

by more than 100 organizations, and numerous personal interviews with key players from each period. The result is one of the most thorough and interesting empirical accounts of national political activity in Canada over the last twenty years. The book brings this empirical account to bear on the question of how best to understand political mobilization in general. Unsurprisingly, neither an interest group approach nor social movement theory can account fully for the effects of the concerted efforts of women in Canadian constitutional politics.

That women had a profound influence is undeniable, according to Dobrowolsky. First, they succeeded in disrupting the conventional politics of federalism, which historically has ignored identities other than those organized on a territorial (i.e., federal-provincial) basis. They convinced Canadians that other forms of identity, including those of national minorities and those based on ethnicity and gender, need to be recognized and represented at the negotiating table. Second, directly through lobbying efforts and by disrupting conventional discourse, women succeeded in securing an expansive notion of equality that reconciles equality rights with difference and diversity. As Dobrowolsky argues, this expansive notion fundamentally changed not only the constitution but also the Canadian political and social landscape. As a result, it changed the context in which women mobilized.

Ironically, one way in which this expansive sense of equality changed politics and society may have been responsible for the demise in power of national women's organizations. Key women's groups weathered troubled times during Canada's constitutional episodes partly because, due to their own success at arguing for an expansive notion of equality, they were confronted by their own failure to respond adequately to the identity-related differences among women. In particular, women of color, Aboriginal women, and Quebec women compelled the movement to rethink the ways in which it represented women's interests. Aboriginal and Quebec women withdrew their formal participation from national organizations and advanced their distinctive interests and perspectives, using their own increasingly powerful organizations.

Dobrowolsky resists the conclusion that the women's movement in Canada operated by advancing vested interests of particular women, that is, white, wealthy professional women. Yet, her analysis shows that at one crucial juncture—during the 1980–82 constitutional negotiations—a network of such women were largely responsible for ensuring that equality rights were firmly entrenched in the Canadian Constitution. Since that time, the women's movement in Canada has displayed what might be seen as a healthy respect for the politics of inclusion and a strong resolve to ensure that differences among women, especially those based on linguistic, ethnic, and national divisions, are not neglected in favor of presenting a façade of gender-based unity. The price of inclusion, however, is a politics that does not attempt to unite women around a set of shared values and does not presume or expect solidarity among women in relation to any single political agenda.

For Dobrowolsky, the pragmatism of women's political activity in Canada is evidence of success rather than failure. She strongly resists the conclusion that identity politics is "fragmenting, divisive and therefore detrimental" (p. 197). She argues that concerns over identity politics are born out of a preoccupation with unanimity and neglect of the benefits of discursive exchange (p. 197). In this sense, Dobrowolsky urges readers to look at political mobilization using a differ-

ent set of standards, but she does not offer a more precise idea of what these standards ought to be.

Unanimity may not be a realistic ideal, but at what point can one conclude that a movement suffers from fragmentation? Discursive exchange is important to any democratic movement, but at some point should conversations move on; should decisions be made; and, as in the case examined in this book, should principles be entrenched in a constitution or be defeated? In Canada, the amendments in 1990 and 1992 were both defeated. Dobrowolsky provides convincing evidence that women as a social movement made a difference to each of these decisions, but her analysis raises the question of whether a more pluralistic movement wedded to a more discursive form of politics is not better suited to disrupting attempts to change the constitutional status quo rather than to advancing change. Dobrowolsky does not address this question, but her book provides a thoughtful analysis of the evidence and arguments one would have to consider in order to answer it.

Citizens, Experts, and the Environment: The Politics of Local Knowledge. By Frank Fischer. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000. 336p. \$59.95 cloth, \$18.95 paper.

Sheldon Kamieniecki, *University of Southern California*

Advances in science and technology account for much of today's pollution, but science and technology are now being relied upon to reduce pollution, protect natural resources, and promote habitat conservation. As scientists, experts, and technical personnel become increasingly involved in these efforts, public values and preferences, especially at the local level, are being ignored. Citizen participation is declining, and professionals are playing a more influential role in environmental policymaking than before. Because a large majority of these professionals are not elected and are not directly accountable to the public, decision making is less democratic. With this as a backdrop, the major question this book attempts to address is how citizens can participate in an age dominated by complex technologies and expert decisions (p. 6).

This book is divided into four sections. Part 1 provides a broad discussion of the role of technology and expertise in today's society. The first three chapters examine citizen participation as both an ideology and an activity, criticize professional expertise, and call for alternative practices. The fourth chapter reviews the epistemological issues underlying the critique of empirical social science, natural science, and technology and offers a "postpositivist," discursive theory of knowledge. "Postpositivism," according to the author, "is grounded in the idea that reality exists but can never be understood or explained fully, given both the multiplicity of causes and effects and the problem of social meaning. . . . Critical of empiricism, 'postpositivism' emphasizes the social construction of theory and concepts, and qualitative approaches to the discovery of knowledge" (p. 282, footnote 1).

Part 2 contains three chapters and addresses the role of expertise in environmental policymaking, the political response of environmentalists to technocratic decision practices, and the resulting politics of "counterexpertise." Part 3 also contains three chapters and discusses the deliberative alternative, emphasizing the importance of local knowledge (frequently studied by anthropologists, such as Steve Lansing), citizens as experts, and community inquiry.

