may want to ask whether the attempt to treat in a unified manner such a broad range of enterprises as is covered by the phrase "non-profit organization" is appropriate. For the concept encompasses many variations, from highly organized foundations devoted to specific areas of involvement to the multitude of religious, medical, and social service groups that continue to dot this diverse and multi-service country. Philanthropy is often governed by regional practices, local elites, and ethnic habits set a century or more ago. A single rubric may fit only the less interesting and less significant aspects of the process.

The best chapters in this handbook are those that lay out the basic data that have been collected and the principles governing their presentation. The legal materials are helpful and insightful, as are the historical overview and several of the economic pieces. Less is done with the relation between public and private institutions, although enough to whet one's appetite and to suggest future inquiries that would be useful. The questions asked and answered least well are those raised by the consideration of charitable activities in other countries that occupies the last section of the book. The major essay there is so badly written and poorly argued as to seem a parody of the language and methodology of the social sciences. Yet the topic of the section is one of the key topics, if only the question were put usefully and discussed more effectively. Why, one wants to ask, do Americans accept and defend this bifurcated system of social policy planning and service delivery when citizens of other nations make clearer distinctions between the services the state will provide and those individuals will provide for themselves? The intermediary philanthropic institutions appear to be an American anomaly. Why should this be? Why are they being defended? Why do they move in and out of public focus?

Part of the problem, I am convinced, comes from the very concept of not-for-profit and the view of such organizations as constituting a third or independent sector in a society supposedly divided normally between institutions organized for the purposes of making profits and tax-funded public institutions committed to providing public services. Third-sector or independent-sector organizations are organizations that provide public services that could be supported by public money, and indeed, as this book makes clear, in many instances it is public money that third-sector agencies distribute. The latter point is important. In the years before professional standing and all its consequences became important, the line between public and private had little meaning in local government, where citizens moved in and out of service agencies as volunteers. In the first part of this century federal agencies partook of the same ambiguity for many of the same reasons, even through the New Deal. Philanthropists funded staffing for government agencies, even took the responsibility of running them when that was appropriate.

Today one can still point to organizations that cross lines, as is recognized in this volume. Hospitals are probably the oldest and represent the most complex of interests, given that some are public institutions, some private, non-profit funded and run by religious organizations, some private and profitable, some associated with universities and therefore a mixture of private and profitable as well as philanthropic. There are debates today over the possibility of running profitable private schools, even profitable prisons. The setting up of the government corporations that run the nation's railroads and its post office was the product of a similar—and continuing—set of debates.

The book is conveniently organized by topic. The opening "overview" section contains not only an excellent historical overview but considerations of economic and political theories that relate to the topic and of the scope and dimensions of non-profit activity. Part 2 covers the relation of non-profits to the state and private enterprise, part 3 their organization and management, part 4 their functions, part 5 their sources of support, and part 6 comparative (cross-national) perspectives. Some contributions are weaker than others, as may be inevitable, but their weakness seems especially sad here, given that the book represents a decade of effort to which, one presumes, significant resources have been devoted.

Yet it is that effort itself that needs to be questioned, not in criticism but to raise the questions the book itself does not. For the book serves a purpose, as does PONPO, and not a bad purpose. Arguments in favor of non-profits should not be elusive and their defense not difficult; but like all defenses this one will get its richest meaning in an understanding of the alternatives it represents and the range of choices from among which it makes its recommendation.

What I am suggesting is that the language we use to discuss these organizations is of our own devising and not necessarily precisely representative of reality. Some of that language obscures relationships that have always existed and that raise questions about the degree of separation there really is between public and private. After all, to the extent that the funding involved in philanthropy is private it comes from profitable enterprises, either of the donors themselves or, in the case of foundations, their investment counsel. Private enterprise is essential to the philanthropic engagement, and that is strictly for profit.

The creation of a sanitary language designating a third or independent sector invites criticism by its very subterfuge. The reality is by far more interesting. This is a capitalist society and a startlingly successful one, given the criticisms that have been made of it and the toe-in-the-dirt embarrassment with which even some of its defenders have faced the necessity of defense. It has found ways of returning significant resources to maintain the present and to stimulate a better future. The fact that Americans by and large do not choose to do this through government and taxation is important, as is the energy devoted by those who organize and maintain PONPO to provide analytic study and justification. A clearer statement of what is being done and why might be just as useful as the excellent body of material presented here.

It might also make it easier for those who are being asked to defend so complex a system to defend it openly and enthusiastically, as participants in a complex social and economic form of behavior that serves useful purposes. As such it needs both defense and criticism, in equal measure. A book like this can provide only one side.

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A Federal Enterprise

Inventing the NIH. Federal Biomedical Research Policy, 1887–1937. VICTORIA A. HARDEN. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, MD, 1986. xiv, 274 pp., illus. $32.50.

The National Institutes of Health dwell like a behemoth at the heart of the federal institutional landscape, influencing not only the direction of biomedical research in the United States but the very conceptions of disease and well-being. Yet most people know little about their origins or the lengthy struggles over public health that conditioned their emergence. With the publication of Victoria Harden's history of the first 50 years, we now know a bit more.

