

---

political institutions, is uniquely qualified to correct social and political imbalances, whether they stem from the excessive influence of a party machine, the reluctance of a legislature to touch a volatile issue, or the illegitimate demands of a majority. Claiming that it is "no more theoretical than plumbing," Neely insists that "constitutional law is *only* about correcting flaws in the other branches; it is basically about balance." Acknowledging a debt to Yale law professor Michael Reisman, Neely maintains that all governments exist on two levels—mythical and operational. When the discrepancy becomes too great, it is incumbent upon the judiciary to act but never to acknowledge its mediating role in the political process.

**CONSERVATIVES IN AN  
AGE OF CHANGE:  
The Nixon and Ford  
Administrations**

by A. James Reichley  
Brookings, 1981, 482 pp.  
\$29.95 cloth, \$13.95 paper

The term "conservative" entered the American political lexicon with the first platform of the National Republican Party in 1832. Over the next century, conservatism in America acquired such tenets as free enterprise, decentralization of government, nationalism, and moral traditionalism. Looking at day-to-day policymaking in the Nixon and Ford administrations, Reichley, a Senior Fellow at Brookings, shows how each President's background, interests, and tactical sense determined how firmly he adhered to the conservative ideology he espoused. An advocate of "conservative internationalism" (itself a deviation from orthodoxy), Nixon pursued détente with the Soviets, while opening relations with mainland China to widen the gap between the two communist powers. Ford proved the more consistent conservative. Pushed to the right by Ronald Reagan's 1976 challenge for Republican leadership, he abandoned Salt II. He also declined to increase federal spending to stimulate prosperity in an election year—unlike Nixon in 1972. Nevertheless, he spurned Reagan's 1975 proposal for a \$90 billion cut in social welfare. The strength of Reichley's book lies in his scrutiny of the chronic tensions between ideology and reality in politics.