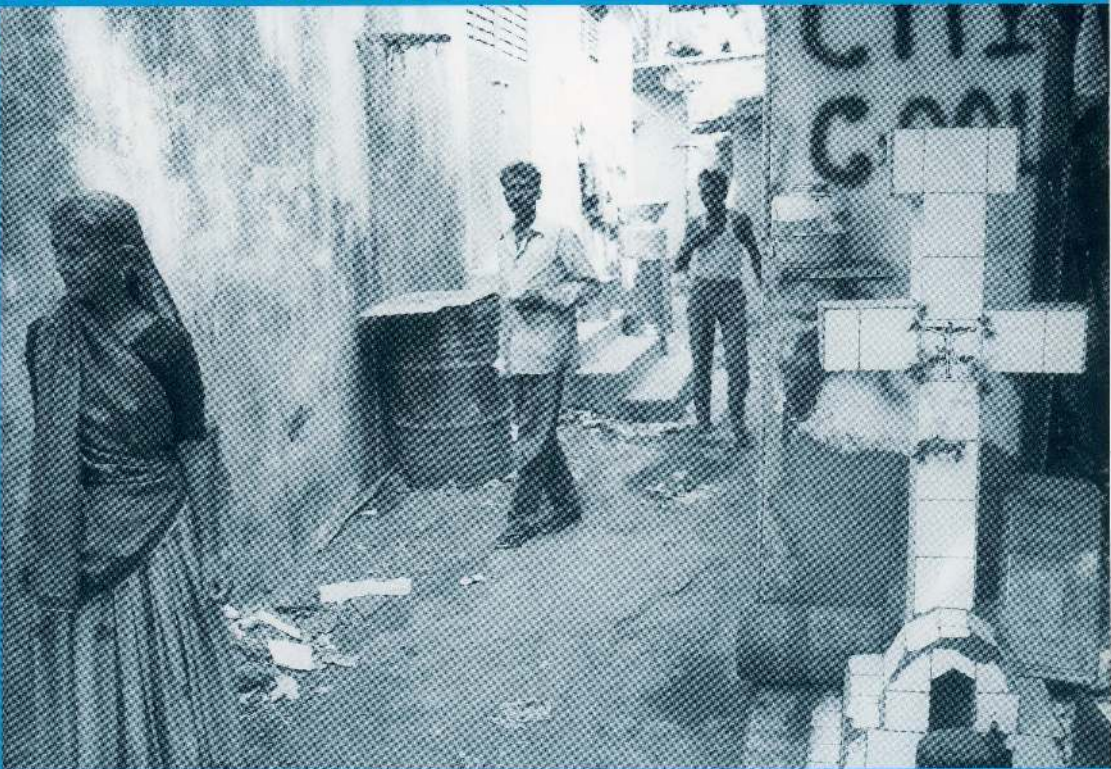


RACE & CLASS



THE HINDU RIGHT, CONVERSION AND LITERACY ■ GAURI VISWANATHAN

■ **AFRICAN AMERICANS IN THE 'NEW' ECONOMY**
■ **RACISM AND SEXISM IN CANADA'S IMMIGRATION POLICY** ■ **COSTA RICA: BANANAS AND BUSINESS** ■ **AUSTRALIA'S RACIALISED PUNISHMENT** ■ **ME DISNEY, YOU TARZAN** ■

Hugh Tinker 1921–2000

Hugh Tinker was, first and foremost, a scholar of Britain's imperial past. His work in that field, particularly into the history of indentured labour, shaped a hitherto neglected area of study, yet one which has profound significance for the make-up of our modern world. And it is as a scholar and a writer that he will be primarily remembered. But he also, briefly, took on a more – if not activist, then pragmatic – role as Director of the Institute of Race Relations, from 1970 to 1972, when it was struggling to escape its own liberal-cum-colonial origins and was undergoing a major transition to become a community-based organisation.

In that process, as both Director of the Institute's International Research Studies Programme and Director of the Institute itself, Hugh attempted to remain true to his own principles of academic freedom of thought and expression while arbitrating between two utterly conflicting entities: the ordinary staff of the Institute, supported by a majority of the membership, and its governing Council, backed by big business – putting his own job in jeopardy. But if, in the circumstances, he could not fully commit himself to a radically transformed Institute, he nonetheless made it possible for others to work to that end. He refused to close down any of the Institute's operations at the behest of the Council, or fire 'trouble-makers'; he brought ordinary staff members into the deliberations of management; he was instrumental in enabling City Parochial Fund grants to be made to a range of genuine black community groups fighting racist schooling, police harassment, unemployment and criminalisation, long before such grant-making was an accepted matter of public policy.

That the Institute has had only three directors in its almost half century of existence, owes not a little to Hugh Tinker's attempt – ultimately at some personal cost – to keep faith with his liberal, scholarly and humane principles at a time when they were most fiercely beset.

A. Sivanandan

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Literacy and conversion in the discourse of Hindu nationalism

In an otherwise cheerless and desultory year, euphoria seized India as it celebrated the award of the 1998 Nobel Prize to Amartya Sen for his work on welfare economics. The distinctiveness of this work lay in Sen's commitment to a concept of human development aimed at realising social and political processes for the betterment of human life. In insisting that all forms of human deprivation such as hunger, malnutrition and illiteracy should be brought within the purview of public policy, Sen transformed economics into a moral science, challenging the direction of a discipline focused primarily on those social aspects that are only instrumentally useful for human life. Among the deprivations he targets as most ignored by public policy is the citizenry's right to education, full access to which is still an unrealised goal in post-colonial India, despite the professed commitments to universal literacy. On hearing the news that Sen had won the Nobel Prize, even those on both the Left and the Right in India who had long questioned the pragmatic usefulness of his work suspended their scepticism and joined the rest of the country in lauding his achievement.

There was, however, a lone voice of dissent and disapproval, and it came from the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), the right-wing Hindu

Gauri Viswanathan is Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University. She is the author of *Masks of Conquest: literary study and British rule in India* (1989) and *Outside the Fold: conversion, modernity and belief* (1998), which has won a number of prizes, including the James Russell Lowell Prize awarded by the Modern Language Association of America.

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religious organisation currently backing the ruling BJP government. VHP president Ashok Singhal gave a sinister turn to Sen's economic programme, darkly interpreting his Nobel award as a western conspiracy to promote literacy in developing societies in order to bring them within the ultimate pale of a global Christian order and thus 'wipe out Hinduism from this country'.¹ 'Despite the accuracy of Prof. Amartya Sen's conclusions', he charged, 'the same could prove harmful to Hindu society as Christians would be bringing in more money ostensibly for promoting education, but actually proselytisation would increase and everything in India would be undermined.'²

Incidentally, Ashok Singhal had earlier launched a scathing attack on Mother Teresa's Nobel Prize as well. Then, too, he accused the Nobel committee of rewarding only those who promoted the work of Christian charity. Sceptical of Mother Teresa's work as properly deserving to be called social service, he insisted that the driving aim behind all the activities of the Missionaries of Charity was to convert poor and ignorant Hindus to Christianity. At that time, unlike the occasion of Sen's prize, Singhal's voice was joined by others, though admittedly not in huge numbers. Publicly, at least, few cared to endorse his views on Sen, as a result of which he was isolated from other hardliners in his own party. Even the prime minister of the BJP-led government, Atal Behari Vajpayee, denounced such provocations as churlish, intemperate and irresponsible.³

Yet, even as he refused to participate in Singhal's denunciation of Sen's award, the prime minister simultaneously urged that there be a 'national debate on conversion' following the attacks on Christians and their places of worship since December 1998. As if in repetition of the horrendous violence of 6 December 1992, which resulted in the destruction of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya by Hindu extremists, Christian churches were razed to the ground and, in a series of particularly gruesome events, a Christian missionary and his sons were burned alive and, most recently, in September 1999, a nun was stripped and forced to drink the urine of her would-be rapists.⁴ Ostensibly a response to Christian proselytisation, the violence began in the western state of Gujarat, but spread to other states as well, including the eastern state of Orissa, which witnessed not only the burning alive of the Australian missionary Graham Staines but also the murder of a Roman Catholic priest, Arul Das, in September 1999. To a country that had come to expect communal clashes as a conflict involving Hindus and Muslims primarily, the sudden surge of hostility towards Christians took many Indians by surprise, accustomed as they had become to the central role of Christian mission schools and hospitals in Indian life. In this context, Vajpayee's appeal sounds innocuous enough, outwardly a sincere attempt to engage in serious dialogue and discussion about the motive force behind the violence.

