Kirp’s lively book has started to look more like an idol, an always necessary and often admirable, it has become paramount and, even though the last three decades. The force of money inspired approaches” (Cuban) has arisen in Lazerson), something “new” (Kirp), and a thing “increasingly insistent” (Grubb and book also insists that some “cusp,” some- school three generations ago. Yet, each workforce transformed the American high objectives). Educating students for the university (yet those universities simulta- neously proclaimed practical and liberal objectives). Educating students for the workforce transformed the American high school three generations ago. Yet, each book also insists that some “cusp,” something “increasingly insistent” (Grubb and Lazerson), something “new” (Kirp), and a new “ubiquitous influence of business-in- spired approaches” (Cuban) has arisen in the last three decades. The force of money has become paramount and, even though always necessary and often admirable, it has started to look more like an idol, an end, rather than a means of accomplishing educational objectives.

Kirp’s lively book relies on revelatory case studies. Using New York University, the University of Chicago, Dickinson College, DeVry, Columbia, the University of California at Berkeley (where he is a pro- fessor of public policy), the Universities of Florida, Michigan, Southern California, and more, he ferrets out beautifully the increasing influence of “the raw power that money directly exerts over so many aspects of higher education.” Money in- fluences—and frequently flatly deter- mines—admissions, financial aid, the presence of “star” professors, the control of law-school curricula, priorities for sci- entific research, forays into distance learning, plans for expansion, and the very names of institutions (Beaver Col-

**OPEN BOOK**

**Galbraith v. the Supply-Siders**

Richard Parker, who directs the program on economics and journalism at the Kennedy School, has written a meticulous, meaty, and colorful authorized biography of a liberal icon, the Warburg professor of economics emeritus—John Kenneth Galbraith: His Life, His Politics, His Economics (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, $30). A sample:

It’s safe to say that virtually every- thing about “Reagonomics” and the Reagan Revolution appalled Ken Gal- braith...

Four months after Reagan took office, congressional Democrats were wringing their hands over how to react to his tax- and budget-cut proposals, but Gal- braith wasn’t. In the New York Times Maga- zine that spring he labelled the new Rea- gan era as what he saw it to be: the modern resurrection of the nineteenth century’s Gilded Age. “The Uses and Excuses for Affluence” opened with the description of a lavish ball organized in 1897 in New York City. At a cost of $400,000 (roughly $4 million in 1980s terms), Mrs. Bradley Martin had had the Waldorf Hotel ball- room transformed into a replica of Versailles and invited several hundred guests to attend in period costume. In the midst of a severe economic reces- sion, her ostentatious dis- play itself was mind-bog- gling, but was outdone by the hostess’s apparently sincere explana- tion for it: Somehow she had learned that the poor of New York were facing great distress that winter and her thought was that a grand party’s exu- berant display of enjoyment of life might somehow, if properly reported, lessen the burdens of those who heard about it—and might also helpfully give direct employment to the legion of cooks, florists, waiters, carriage drivers, and dish washers retained for the occa- sion.

Supply-side economics was born that night, Galbraith dead-panned, and he compared Mrs. Bradley’s ball to Rea- gan’s economic agenda and worldview. This was Galbraith at his witty and polemical best, drawing out historical precedents, deftly deflating the preten- sions of the well-to-do and the vacuous- ness of their defenders....

Reagan supporters quickly returned fire....Robert Nisbet, a onetime left-lib- eral sociologist turned neoconserva- tive,...lambasted Galbraith in Commen- tary...: “More than anyone else I can think of John Kenneth Galbraith is the nearly perfect exemplar of American lib- eralism. No one comes close to Gal- braith in the exquisite fit of his mind and its limitations to the essential theme and the varied idols of the liberal cause in our times.” To begin with, Gal- braith “was not and never will be noted as an economist”....It wasn’t enough that Galbraith was intellectually inferior and a partial Marxist; he was, Nisbet added, a terri- ble writer, too....

The fact was, Nisbet decided, Galbraith suf- fered from the clinical psychopathology of “cog- nitive dissonance...a phe- nomenon characteristic for example of pre-mil- lenarian religious groups,” the woolly, wild-eyed sort that predict the immi- nent end of the world, then, when faced with its continued existence, simply ad- vance the date rather than question their faith. The consequence of his preaching was that “through tracts like Gal- braith’s *The Affluent Society* the expecta- tions [of Americans] multiplied and grew grander, ever harder to gratify,” result- ing in “social and moral chaos, reflected in the exponentially rising number of security guards, security dogs, alarm systems, and, of course, handguns.”

“Accused of many things in my life,” Galbraith recalled with a smile, “I do not ever remember thinking myself re- sponsible for social and moral chaos or an increase in handgun sales.”