The two chapters in the final section attempt to show how the participatory inquiry of lay citizens and experts can be

employed to address complex issues and the ways that their collaborative assessments can be used to inform legislators. Determining environmental risk, both empirically and subjectively, is a central aim throughout the work. In conclusion, the author calls for a new understanding of the expert as “specialized citizen.”

Fischer primarily views the problems of scientific expertise and the need for increased levels of informed citizen participation within the context of political theory. “What the positivists have failed to grasp . . . is that scientific discourse is itself a highly interpretive enterprise. Given this interpretive dimension, science loses its privileged claim as superior knowledge” (p. 44). Hence, citizen participation is critical not only for the functioning of democracy and as a value in and of itself, but also because science is open to subjective interpretation, and knowledge is socially constructed (i.e., it is not objective or value free, and facts do not exist). This is precisely why the author believes scientific expertise and citizen participation should be treated equally in the policy-making process.

Average citizens, we are told, have the ability to understand the most complicated scientific and technical issues. Fischer recommends the establishment of “consensus conferences” (pp. 234–40), or about two dozen “ordinary” citizens who assess the science and technology related to a specific issue or problem. People who are chosen to participate in these conferences read and learn about the technical issues involved and, with the help of a nonexpert facilitator, develop a set of recommendations for policymakers and legislators. This approach has been employed in Denmark and elsewhere with some success.

Overall, the book is well written. The author effectively develops important issues, arguments, and ideas before staking out a position. Readers in all fields will appreciate the clarity of the discussions concerning the expanding role of science and technology in environmental policymaking and why citizen participation is vital, especially at the local level. The study successfully integrates central concepts and ideas in political theory with analyses of the most serious problems related to citizen participation in environmental policymaking.

A critical question Fischer skirts is whether more citizen participation leads to more effective environmental policies. Regardless of what mechanisms are used to involve the public, will the result be environmental policies that work? No study has shown that the level of public participation—regardless of how it is achieved—varies directly with the level of effectiveness of public policy. In fact, research shows that the relationship between these two variables is ambiguous at best. Although the author may feel that an increase in citizen participation is as important as (or even more important than) developing cost-effective, successful plans and regulatory programs, it is highly doubtful that politicians and policymakers will agree.

The failure of previous environmental policies has less to do with whether science is completely subjective or a decline in citizen participation and has more to do with poor policy design and execution. The extreme politicization of critical environmental problems (e.g., the protection of biodiversity and climate change) has resulted in no action or failed policies at the federal, state, and local level. In many if not most cases, the rise of interest group politics has prevented vital environmental legislation from being passed. Laws that have been adopted have not been strictly enforced.

The book also does not adequately address how to persuade citizens to become more actively involved in environmental policy at the local level. In general, the level and type

of public participation that Fischer desires takes a great deal of time and effort, and most people do not want to become involved to this extent. Why would they want to participate in fairly demanding consensus conferences? (Interestingly, the study does not explore how advanced computer and communications technology might be used creatively to include a larger number of citizens in environmental decision making at the local level in a meaningful way.) There must be an increase in feelings of civic duty and responsibility before such mechanisms as consensus conferences can be successful.

The major problem with the book is that it fails to offer significant new insights into the dilemma of citizen participation in modern society, particularly when highly technical issues are at stake. The same observations and possible solutions to this dilemma have been discussed by others as well as the author himself (*Technocracy and the Politics of Expertise*, 1990; “American Think Tanks,” *Governance* 4 [July 1991]: 332–53). At the same time, the vast literature on interest groups, policy stakeholders, agenda setting, and public participation in political science is ignored. Regrettably, despite the importance of the topic, the book does not break new ground or add to our knowledge of citizen participation in environmental policymaking.

The British Presidency: Tony Blair and the Politics of Public Leadership. By Michael Foley. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000. 374p. \$74.95.

G. W. Jones, *London School of Economics and Political Science*

In this updated edition of his book, published in 1993 as *The Rise of the British Presidency*, Michael Foley develops his argument and rounds on his critics. He remains committed to his central proposition that the study of American presidents reveals underlying political pressures that have transformed the British prime minister into the British president. He asserts (p. 331): “The comparability that has come to exist does so at a level that transcends the constitutional differences within the two systems.” He claims there has been a fundamental systemic change in British government brought about by irreversible dynamics in the British political system.

The drivers of the transformation are the media. They regard politics as a clash between leaders, who personalize their parties, programs, and governments. Both prime ministers and presidents deal directly with the people and power centers. In Britain prime ministers detach themselves from their parties, their cabinets, and Parliament in seeking direct links to the people both to attain and to keep office.

Foley makes a plausible case, writes persuasively in an elegant style, deploys apt quotations from his extensive collection of press cuttings, and shifts easily between U.S. and British experiences. Had he waited for the aftermath of the general election of 2001, he would have been able to reinforce his thesis. The party campaigns focused overwhelmingly on the party leaders and copied U.S. techniques, and the media concentrated on the prime minister and the leaders of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties. Tony Blair, once reelected, reorganized the core executive of the Prime Minister’s Office and the Cabinet Office, increasing and reshaping his staff and fusing the two offices under his control. To many commentators Blair copied the organization of the White House. The general election of 2001 and the subsequent reorganization of government resonate with U.S. analogies.