The Constitution and conversion

However, the call for a debate was clearly intended to reopen the discussions that took place at the time of Indian independence, when the Constitution was framed. In the Constituent Assembly discussions held between 1946 and 1950, there was a strong move by powerful Hindu lobbies to ban conversions altogether. The call for constitutional provisions against conversion was made in response to the widespread fear that Hinduism, typically described as a non-proselytising religion, would be under threat and its numerical strength diminished if conversions to other religions were allowed. While all religious groups may, theoretically, disseminate their beliefs, it has been a long-standing belief among Hindus that only Christians and Muslims actively proselytise, placing Hinduism at a disadvantage. This conviction lay behind the attempt by the Hindu lobby to bar conversions altogether and achieve a level playing field among the various religions. Furthermore, Gandhi's famous distrust of Christian missionaries and Christian conversions offered a screen behind which the anti-Christian lobby could conveniently hide.⁵ The fear of conversion produced a strange marriage between Gandhi and the Hindu nationalists who, in all other instances, denounced him for making concessions to Muslims but nonetheless heralded him as the voice of reason when he opposed Christian proselytisation. In his deep scepticism about the work of missionisation, Gandhi imbued Indian nationalism with a Hindu ethos that laid the groundwork for an identitarian notion of Indian-ness. His resistance to Christian conversions simultaneously affirmed a Hindu past which had the power to assimilate different communities and produce a sense of oneness. Of course, the vital difference between Gandhi's position and that of Hindu nationalists was that, while he believed Christian conversions were the instrument of British colonialism and must therefore be resisted as vigorously as British rule, Hindu groups had no such larger aim and remained trapped within their own self-interests.

The final draft of the Indian Constitution effectively resisted all such attempts to outlaw conversions and instead made the propagation of religion permissible under the law. Article 25 (1) of the Constitution gives everyone the fundamental right to 'profess, practise, or propagate religion', a right that is only circumscribed by considerations of 'public order, morality, and health'.⁶ Whereas the constitutional freedom of conscience is described as a mental process, the right to propagate religion externalises the mental freedom of conscience, rendering active propagation a field of open and lawful endeavour.⁷ Freedom of conscience was thus broadly interpreted to mean the right not only to *choose* one's religious views but also to *disseminate* them. Not until 1977 was this provision modified in an Indian Supreme Court ruling

which specified that the right to propagate religion did not necessarily extend to the right to convert. The ruling further allowed states to legislate 'freedom of religion' bills forbidding the conversion of minors, as well as requiring Hindus converting to Christianity to provide magistrates with an affidavit. Such forms of legislation brought civil officials directly into the administration of spiritual affairs, a move that seriously qualified the secular conception of the modern state and challenged the tacitly accepted divisions between religious faith and law.

The impetus for the Supreme Court judgement came from a series of rulings set in motion by the findings and recommendations of a pivotal commission chaired by Justice Niyogi. Set up in 1954 to investigate the role of foreign missionaries in the state of Madhya Pradesh (located in the geographical centre of India), the Niyogi Commission produced a report that, in the eyes of many missionaries, was intended to regulate Christian conversions and drive foreign missions out of the country.⁸ Noting that the term 'propagation' was originally intended to refer to freedom of expression and conscience, Niyogi's report implied that conversion militated against such freedom and therefore could not be regarded as the disinterested dissemination of religious knowledge. By calling for a constitutional amendment reserving to Indian citizens the right to propagate religion, the report showed that it was clearly generated in a climate of chauvinism and ultra-nationalism. But the report went further than merely reopening the constitutional debates on conversion, just as prime minister Vajpayee, in calling for a national debate on conversion, had more than an academic exchange in mind. The Niyogi report introduced a new argument by highlighting loss of control over free will through weakness, ignorance and poverty as a reason for outlawing conversion altogether, since it left the economically deprived sectors of Indian society particularly vulnerable to the inducements of converting to another religion. Such a view was made possible only by representing India's economically weaker sections as essentially disabled, incapable of distinguishing motives and inexperienced in the exercise of their own judgement. The report painted a picture of conversion as a form of exploitation threatening the integrity of the Indian state, an assault so heinous that it justified the state's curbing of missionary activities on the grounds that they posed a danger to national unity. Conversion is construed as a form of mental violence, no less severe than bodily assault. The Niyogi Commission's landmark report set the lines of an argument that have continued to the present day, blurring the boundaries between force and consent and giving very little credence to the possibility that converts change over to another religion because they choose to. Interestingly, in charging that Christian missionaries take advantage of the weakened will of the poor and the disenfranchised, the report confirmed an elitist

view of free will and autonomy as the privileges of the economically advantaged classes. As in the fiery age-of-consent debates over the pre-pubertal marriages of females, 'consent' is not allowed as an option among the poor, and the missionaries' promise of new religious possibilities is construed entirely as a violation akin to the rape of women.

Over the years, the ambiguity in the semantic distinctions between 'propagation' and 'conversion' went a long way to creating the charged environment culminating in such incidents as the fractious ones in Gujarat in December 1998, when scores of Christians and Christian places of worship were attacked. Indeed, the mounting violence against Christians since late 1998 replays an ongoing battle between Christian missionisation and Hindu nationalism which was often fought in the houses of the Indian Parliament to introduce legislation banning conversion. So-called 'freedom of religion' bills were routinely proposed, seeking the extension of state protection to those being wooed away from their religion. 'Freedom of religion' came to be a euphemism for freedom *from* religion.

Ostensibly secular in motivation, the bills to ensure freedom of religious conscience were primarily intended to protect Hinduism against the incursions of other proselytising religions, revealing the collusion of the state in the preservation of Hinduism. 'Conversion' implies force, a radical take-over of people's will, whereas 'propagation' acquires a more intransitive connotation, a middle term between force and instruction. Slipping from one meaning to another in the recent debate on conversion, the VHP general-secretary Praveen Togadia invoked comparative history in order to argue that no other society gave a free rein to conversion, which has never been able to escape the connotations of force and disruption. Seeking a universalist point of reference, he linked economic well-being with free will to argue that 'if these are the views of even the developed countries, how can we allow conversion in India where a large section of the society is poor and illiterate'.⁹ Here again is the evocation of poverty as mental disability, leaving the masses peculiarly vulnerable to religious manipulation. In rehearsing the earlier constitutional debates on conversion, Togadia failed to mention that the constitutional framers invoked western precedent, particularly that of American freedom of conscience, when they decided to include provisions to permit propagation of religion. Selectively calling up the West as a reference point to argue against conversion, Togadia's comparative perspective evidently breaks down in its inability to deal with the multiple genealogies of religious freedom comprising the constitutional debates. These genealogies make room for the notion of conversion as a matter of individual choice and conscience, which the Constitution was obliged to protect.

Conversion and the historical legacy of conquest

Yet, despite such constitutional protection of religious conscience, nationalist discourse has turned conversion into a threat, a challenge to the cohesiveness of tightly woven communities. This is not difficult to understand, given that nationalism's recourse to concepts of ethnicity, race, religion and language is precisely what conversion contests. Conversion's interest for a post-nationalist culture is its resistance to positivist ways of conceptualising difference through such essentialising markers as race, religion, colour, ethnicity and nationality. When identity is destabilised by boundaries that are so porous that movement from one world view to another can take place with the regularity of actual border crossings, a challenge is posed to the fixed categories that act as an empirical grid for interpreting human behaviour and actions. While terms like hybridity are offered as an alternative to essentialising identities, hybridity does not capture the dynamism of movement signified by conversion, which regards cross-overs of identity not merely as items of exchange or even fusion but as a remaking of the categories that define identity. Nor is syncretism a satisfactory term to describe the overlapping of identities since, as its etymology and historical usage indicate, it constitutes a blurring, rather than a negotiation, of differences.¹⁰ Moreover, syncretism is as much a construct as are terms like 'tradition' and 'modernity'.

In destabilising the determinants of race, religion, gender and so on, conversion unsettles the understanding of difference through purely essentialist categories. It shifts the focus away from visible markers of difference (such as race or gender) to the distance in viewpoints emerging from the pragmatics of communication. Such gaps in communication are the starting point for conversion's reconstructive role in initiating movement between opposing viewpoints. The fact that neither origin nor destination is finite and determinate allows the convert to be critical of the religion to which she converts, even as she seeks to reform the religion she has repudiated. This sense of critical distance and fluidity gives conversion its peculiar power – the power to destabilise which belongs to the individual who moves incessantly between disparate viewpoints.

