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Book Notes: The Logic of Delegation:  
Congressional Parties and the Appropriations  
Process. by D. Roderick Kiewiet and Mathew D.  
McCubbins.

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same time period, the percentage of whites in this category increased by only 6 percent, to 89 percent.)

—The homicide rate in 1989 was lower than that in 1980 and only slightly higher than the 1970 rate. The only group showing a substantial increase consisted of black men between the ages of 15 and 24, whose risk of a violent death increased by 30 percent.

—The marriage rate among black men with steady jobs fell almost as much between 1960 and 1980 as the rate among black men as a whole, suggesting that lack of male employment opportunities is only one factor in the decrease in two-parent black families.

Too much of our thinking about race and discrimination law is based on what economists call “stylized facts”—meaning generalizations that everyone assumes to be true without much thought. This book is a welcome addition to the debate.

*D.A.F.*

**THE LOGIC OF DELEGATION: CONGRESSIONAL PARTIES AND THE APPROPRIATIONS PROCESS.** By D. Roderick Kiewiet and Mathew D. McCubbins. University of Chicago Press: 1991. \$12.95 (paper).

The conventional wisdom is that Congress has steadily delegated its decisionmaking authority to the executive branch, while most of the power within Congress itself has gravitated to the committees. The views of the majority of legislators, then, have had progressively less influence on the making of public policy. This conventional wisdom forms an important part of the background for current debates about the separation of powers.

This book mounts a powerful challenge to that view. On theoretical grounds, the authors argue that legislative majorities have neither any real incentive to give up power, nor any means of doing so irrevocably, since what one majority gives up today another majority is equally free to reclaim tomorrow. This part of that analysis is based on what is now called “positive political theory” or more popularly “public choice”—the use of economic theory to explain political institutions.

More importantly, Kiewiet and McCubbins offer substantial empirical evidence on the subject. In an extensive historical and statistical study of the appropriations process, they conclude that

federal appropriations have closely tracked the preferences of the majority party in Congress (even when that party had only a slim majority). The appropriations committees have not exercised a major independent influence on the size or allocation of spending, in part because their memberships have been chosen in a way that reflects the balance of power within the party as a whole. Moreover, the executive branch has not been successful in achieving budgetary independence from Congress, as the delegation hypothesis might suggest.

Apart from the significance of its overall thesis, the book also offers some interesting vignettes. We learn, for example, that in the 1920s, the head of what is now OMB allowed employees to have only one pencil at a time; they had to turn in the old stub before receiving a replacement. Also, on a point pertinent to the current debate over methods of statutory interpretation, we learn that the Congressional Record falls behind late in the session, so that members lack access to the text of bills and must vote on the basis of the explanations given by the floor manager.

Too much discussion of the legislature, both by legal scholars and political scientists, is based on stereotypes about congressional functioning. This book is a welcome departure.

D.A.F.

**AMERICA'S CONSTITUTIONAL SOUL.** By Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr. The John Hopkins University Press: Baltimore. 1991. Pp. xi, 236. \$25.95.

In this collection of essays Harvey C. Mansfield seeks to provide a constitutional argument for the study of American politics as it exists today. While Mansfield's arguments are subject to dispute, *America's Constitutional Soul* offers an interesting perspective on the problems which plague American politics, government, and society today. An admitted political "conservative," Mansfield offers critiques of both "left" and "right" in this book, but at the same time espouses "conservative" values in his interpretation of constitutional form. Irrespective of this, however, the book presents "food for thought" for both "left" and "right," and in particular for the American citizens about whom this book is concerned.

Mansfield's theory for understanding American politics is based on the Constitution's form and purpose. Mansfield argues that the adoption of the Constitution was an experiment in republi-