Harden begins with the establishment in 1887 of the Hygienic Laboratory at the Marine Hospital on Staten Island. Consisting of a single room equipped at the cost of several hundred dollars, the laboratory stretched the long-standing mission of the Marine Hospital Service to provide medical

"In 1916 Ida A. Bengtson became the first woman to hold a professional position in the Hygienic Laboratory. She subsequently earned high regard for studies of bacterial toxins, trachoma, and rickettsial diseases. For the women who followed her, wrote a colleague, 'it was well . . . that the pioneer woman . . . was filling her position so ably.' " [From *Inventing the NIH*; courtesy National Library of Medicine]

care to merchant seamen. There Joseph Kinyoun applied the recent bacteriological discoveries of Koch and Pasteur to the specters of cholera and yellow fever raised by swelling immigration. In 1891, the laboratory was moved to Washington; 11 years later, during the Progressive expansion of the federal bureaucracy, the Service became the Public Health and Marine Hospital Service (the name contracted to "Public Health Service" in 1912). The laboratory ramified into divisions of pathology and bacteriology, chemistry, zoology, and pharmacology; it assumed responsibility for enforcing the provisions of the Biologics Control Act of 1902, defining standards of purity and inspecting and issuing licenses to manufacturing laboratories. Postwar efforts to create a national institute for drug research and parallel concerns over the creation of a national department of public health came to a legislative climax at the end of the '20s. In 1930, the Parker Act consolidated and confirmed the dominant position of the Public Health Service within the federal health-care establishment; the Ransdell Act transformed the Hygienic Laboratory into a National Institute of Health devoted to the comprehensive study of the diseases of man. The National Cancer Institute was founded in 1937, but NIH only became plural in 1948 when Congress established the National Heart Institute and the National Institute of Dental Research.

In an account relatively brief as institutional histories go, Harden succeeds in touching on a large number of researchers, bureaucrats, and politicians whose careers and achievements intersected the history of the Hygienic Laboratory and the Public Health Service. She concentrates, however, on health policy debates within and without the Public Health Service that shaped this early history, concluding with a fine and detailed accounting of the legislative struggles of 1926–1930 spearheaded by Senator Joseph Ransdell and Charles Holmes Herty, a veteran of the Chemical Warfare Service and onetime president of the American Chemical Society. What she makes clear is the difficulty of a victory that was achieved only after years of controversy that pitted against each other a series of powerful groups—among them the American Chemical Society, private research foundations, pharmaceutical firms, the American Medical Association, and not least the Public Health Service bureaucracy itself—each with vested interests in "public health" and its means of control.

In some respects, *Inventing the NIH* is an oddly balanced volume. Committed to celebrating the "invention" of the NIH in its first 50 years, Harden highlights how little (in contrast to its second half-century) was accomplished either in the commitment to public health or in biomedical research. Even after the passage of the landmark bills of 1930, she notes, the expansion of the NIH "into a large-scale, well-financed facility lay nearly twenty years ahead." From this point of view, the amount of space devoted to the legislative machinations of Ransdell, Herty, and others seems disproportionate. Harden's history nicely demonstrates just how many contenders fought over the "public health" and just how precarious was the fate of in-house research given its sensitive location and the inevitable linkage to these wider conflicts. For these reasons, it is disappointing that she hurries along in order to tell the story of Ransdell and Herty. An example: we are told that in 1922 the "maintenance appropriation" for the Laboratory peaked at $50,000; yet in 1918 Congress created within the Public Health Service a Division of Venereal Disease with an appropriation of $200,000, setting aside in addition (if I interpret the figures correctly) another $100,000 for external grant money and $300,000 for sociological and psychological research. Astounding largesse in an era of tight budgets, and reversed by 1926! Given what we have learned of the cultural environment in which Americans sought to confront venereal disease, this might have proved a revealing illustration of the sensitive linkage between budgetary fortunes and wider public notions of illness and its proper treatment. Harden notes the episode in several sentences, remarking of the budgetary contraction that venereal disease "was no longer the important political concern it had been in World War I."

In short, despite what seem to this reader to be problems of balance, Harden has produced a responsible survey of the early history of the NIH, sketching well though necessarily briefly the struggle waged by a variety of interest groups to promote biomedical research in government and to define the public health.

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Building an Observatory

James Lick's Monument. The Saga of Captain Richard Floyd and the Building of the Lick Observatory. HELEN WRIGHT. Cambridge University Press, New York, 1987. xvi, 231 pp., illus. $32.50.

In documenting the labors of Captain Richard Floyd, president of the Lick Trust and overseer of the construction of the Lick Observatory, Helen Wright has focused on a member of a hitherto overlooked group of contributors to the success of the scientific enterprise. The stories of the financial supporters of science are well known, and historians relate the activities of the members of the scientific community as a matter of course. But the efforts of non-scientists who brought the dreams of the donors and the scientists to fruition—men and women who out of a sense of obligation to their community and at great personal cost carried out trusts, or the construction crews who worked in difficult and isolated conditions—are rarely acknowledged.

Wright subtitles this book a "saga," an apt choice. There is adventure in the story of a former Confederate naval officer without astronomical training struggling for 13 years to construct the first high-altitude astronomical observatory, complete with 36-inch refractor, the largest such telescope in the world at the time. Floyd had to overcome a hostile environment on a virgin mountaintop, vocal opposition to his efforts from members of the California Academy of Sciences and the Society of California Pioneers, and the limits of contemporary technology and human creativity. It took the combined efforts of the optical firm of Feil of Paris, who produced the glass for the lenses after years of failure, Alvan Clark and Sons, who ground the lenses, and Warner