I am, therefore, suggesting that conversion performs the epistemological function of negotiating differences in viewpoints. Yet historically the term 'conversion' has been associated with violence and erasure rather than mobility and communication. To those who patrol the barriers around religion, conversion rudely shuts down communication and is forcible by definition; it is 'a colonisation of consciousness'.¹¹ Violence is at its core, as it tears away the secure lineaments of identity and orders the extinction of an individual's most innate beliefs and understandings. Even when conversion works

by persuasion, it is no less coercive in that it leaves the individual vulnerable to alluring promises. This is violence of the most hateful kind, because it induces assent by planting the seeds of hope for a better life. The legacy of historical conquest has made this notion of conversion a palpable and uncontested one, even though violence does not inhere in conversion but, rather, in the historical moment in which conversion occurs. Indeed, when examined as a form of intersubjective communication, conversion can be understood as the outcome of a process whose alternative end point is violence, especially when the differences between parties remain unresolved.¹²

Coercion, erasure of identity and forced assimilation are embedded in colonial desire, which has assigned conversion a set of meanings rooted in violence. Yet the fact remains that conversion becomes violent only when shifts to another world view turn into a desire to make it prevail. This, of course, is Matthew Arnold's classic definition of culture, which is deeply rooted in the logic of conversion by virtue of its ambition to be expansive and all-embracing. Translating the spread of culture into the terms of religious expansion, Robert Hefner describes conversion as a 'great transformation' that assimilates local cults into world religions. This description, however, can be parsed further to reveal an inherent tension in conversion between being a break in the continuity of knowledge *and* representing a prelude to the institutionalisation of new knowledge systems. What appears as a violent erasure of identity – epistemic violence, in Gayatri Spivak's term – is more precisely an effect of discontinuous knowledge. But while, on one hand, discontinuity of knowledge makes universalist propositions more difficult to sustain, on the other, the very presence of competing systems creates a different set of compulsions leading towards violence. In the first instance, discontinuity prevents false universalisms but, in the second, the desire to make the new system prevail reintroduces universalism. Violence is contingent upon the latter, but it also signifies the implacable opposition of claims. Not only does violence symbolise the disruptive power of difference, it also preserves and reproduces it. The history of religious transformations cannot be written outside the framework of these dual impulses: of knowledge interrupted and then transformed from dissent into assent.¹³

Discontinuity and radical pluralism make culture vulnerable to what Habermas terms legitimisation crises. Such crises reveal the need for a theory of religious communication that moves beyond relativism, even as it repudiates universalism in values. Some critics prefer to look towards notions of faith as the 'establishment of a ground or foundation immune to the relativizing powers of Enlightenment and providing, thereby, a basis for the legitimisation of belief'.¹⁴ Conversion's proactive nature, combined with its manoeuvring between

discrepant belief systems, makes it a powerful epistemological tool to face the broad challenges of a pluralistic society.

If pluralism is not to be reduced to a slogan of 'live and let live' but imagined as the groundwork of community, communication between disparate groups on lines other than the assertion of their separate identities is the first step towards that goal. Conversion highlights the crisis of pluralism as the absence of a point of reference for religious groups to negotiate their differences and conflicting needs. Religious absolutism sets up a single centre of values as the ultimate arbiter in conflicts, overriding individual self-definitions. On the other hand, while constitutional provisions for freedom of religion relativise religious difference and thus repudiate the exclusionary force of doctrine, they leave nothing in its place to enable religious communication between groups. To a large extent, this is the dilemma of secularising societies. The failure of relativism enables the return of conversion in post-emancipation society, not as forcible assimilation but as intersubjective communication.¹⁵ In its challenge to thwart the violence that results when groups interact as equal but competing members of civil society, pluralism's real test is to find new philosophical ways of conceiving relationality, particularly to heal the wounds inflicted by restrictive laws on communities in the colonial past of societies. Kept out of full civic participation in the past, communities are robbed of the conditions to relate effectively with one another, especially when consensus in civil decision making is thwarted by the historical baggage of colonialism, which includes the perception that colonial rule was intended to obliterate indigenous religions. However, other than to sanction freedom of religious conscience, the constitutional protection of the right to propagate religions does nothing to establish new conditions for communication or promote the proactive exercise of tolerance, even though civil pluralism forces communities to rethink their relations with each other on principles other than that of religious difference.

The role of the mission schools

The perceived threat posed by conversion reminds one that, for formerly colonised societies, the history of colonial education is also the founding moment of violence. This conviction underwrites Indian prime minister Vajpayee's call for a national debate on conversion. In so doing, he insists on revisiting the role of missionary institutions in India: to ask, in other words, whether their aim was to propagate religion – which could also broadly include morality, civic virtue and character – or convert people to Christianity. Without attacking the Constitution itself, Vajpayee asserted that, while the right of religious propagation was constitutionally guaranteed, 'the country must ensure

that it is not misused'.¹⁶ This statement is no less than a dire warning to those who would use constitutional provisions as a licence to apply force. 'Poverty cannot be a reason for conversion', warned Vajpayee, firmly dissociating economic circumstances from the imperatives of religious change. Regardless of his own disapproval of Singhal's attack on Amartya Sen, Vajpayee kept the two issues of Christianisation and welfare economics squarely within the same frame of reference, however much he may have denied that there was any connection between the two. It is thus no coincidence that Amartya Sen was denounced for advocating basic education – and religious conversion by extension – at the same time that Christianity was under siege in south Gujarat for promoting tribal conversions. In being forcibly linked with conversion, literacy is disengaged from development issues and relocated as an exclusively religious issue. In an effort to reclaim literacy from Christian uses, Sen's critics pointed to what is now a consistent thematic of anti-missionary resistance: literacy has legitimacy only when it is a marker of indigenous cultural identity. Either way, the development issue drops out of the picture.

The public repudiation of Singhal's viewpoint, however, does not mean that his is an aberrant one, the voice of the lunatic fringe unable to make a dent on mainstream opinion. On the contrary, India's history of colonial education provided a real context for the deep suspicion cast upon the Nobel Prize committee's recommendations. That this context was exploited to detach literacy from issues of social reform is perhaps one of the dimensions of the conversion controversy that needs more analysis and clarification than it has received. Views such as those held by Ashok Singhal have been sustained over time and buttressed by references to India's colonial history. The deep distrust of missionary institutions has a colonial past, providing Hindu nationalists with a much-needed moral stance to defend Indian religion and culture. (The collapsing of 'Hinduism' and 'India' is not the least of the rhetorical slippages.) It is well known that Christian missionaries were attacked long before the BJP and the VHP came on the scene. Hinduism put up a stiff resistance to Christianity on both an organisational and a theological level.¹⁷ Richard Fox Young has meticulously documented the development of a whole tradition of anti-Christian polemics in nineteenth-century India focused on a refutation of Christian doctrine, point by point.¹⁸

There is nothing new in the Hindu antagonism to missionary schools as hotbeds of conversion activity ('wolves in sheep's clothing', as they were often called).¹⁹ Opposition to literacy reform has long been motivated by fear that its ultimate intent is religious change, although why Sen's research would benefit Christians more than any other group is never clear in the VHP attacks on him. But it is telling that one of its chief complaints is that the Nobel Prize has never been awarded to

social activists like Gandhi or Baba Amte who had both worked tirelessly for the uplift of the poor and other marginalised sections of society.²⁰ Yet social activism in India, even that practised by a Gandhi or an Amte, has never been totally removed from a related compulsive desire to contest the reach of Christian missionaries, particularly in tribal and outlying areas. In regions where lower castes and outcastes were denied the educational facilities open to higher caste groups, missionaries often stepped in to fill a social vacuum.²¹ In the light of caste tensions, it is easy to see why social reform has been as strongly contested as conversion itself. Neither can be separated from a colonial history that continues to inform attitudes to an ethics of improvement, the content of which, to many today, is still indistinguishable from the *mission civilisatrice*. This is by no means to justify the crudest premises of cultural nationalism, but we are obliged to acknowledge the complex historical formations driving nationalists to the depths of paranoia and suspicion.

