

ambitions,” primarily as they manifest themselves in a “liberal educative project,” which, Macedo forthrightly concedes, does and must inculcate liberal principles in its citizens (Macedo, *Diversity and Distrust*, 2000, pp. xi, 3). The chapter title bears especially on the problematic character of “liberal” public education: Wolfe contends that the right of religious believers to educate their children is increasingly confronted by “an offensive, crusading liberalism” (p. 113), one that poses “a significant threat to freedom” (p. 100) for many Americans (perhaps a majority) who adhere to religious views that are more traditional than those of the theoretical architects of contemporary liberalism.

Whereas the first part of the book is intended to reveal deficiencies in contemporary liberal theory that render it inadequate as a foundation for a truly representative public philosophy, Part Two seeks to establish a positive alternative, what Wolfe calls “natural law liberalism” (p. 131). He begins by placing the currently dominant expressions of liberalism into the broader historical context of political philosophies and political movements reaching back to the seventeenth century. This analysis culminates in the identification of five “core principles” (equal human dignity, consent of the governed, individual rights, effective limited government, and rule of law) and five strong “tendencies” (rationalist, reformist, individualistic, that which tends to promote either rational religion [natural theology] or secularism, and universalistic) that inform or animate most liberal thought. Wolfe provides a similar analysis of the natural law tradition by tracing its historical development, distinguishing different versions and “levels” of natural law theory, sifting out an underlying core agreement among them, and making a credible case that the core principles of natural law theory are not in fact hostile to liberalism’s central preoccupation with liberty. He goes on to show the ways in which natural law theory affirms the main “principles” of liberalism, offers qualified sup-

port for its primary “tendencies,” and helps to overcome many of contemporary liberalism’s blind spots. The book concludes with a chapter that applies natural law liberalism to the topic of religious liberty, and another that sketches the principled basis for a natural law public philosophy.

Wolfe’s writing is often spirited, consistently incisive, and unfailingly clear. He does not stoop to caricature, is uninterested in partisan wrangling, and confines his argument to the most important issues and problems of the day. Like the interlocutors he criticizes, Wolfe is primarily interested in the future health of liberalism, and he treats those with whom he disagrees with the kind of carefulness and seriousness that bespeaks genuine respect. Although he often expresses appreciation for their efforts and the concerns that underlie them, he does not dilute his criticisms and is frank in pointing to their failures. The result is a bracing engagement that is refreshingly direct without being combative.

Nevertheless, the book is bound to be controversial. Not only is it written from a religious perspective alien to the dominant sensibilities of the academy, but its effort to forge an as-yet-untrodden path also risks criticism from both sides of the dispute—traditional natural law theorists sharply critical of the excessively secular character of contemporary liberalism and contemporary liberal theorists impatient with the persistent unwillingness of religious traditionalists to relegate religion to the private sphere. The constructive ambition animating this book (and its promised sequels) is to provoke participants on both sides of the controversy to find a common middle ground in natural law liberalism. The book makes an important contribution to this end. The extent to which he succeeds in furthering the desired dialogue, however, will depend in large part on whether those whom Wolfe subjects to thoughtful and respectful criticism prove willing to return the favor.

AMERICAN POLITICS

When Movements Matter: The Townsend Plan and the Rise of Social Security. By Edwin Amenta. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006. 352p. \$35.00.

Challenging Authority: How Ordinary People Change America. By Frances Fox Piven. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006. 200p. \$21.95 cloth.
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— Joseph E. Luders, *Yeshiva University*

Do movements matter? In particular, can they extract policy concessions from state actors? And if so, how? These questions have been the focus in recent years of a burgeon-

ing and exciting literature. For Frances Fox Piven, the answer to the question “Do movements matter?” is an emphatic yes. Indeed, she argues that the principal surges in egalitarian social change in American history can be traced directly or indirectly to the intervention of disruptive protest movements. For Edwin Amenta, the answer is also yes, but in a more qualified fashion. Together, these two works are brimming with insights regarding how movement impact might be understood.

In *Challenging Authority*, Piven argues that the fundamental basis of movement power is disruption, broadly construed, and its impact upon electoral politics. In their ability to interfere with the routine realization of elite interests, social movements can compel their unwilling targets to make concessions in order to assuage the

grievances of insurgents. For Piven, elective officeholders (Democrats and Republicans alike) are basically conservative, and seek to maintain their electoral majorities through the use of broad, inoffensive appeals, rather than providing policy concessions that might fragment their coalition. In general, elites make concessions to movements because of their direct or indirect capacity to reduce the cohesion of the dominant political coalition.

