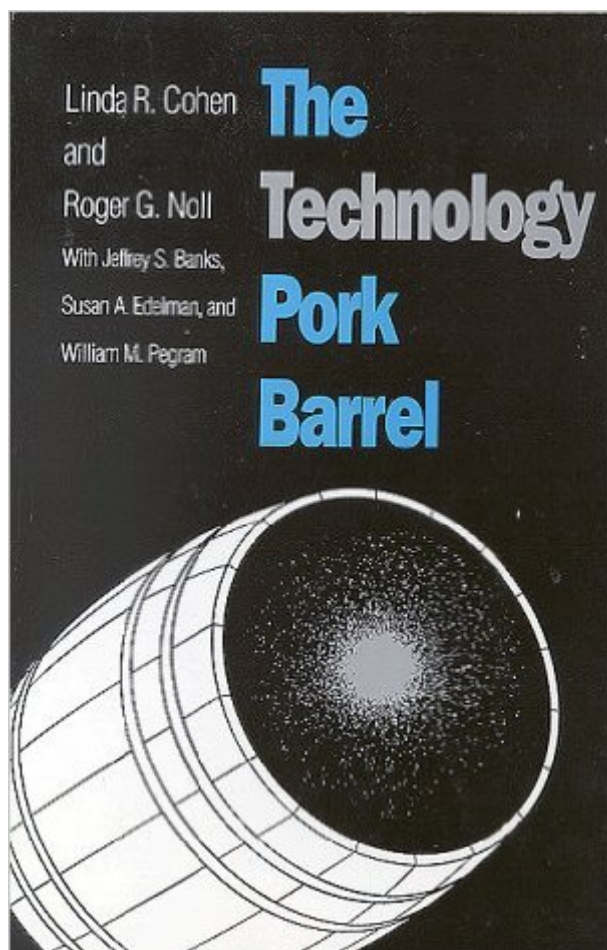


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The Technology Pork Barrel



Synopsis

American public policy has had a long history of technological optimism. The success of the United States in research and development contributes to this optimism and leads many to assume that there is a technological fix for significant national problems. Since World War II the federal government has been the major supporter of commercial research and development efforts in a wide variety of industries. But how successful are these projects? And equally important, how do economic and policy factors influence performance and are these influences predictable and controllable? Linda Cohen, Roger Noll, and three other economists address these questions while focusing on the importance of R& D to the national economy. They examine the codependency between technological progress and economic growth and explain such matters as why the private sector often fails to fund commercially applicable research adequately and why the government should focus support on some industries and not others. They also analyze political incentives facing officials who enact and implement programs and the subsequent forces affecting decisions to continue, terminate, or redirect them. The central part of this book presents detailed case histories of six programs: the supersonic transport, communications satellites, the space shuttle, the breeder reactor, photovoltaics, and synthetic fuels. The authors conclude with recommendations for program restructuring to minimize the conflict between economic objectives and political constraints.

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