Historically, missionary schools opened their doors to socially excluded groups, while the schools run by the colonial government had as their main clientele students from the upper castes. Yet this division so heavily reinforced the caste structure that it appeared as if the very form and spirit of colonial education was driven by caste feeling. There was more complacency than truth in colonial administrators' belief that English studies altered attitudes to caste. The Serampore missionary John Marshman wryly observed that: 'I am not certain that a man's being able to read Milton and Shakespeare, or understand Dr Johnson, would make him less susceptible of the honour of being a Brahmin'.²² The association of missionary schools with vernacular education and the government schools with English education marked the differential development of languages and literary instruction.²³ Yet, precisely because missionary schools were so closely identified with lower-caste education, missionaries found their aims compromised by their desire to lure the upper castes to their schools, if only to extend the range of Christian influence. Partly this was motivated by their fear that, by attracting only 'the most despised and least numerous of society', they were creating a new virulent strain in Indian society, 'a new class superior to the rest in useful knowledge, but hated and despised by the castes to whom their new attainments would always induce us to prefer them'.²⁴ Caste lines being as implacable as they were, missionaries dreaded that the huge efforts they expended on the education of the lower castes would remain confined to these groups and not spread further. Recognising that the reform of Hindu society was impossible without involving all castes, they modified their instructional objectives, expanding their curricular offerings to include English literature alongside the vernaculars. In time, the lines

between missionary and government schools blurred as both types of institutions competed for students from the upper castes.

Interestingly, the work of vernacular education started by missionaries was taken up by Hindu reformist organisations, such as the Ramakrishna Mission and the Arya Samaj. The linguistic stratification was so rigid that the vernacular schools produced a militant brand of youth who pledged themselves to the preservation of Hindu culture, religion and language against the encroachments of an English-educated, westernised elite. So it is somewhat ironic that this form of cultural nationalism developed as a consequence of the vernacular missionary schools and the so-called government schools switching their linguistic orientation, with the former increasingly moving towards English instruction primarily and the latter now having virtually become vernacular-medium schools. The development has also inspired the defenders of Hinduism to view the English press, which covered the atrocities against Christians in the past year extensively, as a key player in the drama of linguistic, religious and caste stratification, its corps of writers having themselves often been educated in Christian mission schools. Therefore, while the English language newspapers have gone a long way in bringing the violence against Christians to public attention, they have also been attacked by Hindu nationalists as complicit with the work of Christian missionaries in propagating an alien culture.

Historically, in seeking to break out of narrow caste identification, the missionary schools set in motion a number of significant developments. The original objectives of imparting basic literacy skills were considerably qualified by a new infusion of literary content. If missionary schools initially sought to remedy the exclusionary effects of caste prejudice by offering educational opportunities denied to lower castes, their turn to an English course of studies took them in a markedly different direction. That conversion rather than caste or poverty relief more often engaged their interest is evident from the perfection of certain pedagogical techniques to produce belief. Catechism and hermeneutics are prominent among these. The Word offered access to the world, but it also opened up access to faith through the power of imagination. Education in imagery supplemented, and in time surpassed, instruction in the fundamentals of literacy. In all its clarity and brilliance, imagery pointed the way to the Bible; to the power of arguments, reasons and demonstrations vividly impressing themselves on the mind; to an experience of truth that could only be known when seen and felt. To missionaries aware of the hostility that direct Christian instruction might produce, there was no better way to convey the deep swell of religious feeling than through the rich tapestry of images, sensations and impressions found in the best of English Romantic writers like Wordsworth, Cowper and Young.

These alternating instructional objectives in missionary institutions kept the pendulum swinging between poverty and caste relief, on the one hand, and conversion, on the other. Let us recall Vajpayee's admonition that 'poverty cannot be a reason for conversion'. He was far closer to the course of colonial history than he may have realised, for institutional developments suggest a complex evolution of conversion motives not always directly related to economic circumstances. The violence against Christians in Gujarat and elsewhere since late 1998 was caused by the perception that missionaries were targeting poor tribals to convert them to Christianity, often by imparting literacy skills to them. Radical Hindu groups interpret Christian conversion as an inducement, an enticing avenue of escape from grinding poverty. But conversion is just as importantly involved in the constructions of new selves, and it is this shift from the ground of economics to that of culture that continues to alarm Hindu opponents, perhaps even more than the threat of religious change. Their will is steeled, therefore, to reclaim culture as the ultimate goal of all future attempts at literacy reform.

Religions assign different functions for reading and writing. In religions of revelation, the word is the Word. Hinduism's self-description as a non-proselytising religion has also meant that it conceives of reading and writing in different ways. One point of difference is the creation and affirmation of community. This does not necessarily mean an interpretive community, however, but a community marked by systems of inclusion and exclusion, which are in turn determined by criteria of purity and pollution. Verbal acts are modes of community affirmation as much as they are forms of communication. But where the use of language signals the expression of faith in a supreme being, religions that employ such language open up the new possibility that language can cause changes in one's conceptions of divinity. Are these then proselytising religions? It can be argued that Hinduism establishes a relation between literacy and faith different from that of Christianity and Islam. If, as is maintained about Hinduism, faith does not lie in words, then a Hindu can have access to the world without the mediation of language. Language, however, is threatening when it is tied to faith. Literacy arouses suspicion because it can alter faith by providing a different form of access to the world. Access to language is essential for economic betterment, yet it also contains the potential to introduce world views at variance with those affirmed by the community. The conflicting perspectives on literacy throw open the divide between economics and culture, which further translates into artificial distinctions between religions on the basis of whether they proselytise or not.

Ironically, the VHP leaders who attacked the Christian conversions of illiterate tribals do not accept that literacy can also be a defence against forcible conversions of any kind, Christian, Hindu, Muslim

or any other religion. Their unquestioned assumption is that illiteracy is gullibility. But if the opposite is also true – that literacy is scepticism and critical judgement – then the threat posed by the lure of other faiths should be diminished. The Word may be the source of faith, but it is also the maker of selfhood and independent judgement. However, the rhetoric of the VHP suppresses this fundamental understanding of literacy's role which, in offering the tools of knowledge, discrimination and evaluation, shapes the modern self. We are led to inquire whether literacy as self-making, independence and private judgement poses the real threat, an unnamed one perhaps, acknowledged only as a tool of Christianisation but not of Hindu modernity.

Literacy, economics and the culture of conversion

At this point I want to return to Amartya Sen and his Nobel Prize for economics. We may now place Ashok Singhal's diatribe in the framework of a perceived shift in literacy's address from economics to culture. That is why no matter how much of a *non sequitur* his comments may appear, his view that Sen's mass literacy would benefit only Christians reflects how definitively culture, not economics, has become the contested ground for discussions of development issues. In part, this shift has strategic uses for a government seeking to deflect attention from the dismal failure of *swadeshi* (self-sufficient) economics, despite the BJP's campaigning for power on this issue. And, as its economic policies have met with one disaster after another, the BJP has needed to keep economics out of public discussion. Religion has always been its surrogate theme, and it is not surprising that turning even literacy into a conversion issue offsets the government's dismal showing on the economic front. But apart from turning the focus away from a string of economic failures, the perception that mass literacy is a tool of cultural imperialism undermines the developmental rhetoric of secular progress that literacy reform also tends to generate. Singhal's denunciation of Amartya Sen reflects attitudes towards literacy that are part of an ongoing tension between development priorities and cultural purity.

By objecting to literacy as a missionary-inspired practice, do Hindus really want to say they object to the introduction of social benefits to the people? Most would probably say no, but the ethics of social reform has been challenged in mounting anti-Christian rhetoric since the BJP assumed power in early 1998. It can, and should, be argued that if missionaries give people services they would otherwise not have had, no one has a right to restrict their activities, particularly when there are no other state-supported or private initiatives. After all, missionaries do not have a monopoly on the opening of new schools and hospitals, and there is nothing to stop Hindus or any other group

from doing likewise. But the cumulative effect of the attack on Christianity has been a fierce questioning of whether social benefits can ensue at the cost of religious and cultural integrity. This is nothing less than an anti-Orientalist response to a condition sewn into Indian history through the reformist ideology of British colonialism. Its corollary is that social reform has, and always will be, politicised in post-colonial India. The view that social service has a national or a religious identity suggests that no act of reform or service can take place in postcolonial India without its being measured against a corresponding degradation of Hindu customs and rituals in the process.

But I think there is something fundamentally more worrying in the anti-literacy, anti-conversion posture of the VHP. The numbers of Hindus who actually converted to Christianity are far less than the numbers of those who detached themselves from Hinduism over time and affiliated themselves to more secular conceptions of modernity. Today we call the latter group 'secular Indians', though that term has its own problems. The main difference between these two groups of Hindus is that the former have converted to Christianity and the latter to modernity. The mechanism is the same, even though the characterisation may be different. Critics will argue that this was the effect of mission-school education on the middle classes. But there are deeper issues involved. Hinduism is once again at the crossroads of change. Instead of attending to the problems of overwhelming illiteracy, caste and gender discrimination, and poverty, the most extreme among the Hindu nationalists have narrowed their agenda to attack other groups – notably Muslims and Christians – for the erosion of cultural traditions. India's struggle to keep pace with a changing world is most pronounced in a stagnant educational system which, while professing secularism, is still caught up in the forms and practices of a religious culture. Is the desire to interrogate mass literacy ultimately a desire to renounce the modern world altogether? Is the quest for cultural integrity so supreme that it creates a longing in Hindus to supplant modernity with a more reassuring past in which their traditions are uncorrupted? These are difficult questions, but they go to the heart of the resistance to literacy as a development issue and the antagonism to conversion in general.