By my count, Piven suggests four main routes by which this is accomplished. First, movement disruptions heighten the salience of particular issues and remedies among mass constituencies. Second, to the extent that movements actuate voters directly, this electoral leverage may be sufficient to elicit favorable attention from elective officeholders. Third, movement activists may insinuate themselves within party organizations to produce responsiveness from within. Finally, Piven suggests that disruption can *indirectly* produce disequilibria in political coalitions that necessitate overtures in the form of new policy benefits for disaffected constituencies. Thus, she implies that the basis of movement leverage depends variously upon supportive public opinion, fear of electoral reprisal, leverage from within the dominant party organization, and unintended consequences.

To demonstrate her argument, Piven traces a breathtaking historical arc from mob activity in the Revolutionary period, to abolitionism, to the movements of the Great Depression era, and eventually to Civil Rights agitation in the 1960s. Her argument is audacious. Without revolutionary era mobs, abolitionist agitation, and the unruly disruptions from the unemployed, workers, African Americans, and others, bursts in egalitarian social change simply would not have happened. In the section addressing the twentieth century, her formulation might be put bluntly as follows: no disruptive protests, no New Deal nor Great Society. Her argument, which no doubt is meant to be provocative, challenges those approaches that dismiss or minimize the contributions of social movements in their explanations for egalitarian political change. Too, Piven argues that the cessation of disruptive protests contributes to the retrenchment of previous policy victories. With the decline of disorder and a reduction in the threat of electoral division, officeholders reset public policies to be consonant with the new balance of political leverage in the electorate. This pattern, she maintains, provides further proof that major policy reforms depend upon the presence of insurgencies.

Whereas Piven describes social movement outcomes in broad historical brushstrokes, Edwin Amenta's *When Movements Matter* depicts in meticulous detail the impact of the Townsend movement upon old-age social policy, particularly from 1934 to 1950. Firmly based on social movement theory, Amenta's analysis will be more immediately appreciated by those seeking to discern precisely the conditions under which movements make a difference in policy outcomes. His close attention to the nuances

of the legislative process in old-age policy offers an astute and subtle analysis of the interaction between movement and discrete policymakers. For Amenta, movement impact is "politically mediated" such that mobilization is likely to win policy concessions only if the broader political alignment is favorable and the movement uses tactics suited to its political-institutional circumstances. The posture of elected officials and state bureaucrats toward the demands of the social movement define the salient political conditions within which movements select their strategies. Under highly favorable circumstances, in which the movement has support from both elected officials and bureaucrats, new benefits may be obtained by using only limited protest and an effective demonstration of mass support through widespread mobilization. By contrast, less favorable conditions necessitate more assertive strategies, including electoral threats against officeholders and sanctioning bureaucrats. More assertive behaviors are more demanding for social movements and, therefore, as political conditions turn less favorable, the prospects for winning new collective benefits diminish accordingly. In this way, Amenta's approach neatly combines structure and agency to account for variation in movement impact.

To evaluate his theoretical perspective, Amenta carefully delineates the influence over time of the Townsend movement, which pushed for generous old-age pensions, on social policy at both the national and state levels. At its peak, the Townsend movement encompassed two million supporters, nearly a fifth of Americans over 60 years of age. However, the author demonstrates that the movement's impact was variable, depending upon both real or anticipated electoral clout and the use of effective strategies.

Amenta suggests that before the onset of Townsend mobilization, the Roosevelt administration in early 1934 already had plans for old-age assistance. That said, he argues that the wildfire mobilization of Townsend clubs induced the administration to move old-age policy higher on the agenda and to boost the proposed old-age benefits. In 1935, as Congress hammered out the specifics of the Social Security Act, the Townsend movement came out against the bill, preferring only their own measure, and failed to push for greater generosity in Old-Age Assistance (OAA) benefits. Thus, despite movement mobilization, strategic ineptitude allowed the House Ways and Means Committee to cut benefits to levels below the administration's request. Throughout the following three years, the movement lacked the leverage to place old-age policy back on the national political agenda. Then, exogenous circumstances intervened to do so. This time around, the Townsend Plan, as well as other pro-pension challengers, won higher benefits under OAA. Although the movement was incapable of passing the Townsend Plan or dictating the contents of the final legislative product, this outcome depended heavily on the electoral leverage in numerous congressional districts that the movement

had carefully cultivated. In the next wave of legislative consideration, subsequent organizational expansion in key electoral territory, particularly the East and Midwest, meant that the movement had greater electoral leverage than ever before. Amenta maintains that only the attack on Pearl Harbor thwarted the adoption of a universal old-age pension. Armistice and the ascendance of the conservative coalition in Congress kept the movement from winning further victories. Nevertheless, the movement continued to have an indirect affect upon old-age policy. By the late 1940s, the organization's prior achievements in enlarging old-age benefits under OAA produced fiscal arrangements that indirectly fostered political support for a shift toward Old-Age and Survivors Insurance (OASI). These changes, in the absence of effective organized demands, led to the birth of the modern Social Security program.

