may cause negative external social consequences. Yet they trust that a "well-functioning system of representation, in which a critical media and other democratic institutions expose the external costs of the campaign contributions, and voters will punish politicians" (p. 45). I was not convinced.

There are real inequalities in the campaign finance system. William Mayer shows that citizens believe interest groups have more influence than voters, that contributions influence policies, and that both parties engage in unethical campaign finance practices. Clyde Wilcox reports that contributors are overwhelmingly wealthy, white, and male. He suggests that expanding the donor pool will encourage more, and different, citizens to participate by contributing, giving those now left out of the donor pool a greater voice in politics.

Ray La Raja gives us a look at how state parties actually spend soft money. He cautions against an outright ban, for it is clear that parties spend a good deal of their soft money on party building and voter mobilization, activities that most observers would consider positive. He recommends allowing a $100,000 limit on soft money, similar to the $10,000 state party soft money limit in the BCRA. La Raja's research is the kind that E. Joshua Rosencranz challenges political scientists to produce to help judges make informed decisions in campaign finance cases. He warns that judges need solid, empirical research results on which to base their decisions or we may end up with more "botched judicial forays into the political thicket" (p. 130). Rosencranz's chapter is an excellent, concise review of how campaign finance laws have been interpreted and altered by the courts.

The book closes with eight reform proposals offered by Norman Ornstein. Many of these, developed by a small group of campaign finance scholars including Ornstein, were incorporated into the McCain-Feingold bill. His chapter shows how the work of political scientists can have an important impact on policy making.

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What Government Can Do: Dealing with Poverty and Inequality *by Benjamin I. Page and James R. Simmons. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2000. 409 pp. $29.00.*

Why Government Succeeds and Why It Fails *by Amihai Glazer and Lawrence S. Rothenberg. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2001. 204 pp. $35.00.*

Given disciplinary partitions in the academic mind, it is not surprising that books often appear on the same subject without any cumulative increase in knowledge from their common concern. This is unfortunate, especially when the topic is important. In the two books under review, the common and important topic is what citizens can reasonably expect government to be able to do in advancing their domestic welfare. While both pairs of authors claim to be addressing this question from a political economy perspective, their approaches have little in common, the promises implied by their declarative titles remain unfulfilled, and their conclusions bear only a superficial resemblance to each other. Each book is a solid, workmanlike academic tome. However, for the lay reader the result is likely to be confusion or even a net loss of understanding, assuming there can be such a thing as negative serendipity from reading two incommensurate books on the same subject.

Political scientists Benjamin Page and James Simmons offer a straightforward account of federal social policies that is designed to show both that redistributive programs do work and that they could do much more to combat poverty and economic inequality. Of course, there is a tension, though not necessarily a contradiction, between these two lines of argument. As the authors point out at the outset, economic inequality and poverty remain at disturbingly high levels. At the same time, the book argues that citizens would be mistaken to draw negative conclusions about the capacities of government to deal with these problems. Four informative chapters at the center of the book offer an account of the successes that have been achieved in the areas of social insurance, tax policy, education, and labor market programs. One also learns much about the gaps that remain, particularly in the availability of good jobs paying decent wages.

Ultimately, the authors thread the line between complacency and discouragement by putting the main blame on the current political system for failing to pursue more far-reaching social policies. Rather than pressures of the global economy, the undemocratic features of the American political process have prevented the nation from doing more about poverty and economic inequality. The power and privilege of moneyed interests in politics stand athwart this path to a fairer society. Page and Simmons conclude that through political reforms to equalize citizens' power, the way will be opened for more ambitious policies to guarantee all Americans the right to basic standards of food, housing, medical care, and possibly even (the authors waver here) guaranteed incomes. In essence, *What Government Can Do* restates a standard case for defending and expanding the American welfare state through a recommitment to progressive politics.

By contrast, *Why Government Succeeds and Why It Fails* proposes to look beyond "conventional political explanations" (p. 2) and show why some policy problems are inherently more solvable than others. The economist Amihai Glazer and University of Rochester political scientist Lawrence Rothenberg seek to understand the difference between policy success and failure in terms of the variable economic constraints associated with different policies (versus the motivations of politicians and influence of special interests that they claim political scientists are wont to study).

Readers will need to recognize that the economic constraints the authors have in mind have nothing to do with budgets and funding difficulties. The economic analysis in question refers to the way policy outcomes are shaped by the calculations of rational economic actors in certain generic contexts of public choice. Four particular economic constraints are considered in chapters devoted to four broad policy realms (macroeconomic policy, economic redistribution programs, government regulation, and public production of goods and services).

The first economic constraint is termed "credibility," the conviction that government will follow through on its promised actions. The second is "rational expectations . . . the collection of, and the sophisticated response to, information by decisionmakers" (p. 6). In the authors' view, failure is likely to attend policies that economic agents can readily anticipate and manipulate. The third economic constraint is the tendency for a policy to augment or displace the corresponding activity of other actors, or what is termed "crowding in and crowding out." Finally, "multiple equilibria" refers to the fact that different outcomes can be produced by the same circumstances. In such cases, government may have a greater chance of pushing outcomes from an undesirable to a more favorable equilibrium point.

If one imagines that all this sounds too abstract and slippery to offer very firm conclusions about "why government succeeds and why it fails," he or she would be correct. The constraints often point both ways at once for a given policy domain, thus producing something of a credibility problem for the analysis itself. The authors conclude that on the whole, when compared with popular views on the matter, macroeconomic and regulatory policies tend to be more difficult than assumed, government production is as tough as imagined, and redistributive policies have a greater chance of succeeding than commonly assumed. On the latter point at least, the two books would seem to agree. If government policies are not producing major redistributive reductions in economic inequality, it is not for lack of knowing how but for lack of political will to do it.

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Welfare Policymaking in the States: The Devil in Devolution *by Pamela Winston. Washington, DC, Georgetown University Press, 2002. 352 pp. Cloth, $59.95; paper, $24.95.*

Devolution, the shifting of policy responsibility down the federalist food chain from the national governments to states, was the hallmark of the 1996 welfare reform legislation in the United States. Arguments in favor of devolution centered around three themes: that states are laboratories where policy innovations can be tried on a small scale; that policy can be tailored to local needs; and that state policy making is inherently more democratic because smaller