Significantly, even as some Hindus recoil from the demands of modernity, at another level they are reclaiming literacy as a hallmark of Hinduism's cultural past. Indeed, when literacy performs the work of culture in Hinduism, it is assigned an economic role denied in the work of missionary schools. In the context of an ancient past, literacy extends beyond reading and writing to encompass a range of technical and vocational skills. This is illustrated in the comments of Vajpayee and other government figures on indigenous technical education. On a trip to the southern city of Mysore, Vajpayee lauded the work

of Basaveshwara, a social reformer who made significant efforts in educating the masses while also promoting women's education. Vajpayee pointed to the Veerashaiva *mutts* as ideal service institutions providing training for literacy – training that the government ought to provide but did not. The Veerashaiva *mutts*, he further added, were the only institutions serving society over a long period of time with the same missionary zeal as Christian educational institutions.²⁵ As if on cue in a musical duet, the state chief minister who hosted him glorified the work of institutions like the JSS Mahavidyapeetha, saying that they were providing opportunities for the disabled and the disenfranchised to become useful citizens. Significantly, both political figures consider the indigenous schools important because they are first and foremost technical training institutes. The vocational training offered in these indigenous institutions becomes that site of difference turning basic literacy into a colonised space, a zone of foreign domination.

Conflicting approaches to developmentalism underscore a deep ambivalence about literacy that has remained unresolved since the framing of the Indian Constitution. Amartya Sen reopened the old debates about rights versus directives when he released the Public Report on Basic Education (PROBE) on 1 January 1999. The PROBE report is described as 'a people's report' on school education. Prepared by a team of independent academics and social activists, it set out to counter the prevalent official myths about Indian schooling. The report claims to be the first attempt of its kind to examine the condition of India's elementary education from the standpoint of the underprivileged. It demolishes a set of ruling myths that have guided Indian education since the country's independence, among which are, first, that poor parents are not interested in sending their children to school; second, that child labour is the main obstacle to school attendance and therefore to universal literacy; and, third, that elementary education is free. Most importantly, the report attempted to clarify the links between child labour and schooling by showing that, far from being unable to go to school because they have to work, full-time child labourers often work because they have dropped out of school, typically for family reasons.²⁶ Amartya Sen has argued against this form of educational deprivation for a long time, noting with chagrin that 'child labour is considered perfectly acceptable for the boys and girls of poor families, while the privileged classes enjoy a massively subsidized system of higher education'.²⁷

Encouraged by the report's conclusion that, contrary to popular perception, education remains sought after even by the most economically disadvantaged sections of society, Sen declared that the time for demanding elementary education as a fundamental right had arrived. Simultaneously, he unveiled his plans to set up a charitable trust with the Nobel money for the development of education and health in India

and Bangladesh.²⁸ Stressing the West's economic progress as a function of its planned development of human resources, Sen spoke persuasively of how the general availability of elementary education would enhance a sense of citizens' participation in India's overall economic expansion. He sounded a theme that placed the economic imperatives of educational growth in the perspective of social choice theory. Economic advantages, he appeared to suggest, were the fruit of participatory democracy whose foundations rested on basic literacy.²⁹

Education as a right

If, then, literacy is the chief basis of economic development and social change, education as a fundamental right has still remained largely undefined in the Indian Constitution. On the other hand, Articles 25 and 26, comprising the section on fundamental rights, were careful to give 'every religious denomination' the right to propagate religion and maintain religious institutions. Constituent Assembly discussions struggled to untangle the contradiction between the secular goals of Indian democracy and the permission granted to religious groups to practise (and preach) their religious philosophies in their own institutions. Article 30 addresses educational rights, but is less interested in universalising education than in providing for the rights of minorities to maintain their own educational institutions and have full control over curricular content. The right-to-education needs of citizens still remain largely undefined. Vajpayee acknowledged the continued failure of his own government to address educational needs, uttering in a moment of utter candour, 'We pray to Saraswati [the Hindu goddess of learning] but make no arrangements to educate our children'.³⁰ Hence his admiration for the efforts of non-governmental institutions like the Veerashaiva *mutts* or the Mahavidyapeetha for doing what the government was obliged to do, but failed. Unable to invest adequately in education, the Indian government has appeared to be resigned to the possibility of non-governmental organisations taking the initiative. Yet social strife results when religious groups (operating as parallel NGOs) undertake the work of education, often work that is considered disruptive of another religious tradition. And, in order to resolve conflicts of such a nature, the state is required to intervene, even though it prefers to leave educational initiatives to non-governmental organisations. This contradiction remains at the core of the state's fraught relation with the education of its citizens.

By proposing universal education as a fundamental right, Amartya Sen has called for alternative ways to rethink 'inconsistencies of means and ends', by which he means the present arbitrary distribution of resources and the uncertain division of labour between government and non-governmental (minority) agencies.³¹ To be sure, he is less

forthcoming about the sources of investment in education, for it is never entirely clear whether he would be willing to settle for an education funded by non-governmental agencies to supplement government funding. To some extent, this uncertainty has augmented the deep anxiety of his opponents that groups seeking to propagate their own beliefs – such as Christian missionaries – would seize the momentum for educational change. But Sen's most important intervention is in shifting freedom away from a concept that denotes a community's right to practise and propagate its beliefs. Rather, freedom for him is the creation of conditions for the wholesome participation of citizens in the democratic process. Universal literacy is the key to this process. As the instrument for securing the representation of people belonging to the unorganised sector, universal primary education is more than an entrée into people's participation in their economic advancement. By enacting democracy, it confers a reality on participatory processes that Indian democracy still lacks, despite its adult suffrage.

At the same time, Amartya Sen has been careful not to make freedom an all-encompassing category overriding goals of equality, such that one person's freedom becomes another's unfreedom. His suspicion of freedom as an unqualified term leads him to argue that the freedom accruing from a market economy is attended by far too many dangers of inequality and poverty stemming from the market.³² Instead, he proposes five kinds of freedom: (1) enabling freedom, which signifies that each individual is able to participate in social and economic activities, and that the quality of life is improved through education and health facilities; (2) political freedom, which invariably involves democracy and civil rights; (3) economic freedom, which involves transactions and the market, and could thus promote efficiency and equity; (4) transparency freedom, which encompasses a person's right to know that he or she is not being cheated in a transaction; and (5) protective freedom, which is freedom from droughts, floods, famine. These freedoms are important insofar as they constitute the legitimate end of development.³³

Thus, for Sen, literacy is not exclusively an economic issue, as some commentators believe. His notion of freedom encompasses culture – the kind of life we would like to lead – as an essential goal of development.³⁴ What his critic Ashok Singhal evidently feared was that culture would be made synonymous with social choice and, to that extent, Amartya Sen's notion of freedom uncannily confirmed his anxiety that development had a Christian trajectory. Singhal obviously got the story wrong in most of the particulars. But, on the subject of choice, Sen offered a new set of questions that could potentially have more bearing on how individuals construe selfhood, as opposed to being affirmed by their community, and it is this move that set the alarm bells ringing for Singhal. Instead of asking the old

question, 'Is it possible to have socially rational decisions based on the interests and preferences of the members of the society?', Sen proposed asking, 'Which of the various ways of equity and justice are most relevant?' The choice, he suggests, is between different ways of evaluation whose ultimate validity is that they draw upon foundational notions of justice and fairness. Even the apparently scientific subject of choosing a suitable measure of poverty for a nation or a state can be approached in terms of the competing values reflected in different ways by distinct statistical measures. Because welfare economics and social choice theory link knowledge with practice, their operative premise is that self-construction is national construction. So, even though economic development has merged into an issue of culture in the rhetoric of the postcolonial state, driven by its own sense of cultural nationalism, the question of choice is deliberately suspended. Where it does appear, it is turned into proof of forcible conversion.

