

Perry, Huey L., ed.
**Race, Politics, and Governance
in the United States**

Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida
217 pp., \$49.95 cloth, \$21.95 paper
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Race, Politics, and Governance considers the concept of "deracialization"—the downplaying or avoidance of "black" issues by African American candidates combined with a vigorous appeal to white voters. William Julius Wilson, one of the originators of the concept, suggests that the Democratic Party pursue "race-neutral" policies, such as national health insurance and full employment.

Huey L. Perry is a professor at the School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs at Southern University. Almost all of the contributors to the book are political scientists.

The book analyzes the campaigns of ten black politicians between 1989 and 1992, including Carol Mosely-Braun, Andrew Young, David Dinkins, Douglas Wilder, Norman Rice, Harvey Gantt, and Kurt Schmoke. Several of these candidates conducted "deracialized" campaigns.

The theory of deracialization points to the continuing significance of race in U.S. politics. V. O. Key argued that race was at the heart of every issue in southern politics. Derrick Bell asserts that "racism is an integral, permanent, and indestructible component of this society."

Deracialization is criticized in the book. Robert C. Smith complains that a deracialized electoral strategy may require blacks "to sacrifice their substantive policy agendas." The strategy certainly has problems in practice. In 1990, Andrew Young unsuccessfully sought the Democratic nomination for governor of Georgia: "Young maintained a strategy of trying to get African-Americans to the polls while doing nothing to alienate white voters. . . . Young's low-key strategy did little to encourage black turnout" (98). Similarly, David Dinkins lost his bid for reelection as mayor of New York in 1993, and Douglas Wilder ran an abysmal campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1992. Both are out of electoral politics. The most prominent African American elected from a district with a white majority is Congressman Ron Dellums, who represents Berkeley!

While *Race, Politics, and Governance* is valuable and interesting, it is dated. Most of the case studies are drawn from 1989: U.S. racial politics has changed significantly since then. For example, the book contains no discussion of the electoral prospects of Colin Powell—clearly the black politician most capable of successfully pursuing a deracialization strategy. Similarly, there is no analysis of the campaign strategies of black conservatives Gary Franks and J. C. Watts.

Also, the book suffers from an erroneous, implicit assumption of inexorable black political progress. In the last few years, white mayors have replaced black mayors in New York (Dinkins to Guiliani), Chicago (Washington to Daley), Los Angeles (Bradley to Riordan), and Philadelphia (Goode to Rundell). Further, California's passage of Proposition 209 in 1996 may portend the beginning of the end for affirmative action. Finally, the Supreme Court ruled on 12 May 1997 in *Reno vs. Bossier Parish Board* that racially gerrymandered majority-minority electoral districts violate the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

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Ritter, Gretchen
**Goldbugs and Greenbacks: The
Antimonopoly Tradition and the Politics
of Finance in America, 1865-1896**
New York: Cambridge University Press
303 pp., \$54.95, ISBN 0-521-56167-1
Publication Date: February 1997

The central theme of this study, by an assistant professor of government at the University of Texas, Austin, is that the many reform movements in later nineteenth-century America were not merely contests between debtors and creditors. Some of the reform movements, especially the Greenbackers, provided an "intellectually coherent" and "politically imaginable" program for financial regulation. The triumph of the gold standard was by no means ordained by history.

Gretchen Ritter's book is highly structured. Following a lengthy introduction to money and banking and party politics during the 1865-96 period, there is a detailed description of the contest between the Greenbackers and the advocates of the National Banking System during the 1870s. Involved was whether the national government of the market and private interests should control the nation's money supply. As proof of the legitimacy of the Greenback position, Ritter notes that the United States, indeed, has adopted the Greenback fiat money position in the twentieth century.

Ritter devotes the same amount of space to the contest between the silver and gold advocates during the great debates of the 1890s. Although the ideas of the silver advocates are somewhat less warmly endorsed than those of the Greenbackers, the author cites Milton Friedman's observation that silver would have provided the monetary system with more flexibility.

The economic analysis is supplemented by a detailed political analysis not only of the major parties of the time, but also of the various reform parties and movements.

Special attention is devoted to the political developments in certain representative states—North Carolina, Illinois, and Massachusetts—that harbored various sectional interests.

Although Ritter staunchly defends certain ideas in the reform movements, she is so admirably objective in presenting the ideas of their opponents that the reader might find it difficult to disagree with either faction. On the other hand, her analysis of the reasons for the failure of the reform movements seems unnecessarily abstruse, as is her argument that what happened did not have to happen. History, after all, is history.

The book lacks a bibliography, but the text is supported by copious footnotes, mostly to printed sources, which provide abundant evidence of research in this area of economic history.

Although she might consider the metaphor inappropriate, Ritter's book might be described as a gold mine of late-nineteenth-century ideas regarding contemporary economic problems, banking, and the nature of money. It should be of great interest to all scholars working on this period.

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Radford, Gail
**Modern Housing for America: Policy
Struggles in the New Deal Era**
Chicago: University of Chicago Press
273 pp., \$45.00 cloth, \$17.95 paper
ISBN 0-226-70222-7
ISBN 0-226-70223-5
Publication Date: January 1997

This book is quite timely. The House has just passed legislation that would repeal the Housing Act of 1937. Today the conservatives speak of mixed incomes and self-sufficiency in regard to public housing as the Left did sixty years ago. Now the proposal is for the poorest of the poor to be replaced by those with higher incomes, so that the need for government subsidy would decline to the extent that tenants pay their own way. In the thirties, the vision was of comprehensive communities that would draw the middle class because they incorporated amenities such as nursery schools and swimming pools. Of course, there never was much hope that this style of planned, affordable, and nontraditional housing would be built and kept out of the market on a widespread basis. Indeed, the book's greatest weakness may be that it is at times rather wistful about what might have been, seeming to deny just how radical the housing concepts were then, even during an era of tenements and economic crisis.

Not that the history recounted here lacks romance: Imagine Catherine Bauer, the