted by social workers but by police officers, because, the authors argue, child abuse “is first and foremost a criminal act requiring police intervention” (p. 181). Officers would pursue a “pro-arrest” policy (p. 181), immediately arresting all suspected abusers. Although such a policy has never been tested in cases of child maltreatment, the authors cite evidence (thrown into question after its initial publication) that, in some cities, the approach has reduced repeat offenses in cases of spousal abuse. They offer no other evidence that their ideas have been tried somewhat, somewhere, successfully.

Unfortunately, there is an analytic disconnection between the authors’ proposal and their recognition that child mal-

treatment is intertwined with poverty, drug abuse, and related social problems. Their proposal is based on the mistaken assumption that parents fall into discrete categories of “abuser” and “nonabuser.” The majority of parents reported for maltreatment are not criminals; rather, they struggle to care for their children under conditions of severe poverty. Child abuse is deeply rooted in the way we live and organize our society. Hence, the rhetoric of “rights” simply does not lead to the kinds of remedies that will work. As the authors themselves state, policymakers should focus on “the harsh economic and social problems experienced by poor households, many of which experience child abuse” (p. 151). Unfortunately, they failed to take their own advice.

**Roads to Dominion: Right-Wing Movements and Political Power in the United States.** By Sara Diamond. New York: The Guilford Press, 1995. 445p. \$19.95.

Michael P. Federici, *Mercyhurst College*

The rise of the Right in the latter half of the twentieth century has gained the attention of scholars in a variety of academic disciplines as well as that of the popular media. The conservative movement in the United States warrants analysis because it has played an important part in shaping political culture and politics in recent decades. Sara Diamond’s book, which began as her doctoral thesis in sociology, is about “how right-wing movements in the United States, from the 1940s to the present, moved from the sidelines of U.S. politics to center stage” (p. 2). She focuses on how right-wing groups succeeded in gaining political power, a topic that has been discussed in several scholarly and popular books. What differentiates Diamond’s analysis from similar studies is the scope of her book. She is primarily interested in how “the Right,” as a social movement, became politically powerful. Most studies of the conservative movement focus on organizational, ideological, or intellectual aspects of the rise of the Right. Diamond, by contrast, not only claims to be “historical” but also attempts to provide a more comprehensive study of the Right than the existing literature on the topic offers. She identifies her work as a “history of the U.S. Right” that explains the instrumental role played by right-wing groups in the recent conservative shift in public policy.

As a way of explaining the connection between right-wing movements and public policy, the book draws the distinction between “oppositional” and “system-supported” (terms that are omitted from the index) right-wing movements. *Oppositional* means opposed to “prevailing power structures,” and *system-supported* means that the movements are supported by the existing power structures. This distinction is not particularly helpful to understanding the nature of right-wing movements, but Diamond uses it to distinguish her analysis of those movements from that presented by Seymour Martin Lipset and Daniel Bell. She argues that the Right has been more system-supported than the prevailing scholarly view contends. Her assumption seems to be that right-wing movements are anchored to established power structures and thus are more powerful and have greater political viability than other scholars have assumed.

Diamond identifies four “movements” that make up the Right in the United States: the anticommunist movement, the racist Right, the Christian Right, and the neoconservative movement. According to her, these have converged to form a power base which has been used to create the social and political change that she finds “tragic” and “perplexing.” In fact, the title of the book indicates Diamond’s ultimate point: The emergence of the political Right in America is dangerous