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- 33 See Amartya Sen, 'Well beyond liberalization', in *The Amartya Sen and Jean Dreze Omnibus* (op. cit.) for an exploration of these themes, as well as an assessment of India's recent economic reforms. His conclusion that the 'uncaging of the tiger' has not – at least not yet – led to any dynamic animal 'springing out and sprinting ahead' (p. 180) draws attention to the still unfulfilled promises of participatory growth evident in the alarming illiteracy rates and social deprivations.
- 34 See particularly Sen's essay, 'Freedom, agency and well-being', in *Inequality Reexamined*, op. cit., which describes freedom as our right to set goals for ourselves and our ability to get what we value and want; in short, to lead a life we would *choose* to live.

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The new economy, globalisation and the impact on African Americans

Something special has happened to the American economy in recent years.

Alan Greenspan, US Federal Reserve chairman¹

*I have seen the new economy – and I am here to tell you that it works.
Vice-president, Al Gore, Washington, DC, July 1997²*

For some time now, the US economy has been undergoing structural transformations. These changes have given rise to widespread debates about the 'new economy'. While the impact of the 'new economy' and the accompanying 'long boom' will only be fully understood in the future, there is palpable excitement among what C. Wright Mills once called the power elite. From President Bill Clinton to presidential candidate Al Gore, from Wall Street to the *Wall Street Journal*, jubilation and joy have run rampant as the nation's political and economic dominant classes gloat over what have been seven straight years of

Randolph B. Persuad and Clarence Lusane are Assistant Professors in the School of International Service at American University, Washington, DC. They are co-directors of the sub-field of Comparative and International Race Relations.

Race & Class

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economic growth, job creation and confidence in the 'new economy'. Here is Al Gore:

[T]his is not your father's economy. The new economy is workers who learn throughout a lifetime, not those with a single skill. It is entrepreneurs who take risks, not managers who take a pass . . . The new economy is networked, not hierarchical. Distributed, not top-down. Creative, not complacent. Multicolored, not single-hued. It thrives on reinvention, not bureaucracy. It focuses on results, not red-tape. It is customized, not standardized. It is bits, more than brawn. Wits, more than widgets. Wired, not tired. Partnership, not confrontation.³

Though Gore's unconstrained enthusiasm might be excessive, it does not, in fact, depart significantly from much of the scholarly literature on the subject. In particular, except in a few cases, little effort has been made to undertake a systematic examination of the racialised impact and distribution of the 'new economy' and the current economic expansion. What we undertake here is an analysis of the 'multicolored, not single-hued' aspect of transformations which have produced that new economy.

The major components of this transformation are: (a) a long-term shift of the economy from manufacturing to services and retail industries; (b) reconstitution of the labour market, away from the relative stability and predictability of the Fordist period to increasing 'flexibility'; (c) an increasing division in the labour market between core/protected and contingent/unprotected workers; and (d) a realignment of state/society relations which has entailed a sustained attack on welfare provision and previous civil rights era legislation.⁴ These changes have all occurred within the larger context of the consolidation of monetarism both as an ideology and as a set of integrated policies. Concomitantly, the market has increasingly occupied a hegemonic position within both state and public discourses of economy and society. At the same time, there has been a simultaneous withdrawal of the state from market regulation and oversight, and the provision of social welfare. In tandem with this, the increasing centrality of the prison-industrial complex forms part of what we term the 'containment state'. The economic boom which began after the recession of 1991–2 must be understood as a recomposition of the US political economy and the social forces that underpin it. It also reflects a restructuring of the balance of class forces. In what follows, we intend to demonstrate the differential class and racial impact of sustained growth on US society during the 1990s. While the economy as a whole has done well, the distribution of the benefits has been grossly uneven. Some groups have benefited disproportionately, while others continue to be mired in the periphery. As one study demonstrates, 'the top fifth of

Americans are earning 43 per cent more than in 1977. The bottom fifth are earning 9 per cent less. The richest 1 per cent of workers are earning 115 per cent more.⁵

The shift from manufacturing to services and knowledge-based industries, and the transformation of the labour market towards higher 'flexibility' and 'contingency' must be understood as a set of interrelated processes. Specifically, a dual regime of accumulation has emerged, based, on the one hand, on increasing rates of relative surplus value extraction (the exploitation of highly educated and skilled workers) and, on the other, on absolute surplus value exploitation (the exploitation of unskilled and low-skilled workers working longer hours). The two regimes coexist in a mutually dependent manner. The relative surplus value sector is based on the intensification of the rate of exploitation in those sectors with high organic compositions of capital, while the absolute surplus value component is more reliant on the magnitude of exploitation. These two modes correspond roughly to 'core' and 'contingency' forms of social relations. The two modes are highly racialised in terms of the division of labour and also in terms of the consequences of the two-tiered accumulation pattern. In general, core workers have relatively secure employment, higher pay and more benefits and, because of these factors, have better access to other avenues of wealth accumulation such as credit, stocks and bonds, and mutual funds, whereas contingent workers experience tremendous insecurity and instability and survive on the edges of the economy. Involuntary contingent workers in particular, such as security guards, sales clerks and office cleaners, who now number tens of millions, are the most vulnerable of all workers, at the beck and call of capital, and considered disposable labour.

Twentieth-century American industrial capitalism, as is well known, developed in a framework of mass production, mass consumption and forms of state intervention consistent with industrial and political stability, and some recognition of social welfare provision. Manufacturing, particularly in the automotive and steel industries, was at the leading edge of the economy, as growing demand for consumer durables, both in the United States and overseas, provided ready markets. One of the specific consequences of the rise in manufacturing was in the area of employment. Because of the unskilled nature of mass production, workers with relatively little education could, and did, earn a 'living wage'. This, of course, had a direct impact on African American families who, because of historically entrenched patterns of marginalisation, often in the form of outright segregation, did not have equal access to education with whites. On account of that, from the 1930s to the 1970s, particularly in the North, African Americans were especially dependent on work in the manufacturing sector for upward social mobility.

The arguments we present challenge the dominant discourse that the success of the US economy in the post cold war 1990s is a validation of capitalist modes of operation, that it is relatively long-term and permanent and, most critically, that everyone benefits. In fact, large sectors of the working class find little to celebrate in their social and economic lives in this period. The 'economy is great' discourse also masks and justifies the retreat by the state from responsibility for the elimination of poverty, marginalisation and immiseration. However, the new ideology of 'personal responsibility', which increasingly dominates the popular media and discourse within the public sphere, generates a cultural response that wins many to the belief that state responsibility towards the poor and the subaltern should be eliminated. A 'winner-takes-all' mentality grows with media-driven beliefs that the market is the only source capable of addressing human social needs.⁶

This analysis also challenges the view of some on the Left who contend that capitalism's crisis is overtly manifest, that the much-hyped boom is mostly myth, and that the working classes as a whole are gearing up for revolt. It is our contention that a more complicated response is unfolding in which some sectors of the class believe in and experience relative prosperity, even as long-term financial security generates an anxiety that tempers their support for state and capital-driven policies. At the same time, other sectors of the class are living under a sustained economic and political crisis and require distinct forms of mobilisation and resistance.

The short boom

It is correct, as the US administration and the ideologues of capital note, that there has been an economic recovery since 1992. The features of the recovery that have benefited both capital and, in some ways, some workers can be identified and delineated. They include, in measurable terms, a balanced budget and budget surplus; upsurge of the stock market (though it became rocky in the last two quarters of 1999); expansion of the GDP; low inflation; low interest rates; growth in home ownership; and declining unemployment.

Since 1991, the Dow Jones Industrial Average has increased from 3,000 points to reach over 10,000 consistently in 1999, and has even broken through the 11,000 mark. The market doubled its value between 1995 (5,000 points) and late 1998 (10,000 points). Another way to view this amazing growth is to note that it took the Dow forty years, from 1932 to 1972, to reach 1,000 points.⁷ This has translated into substantial accumulation of wealth for the already rich. Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates, the richest human on the planet, is today worth \$96 billion dollars, a good deal of it attributable to the spectacular rise in share prices.⁸

One of the interesting things about the stock market is the increasing involvement of the middle classes, i.e. the stable core, through instruments like mutual funds and individual retirement accounts (IRAs). Private investment in capital is facilitated by application of the new technologies such as on-line investing that do not require a broker. The class nature of stock-market benefits can be seen in the divide between core and contingent workers.

