

the Santa Clara County (California) Child Care Pilot Study. In general the discussions are quite readable and eschew jargon (although one might have expected a more "lay" discussion of heteroskedasticity [p. 164] in a policy-oriented book).

A careful reading of the book provides a good deal of valuable information. Chapter 2 confirms that the vast majority of working parents continue to use nonformal care for their children. In 1974-75, only 4 percent of employed mothers' children, ages three to six, were cared for in day care centers (p. 20). We learn, too, that in the Seattle and Denver studies the prices charged by family day care providers were quite low relative to what one might predict based on the providers' education and experience. Weiner suggests that providers may in fact be giving parents a partial subsidy. This phenomenon was echoed in the Santa Clara County experiment, which found that the average prices charged by all three types of child care providers (public centers, private centers, and family day care homes) were all significantly lower than the maximum California reimbursement rates. The Santa Clara County experiment also revealed the high cost of providing information to parents and the difficulties in estimating available child care slots (pp. 146-47).

While economic analysis of child care has clearly come a long way in the last five years, many issues remain to be analyzed. In particular, considerably more attention must be paid to examining alternative methods of delivering child care services, including oft-forgotten care services for sick children. Nonetheless, at the present moment, scholars and policy analysts interested in extrafamily child care will undoubtedly find the Robins-Weiner volume an important resource.

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The Art of Problem Solving: Accompanied by Ackoff's Fables. By Russell L. Ackoff. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1978. Pp. 214. No price given.)

Ackoff's *The Art of Problem Solving* joins James L. Adams' *Conceptual Blockbusting* and Roger Fisher's *International Conflict for Beginners* in that small but important genre of witty, light, brief, pragmatic, and convivial collections of inspiring examples of creative problem solving. Ackoff focuses on management problems, usually private, occasionally public. The last third of his book lags disappointingly far behind the brilliant pace he sets at first, and a gloating, *ex cathedra* undertone that sounds here and there makes Ackoff's lessons somewhat less satisfying and inviting than Adams's or Fisher's. But little matter: this high-spirited author has

earned the honor of having fun showing off his glittering gallery of portraits of imagination at work. Given the frustration of long, dark hours brooding over devilish puzzles and the exhilaration generated by those all-too-occasional sparks of creative insight, policy analysts will surely want to read this easily read book in the soothing hope that a fleck of its genius will somehow rub off.

Expectations, however, should not be pitched unfairly high: *The Art of Problem Solving* hardly solves our problem-solving problems. "This is neither a textbook, nor a handbook, nor a learned treatise. It is what is left from sifting through thirty years of experience, my own and others, in search of clues on how to make problem solving more creative and more fun" (p. x). The morals Ackoff draws are the ones we all know but tend to ignore: Don't jump to conclusions. Beware of imaginary constraints and over-simplifying assumptions. Check your hypotheses against systematic data. Do not confuse association with causation. Remember that people usually act in their own interest.

Why do we generally ignore these maxims? Because, of course, it is usually in our own interest to do so. The maxims take time, energy, and money: we rely on snap judgments in order not to devote all our lives and resources to problem solving. Even Ackoff, after all, probably spends a moment or two sipping cognac or pursuing a golf ball. Ackoff's genius is to recognize those situations where "simplification is . . . simple-minded" (p. 78) rather than being sensible, as it usually is, given the brevity and mind-boggling complexity of our lives.

Implementing Ackoff's rule that "the consequences of every simplifying assumption should . . . be seriously evaluated" (p. 78) or "the more obvious the value of a service appears to be, the more intensively it should be tested" (p. 176) would bankrupt any organization—and infinitely enrich countless consultants! The trick is knowing which two or three simplifying assumptions are worth creative thought. The anecdotes Ackoff tells provide a few subtle clues about that—and that is the value of this entertaining and stimulating little book.

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Education and the Presidency. By Chester E. Finn, Jr., with a foreword by Daniel P. Moynihan. (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1977. Pp. 190. \$15.00.)

Lee DuBridges, Richard Nixon's first science adviser, remarked (I quote from memory) that "everyone talks about 'policy' but what they mean is