With Piven and Amenta both offering accounts of the New Deal surge in social policy, a juxtaposition of their approaches is instructive. While in some ways complementary, their analyses diverge on key points. First, the Townsend movement hardly appears to be disruptive in the fashion to which Piven often alludes, that is, engaging in rallies, strikes, rioting, or other unorthodox political behaviors. Rather, this movement appears to be a quintessential pressure group operating fully within the norms of electoral politics. True, as the movement grew and became capable of threatening electoral disruptions, it acquired greater leverage over old-age policy, but these disruptions were of a quite conventional variety. Second, Piven seems to argue that in the absence of mobilization to disrupt electoral politics, the Social Security Act would not have been enacted. Amenta disagrees and suggests that old-age policy was already on the administration's agenda before Townsendite organization, and that some measure was likely to be enacted irrespective of the movement. Furthermore, instead of assertive mobilization automatically boosting generosity, Amenta's analysis indicates that the movement's tactical blunders actually allowed congressional conservatives to reduce OAA benefit levels below the administration's original recommendation. Finally, while Amenta's analysis indicates that greater Democratic control in Congress furnishes movements seeking enlarged social policy benefits with better prospects for success, Piven treats these circumstances as analytically insufficient. Her argument nevertheless points to the hypothesis that disruptions have the effects she identifies only during moments in which center-left coalitions are dominant, a situation which may well be exogenous to social movement agitation.

Despite significant disagreements, both narratives converge in the proposition that movements matter under the right circumstances, and they clarify what those circumstances are. While there are sure to be challenges to the specifics of her analysis, Piven's argument should stimu-

late a lively debate and provoke further research on the specification of movement impact during the fleeting moments of egalitarian public policymaking. The propositions that she offers in this regard are bold and suggestive. For his part, Amenta's sharp theoretical analysis of Townsend mobilization and his rigorous excavation of the historical evidence sets a high standard for future research and makes an exceptionally significant contribution to the literature on movement impact. For those interested in how social movements shape politics and policy, especially in an egalitarian direction, both studies warrant attention and careful consideration.

Prejudice in Politics: Group Position, Public Opinion, and the Wisconsin Treaty Rights Dispute.

By Lawrence D. Bobo and Mia Tuan. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006. 288p. \$40.00.

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— Harwood K. McClerking, *Ohio State University*

In his seminal 1958 article ("Race Prejudice as a Sense of Group Position"), sociologist Herbert Blumer argued that we should understand race relations and racial prejudice especially as a "sense of group position." Blumer's basic intuition is that individuals are organized by racial categories as groups and that group members are concerned about the relative position of their group in the racial hierarchy: Members of higher-status groups in particular react with many of the visible signs of race prejudice when their group's status is challenged. Lawrence D. Bobo and Mia Tuan offer possibly the most comprehensive exposition and explanation of that argument in their new book, *Prejudice in Politics*. First, Bobo and Tuan let us know exactly what group position theory is and how to make sense of it in comparison to other ideas about the nature of prejudice in politics. Along with group position, they examine the relevance of other theoretical explanations of prejudice, such as self-interest, clashing values, and symbolic racism. Then they use a unique survey to operationalize, compare, and contrast these competing ideas about prejudice in politics. In the end, they offer us the compelling idea that the "real" answer to understanding prejudice in politics lies not in eliminating alternative hypotheses but in a group position-oriented synthesis of these presumably competing ideas.

At first glance, this book may seem to be about a relatively small issue. As noted in the subtitle, the book examines the context surrounding a treaty dispute in Wisconsin between a tribal group of Native Americans, the Chippewa, and various governmental entities. The actual dispute (lasting officially from 1974 to the mid-1990s) was about whether the Chippewa have the right to fish, hunt, and gather off their reservation in Wisconsin, as had been guaranteed by treaties signed in 1837, 1842, and 1854. But Bobo and Tuan use this particular case to understand a