During the Reagan and Bush administrations, one of the central policy divisions between Democrats and Republicans had to do with the extremely large budget deficit, the reduction of which provided a rationale for conservatives to attack social welfare programmes and advocate tax cuts. This, of course, was consistent with the new hegemonic position of fiscal restraint and monetarist instruments at the state and federal levels. From 1979 onwards, the Federal Reserve started to win increasing autonomy from congressional oversight, resulting in tight monetary policies. In the 1990s, during the Clinton years, the budget deficit has not only been eliminated but, since 1997, there has been a budget surplus, with projections of more in the years ahead.⁹

For three years in a row, from 1996–8, US real GDP grew by about 4 per cent. In the post-recession years after 1991, GDP expansion in excess of 3 per cent has been consistently posted. According to Greenspan, this is the longest period of economic expansion 'in US peacetime history'.¹⁰ It compares well with western European countries, which have much higher unemployment and which have regularly averaged below the US growth rate during the same period. Moreover, the US economy has managed to maintain steady growth, despite the convulsions in Asia and Latin America.

GDP growth has translated into, in a word, jobs. Clinton has repeatedly and proudly claimed to have created almost 19 million jobs overall, during his almost two terms in office.¹¹ In addition, unemployment is the lowest in the country since 1970 and fell to a remarkable 4.25 per cent in 1999.¹² In some places, such as the Maryland–Virginia technology corridor, the rate is substantially lower. In Northern Virginia, unemployment is 1.7 per cent.¹³ In fact, official unemployment is so low that the Federal Reserve has notched up interest rates to ward off any possible inflationary pressures that will come about due to the tight labour market. It might also be noted that productivity gains have also helped to keep inflation in check.

No amount of media or administration cheerleading, however, can hide the evanescent nature of the current economic picture. It is through the prisms of class, gender and race that a more genuine characterisation can be seen. For many workers of colour, particularly women, the boom is an unqualified bust.

The long bust

Economic expansion and growth have been uneven, not only between capital and the mass of workers, but, importantly, between different sectors of workers themselves. To understand this further, it is necessary to analyse the shift of the US economy from manufacturing to services and information technologies. At the broadest level, there has been a long-term trend of declining contribution from the manufacturing sector to the GDP, and a corresponding displacement of employment. In 1980, manufacturing accounted for only 20 per cent of the nation's employment. By 1999, that figure had fallen to about 10–14 per cent and it is projected that, by 2005, the number will drop even further, to between 2.5 and 5 per cent.¹⁴ Employment in the retail trade has increased by 77.4 per cent between 1989–95, with median weekly earnings of \$209 (1993) compared to \$486 (1993) in manufacturing.¹⁵

The service sector itself can be divided into two major categories of workers, namely an upper rung of professionals (consultants, executives, upper-level managers, medical, computer and information specialists, and so on) and a lower rung (those supplying unskilled personal services, taxi drivers, security personnel, food service workers, lawn care workers, office cleaners, retail sales, and so on). These divisions can be appropriately called core workers and contingent workers. Underscoring the uneven distribution of the boom's beneficiaries is the widening gap between the salaries of executives, managers and company owners compared to those of the workers. In 1990, the pay of chief executives (CEOs) was eighty-five times that of the average factory worker. By 1998, the ratio had increased to 419 times the average factory worker's pay.

One study by Stephen Hipple shows considerable disparity in remuneration for occupations that had 'above average contingency rates'. In 1997, weekly earnings for specialised professional jobs, for example, were \$677, compared to \$258 for service occupations and \$342 for administrative and clerical support.¹⁶ Hipple also found that the reasons for the high rates of contingency were directly related to the restructuring of the labour market towards increasing flexibility. Thus, nearly one-fifth of contingent workers noted that this was the only type of job they could get, and nearly three-fifths of those workers said they would prefer to have full-time work.¹⁷

In particular, there has been a change in the racial and gender composition of the labour force, with people of colour, immigrants of colour and women increasing in terms of both percentages and raw numbers, a trend that will only grow. According to historian Robin Kelley, 'between 1976 and 1988, while the nation's overall labour force grew by 26 per cent, the number of black workers rose by

38 per cent, Asian American workers by 103 per cent, and Latinos by 110 per cent'.¹⁸ These changes have been marked by the uneven distribution of the benefits from the 1990s economic boom.

Benefits have gone disproportionately to those who strategically manage and control capital. This is a consequence of the restructuring of social relations and increased insecurity in the labour market. While annual pay levels have gone up over the past several years, there is a notable disparity between different sectors of the economy. This is manifest in the gap between the average income of \$44,860 in the fields of finance, insurance and real estate, and the drop to a \$15,877 average income in the retail trade, where a lot of the new jobs have been created – a discrepancy of 65 per cent.

Pay levels vary considerably from state to state, reflecting a pattern of regional concentration of higher incomes in the northeastern states and relative stagnation in the southern states. For example, the average annual pay level in Connecticut was \$38,895; in New York \$38,497; in New Jersey, \$37,513; and in Massachusetts, \$37,510, compared to Mississippi at \$22,772 and Arkansas at \$23,268. In 1997, thirty-nine states were below the US average.¹⁹ It is critical to note that the majority of African Americans, 53 per cent, reside in the South. In the summer of 1999, President Clinton (along with Revd Jesse Jackson) went to the Mississippi Delta, one of the poorest regions of the United States, to highlight poverty in the area but, in the end, all Clinton could offer was his plea to the private sector to do more. In the meantime, in September 1999, Congress pressed for a staggering \$792 billion tax cut which most experts believe would disproportionately benefit the very rich, a measure Clinton initially vetoed.

The income data suggest considerable distortion based upon race and gender. In 1998, for example, the median weekly income for white men was \$615 while for Hispanic women it was \$337, a 54 per cent difference. This is a gap of \$278 per week. Black women earned \$400 as their median weekly income, compared to black men who earned \$468, which suggests gender disparity as well as the difference based upon race. Overall, white men earned nearly \$100 over the national average of \$523. Interestingly, black men and white women earned the same weekly amount, \$468.²⁰

Since the 1970s, black male employment in manufacturing has seen a precipitous decline across all age groups and in all regions of the nation. For instance, in 1978, 52 per cent of black men born between 1956 and 1960 worked in manufacturing; by 1987, that number had dropped to 28 per cent.²¹ For younger black men, born between 1965 and 1969, 39 per cent were employed in manufacturing in 1974 but, by 1987, that figure had fallen to 18 per cent. Between 1967 and 1987, according to scholar William Julius Wilson, major job losses occurred in a number of cities with significant black populations. For example,

'Philadelphia lost 64 per cent of its manufacturing jobs; Chicago lost 60 per cent; New York City, 58 per cent; Detroit, 51 per cent'.²² In real terms, this meant that Philadelphia lost 160,000 jobs, Chicago, 326,000, New York 520,000 and Detroit 108,000.²³

What has been the impact of current economic growth on poverty? First, it is important to note that during the Clinton years (1992–8), the poverty rate has declined. However, the decline has only reached the level of the last years of Reagan's presidency, meaning that rates have not fallen to the lows of the pre-Reagan era. The benefits of a lower poverty rate, while welcome, have not corrected the attacks on the poor that existed during the 1980s.

Second, it is important to note that the definition of poverty is extremely conservative and has been challenged by a wide number of progressive economists. A family of four, for example, must subsist on less than \$16,400, or a family of three on \$12,802, for them to be considered in the official poverty count. In Washington, DC, the nation's capital, tuition fees for one student at some private primary schools are equal to, or higher than, the income of a family of four that falls below the poverty line. In aggregate terms, there were 35.6 million people in the US living in official poverty in 1997. There is, too, wide variation in poverty levels across the country. For example, whereas in New Hampshire, 6.9 per cent of the population is classified as poor, in New Mexico, the comparable figure is 24 per cent, a quarter of the state's inhabitants. Poverty is also heavily concentrated in areas densely populated by African Americans. Thus, 18.8 per cent of residents 'inside central cities' were living below the poverty line in 1997, a figure roughly equal to the 18.5 per cent below the poverty line in 1989. By comparison, the rate for those living below the poverty line 'outside central cities' in 1997 was 9 per cent, that is, half the inside-city rate.²⁴ Politicians and mainstream commentators minimise the gravity of economic marginalisation by consistently referring to 'pockets of poverty'.

Third, racial difference abounds. While 600,000 African Americans fell out of the poverty categories between 1996 and 1997, 26.5 per cent of that population still live in poverty. In other words, despite the tremendous economic upsurge, 9.1 million African Americans were still living in poverty in 1997. The US Hispanic population does not fare much better. Thus, while 400,000 also came out of the poverty category between 1996 and 1997, an astonishing 27.1 per cent still live below the poverty line. Regardless of the overall decline in poverty for both groups, the rate is still twice as high as that for whites, which is 11 per cent. For Asians and Pacific Islanders, the poverty rate is 14 per cent. While Asian Americans have been projected as 'model minorities', their poverty rate seems to belie that designation. The 'foreign born' and 'non-citizens' also live disproportionately in poverty. In 1997, for

example, fully 25 per cent of all non-citizens were below the poverty line, as were 19.9 per cent of the foreign born.²⁵

Analysis of social indicators and disaggregation of the poverty rate by race, age and family structure, however, reveal an even more disastrous situation. In 1997, for example, fully 19.9 per cent of all US children were living in poverty. Despite the long economic boom of the 1990s, the poverty rate for children has, in fact, remained close to or above 20 per cent. This has been the case since the early 1980s, which means that economic expansion and sustained growth have had little impact in alleviating the condition of the most vulnerable in society.

