

**AMERICAN POLITICS:  
The Promise of Disharmony**  
by Samuel P. Huntington  
Harvard, 1981  
303 pp. \$15

Why, at certain times, has America experienced so much political consensus—and, at others, so much political conflict? Huntington, a Harvard political scientist, answers with a provocative thesis. As he sees it, an inevitable chronic tension exists between the nation's high "liberal ideals" and its "semi-liberal institutions." The American Creed is egalitarian, individualistic, democratic, and hence against authority, even U.S. authority. Over time, the *intensity* of Americans' belief in the creed varies. The 1960s uproar was an intense, angry reaffirmation of the creed, challenging most existing institutions and practices. Quite similar reformist upsurges occurred earlier, during the Age of Jackson (1820–40) and the Populist-Progressive era at the turn of the century. "America," Huntington observes, "has been spared [European-style] class conflicts in order to have moral convulsions" every third generation. While complacency and hypocrisy are dangerous, mindless reformism could some day cripple the nation's institutions and its ability to support liberty and democracy abroad. "Critics say America is a lie," Huntington concludes. "They are wrong. America is not a lie; it is a disappointment. But it can be a disappointment only because it is also a hope."

**MARKETS AND  
MINORITIES**  
by Thomas Sowell  
Basic, 1981  
141 pp. \$13.50

Sowell's great strength is his ability to take a volatile issue—race—and discuss it in a dispassionate manner. The first chart in this volume sets the iconoclastic tone of the book: Ranking family income by ethnic group, it puts WASPs seventh, below, among others, Jews, Japanese, and Poles. As a partial explanation, Sowell offers the age factor (46 is the median for Jews, 18 years above average) and geographic distribution (the Japanese, for instance, are found disproportionately in prosperous California). Sowell's purpose here is to demonstrate that no single factor can explain the wide ethnic differences in family income. He proceeds to look at the historical experiences of ethnic groups in America, examining the rise and fall of their relative positions and