That 19.9 per cent of children should live in poverty in a period of sustained growth in the richest country in the world is, of course, hard to comprehend. Yet even that figure does not adequately capture the gravity of the situation. What is more staggering is that close to half of those children (8 per cent of all children) live in what the government classifies as 'extreme poverty'. In quantifiable terms, that is less than \$8,200 a year for a family of four! Further, in addition to the 19.9 per cent below the poverty line, another 22 per cent subsist in families that are 'low income'.²⁶ There is a clear-cut racial dimension as well to the situation of children. In 1996, while 10 per cent of white, non-Hispanic children lived in poverty, 40 per cent of black children and 40 per cent of Hispanic children did so.

The infant mortality rate for black children in 1996 was 14.2 per 1,000 live births, or more than double the 6 per 1,000 for white infants. Similarly, the child mortality rate of 67.6 per 100,000 for blacks (aged 1-4) was also more than double the rate of 32.1 per 100,000 for white children in the same age group. The mortality rate for Hispanic infants and children was similar to that of the white population. Access to health care is a problem for all groups, but especially so for minorities. In 1996, 19 per cent of black children and 29 per cent of Hispanic children below 18 years had no usual access to health care. By comparison, only 11 per cent of whites in the same age group were similarly disadvantaged. In 1996, 10.6 million children had no health care at all and currently 43 million Americans, all told, have no coverage.

One further consequence of the economic restructuring concerns the unequal distribution of work-related fatalities – in other words, dying on the job. Foreign-born workers, especially those from Mexico, India, the Dominican Republic and Vietnam, consistently suffer more workplace-related fatalities than their percentage in the population would warrant. Mexican-born foreign workers, for example, who represent 28 per cent of the immigrant population in general, experience 31 per cent of the deaths that occur at work among foreign workers.²⁷ In 1994, foreign-born workers accounted for almost half of all workers killed in food stores.²⁸ One-third of those who died in

agricultural production, construction, mining, manufacturing, taxi driving and public administration began life on foreign shores. What is reflected here is the differentiated labour integration of immigrants of colour who end up in more dangerous jobs than their white immigrant counterparts.

Social consequences

The 1990s have witnessed the erosion of the welfare state and the emergence of a *containment* state. This dialectic has been thoroughly racialised. A dual discourse of 'personal responsibility' and 'law and order' paved the way for policies at the federal, state and local levels that reified attacks on the working class as a whole, but on the poor of colour and women of colour, in particular. Significantly, the wide support mobilised over these policies, though begun under the Reagan and Bush administrations, did not become a qualitative material force until the Clinton administration; it was then further exacerbated by the Republican takeover of Congress in 1994. The political elite of the 1990s not only championed an economic agenda that met the wishes of US-based transnationals, but advocated a corresponding social agenda that also meant fundamental changes for the working class.

Clinton came to power advancing a discourse forged in the Democratic Party's right wing that explicitly rejected Jesse Jackson's leftism of the 1980s. The regressive New Democrats, much like the Blairites in the British Labour Party, consolidated in the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC) that Clinton led prior to his presidential candidacy. Clinton and the conservative wing of the party drafted a programme of political and social reorganisation that included, *inter alia*, welfare reform and more crime legislation. At the centre of Clinton's campaign and conscious appeal to bring home the Reagan Democrats were his pledges to 'end welfare as we know it' and to pass new crime legislation that had been stalled under his predecessor. These policies would not only serve an ideological function, but would also serve the current interests of capital in the search for a more vulnerable labour force in a more socially secure environment.

The politics of welfare reform performed the dual function not only of winning people over to the ideological position of ending state responsibility towards the poor, but also of creating, simultaneously, a new stratum of low-skilled and unprotected workers who were immediately exploitable. The call to move people from welfare to 'workfare', whereby the poor would henceforth have to work under restrictive and perhaps unconstitutional guidelines, placed an army of vulnerable workers at the mercy of capricious local and national capital. These workers, who are sometimes even forced to wear clothing that marks them as different from their fellow workers, are paid less

than normal wages – often below the minimum wage – and have virtually no benefits or job protection.

Welfare reform was consistent with the new imperatives of capital which was increasingly ridding itself of nation-state boundaries and, more critically, of regulation. In addition, privatisation became the solution to the nation's social problems. And along with privatisation came racialisation. From beginning to end, the battle over welfare has been racialised. Images of women of colour and the popular but erroneous notion that it is primarily black women who make up the bulk of welfare recipients were underscored as Clinton and the congressional Republicans fought over the details of welfare reform. As long as these images held sway, any outcry against the attacks on poor women fell on the deaf ears of policymakers.

Since the passage of welfare reform, the racial gap has continued to grow. This has meant that black and Latino women bear the brunt of the most pernicious elements of the new labour dispensations flowing from the new states-centred welfare regimes. Professor Susan Tinsley Gooden, author of *Race and Welfare Report: examining racial differences in employment status among welfare recipients*, found that some southern states, such as Louisiana and Mississippi, often deem black women ineligible for welfare benefits because they are 'employable' as domestic workers and field hands. This discretionary option is generally not applied to white women.²⁹

Control and containment

What some have termed the 'prison-industrial complex' – the array of interconnections between the state, the private sector, prison industries and policies that defines the contemporary US criminal justice system – embodies all the contradictions of capital gone global. Few in the political and economic elite draw a link between the economic boom and the prison boom. Primarily as a result of crime legislation passed in the last fifteen years, the United States incarcerates nearly 2 million people, while millions more are locked into the system in other ways, such as being in jail awaiting trial or sentencing, being on parole, on probation, or under home arrest. Very few are not touched in some way – if not themselves directly – by the criminal justice apparatus. According to Bureau of Justice statistics, '1 of every 20 persons (5%) can be expected to serve time in prison during their lifetime'. In 1999, the United States had 672 persons per 100,000 incarcerated, the second highest rate in the world after Russia. In 1996, about 5.5 million US citizens were under some form of correctional supervision. Between 1985 and 1996, the number of adults under correctional supervision nearly doubled, increasing from 1.6 per cent to 2.8 per cent of the total population. During the same period, the number of adults

incarcerated in jails increased by 237,700, or an average of 6.5 per cent annually. Although the impression is often created that only African Americans and Latinos are being incarcerated, whites are also being locked away. Between 1990 and 1996, the white prison population grew by 39 per cent. The prison population grew by an annual average of 8.4 per cent between 1986 and 1996. The prison population has grown by 130 per cent since 1985, although the crime rate has been dropping for six straight years in a row.³⁰

That the outcry against the 'gulaging' of the nation is so muted is because it is, in part, conditioned by the racial character of the prisoners. More than half of the men and women who are incarcerated or otherwise shackled by the criminal justice apparatus are people of colour, mainly black and Latino. According to the US Department of Justice, 49 per cent of all inmates are blacks, which includes many Latinos, and 48 per cent are white, which also includes many Latinos. Even the US government admits that 'at current levels of incarceration newborn black males in this country have a greater than 1 in 4 chance of going to prison during their lifetimes while Hispanic males have a 1 in 6 chance'.³¹ For white males, the figure is one in twenty-three.

The rise of the prison-industrial complex can be directly linked to the political economy of global and domestic illegal narcotics. Energy spent on going after drug violators is relentless. As one researcher noted: 'Every 20 seconds, someone in the United States is arrested for a drug violation.'³² A primarily economic 'crime', this one area of criminal justice alone has been responsible for the sharp increase in the US prison population over the last two decades, consisting of mostly low-level and disproportionately minority dealers and consumers. As the *New York Times* reported: 'More people are behind bars for drug offenses in the United States – about 400,000 – than are in prison for all crimes in England, France, Germany, and Japan combined.'³³ In line with capital's predilections over welfare, privatisation of the criminal justice system has resulted in the privatising of prison maintenance and construction, a rise in prison industries, an increase in the use of prison labour, a concomitant growth in products and services sold to prisons and an explosion in the numbers of prison and jail employees (one of the fastest growing arenas of employment).

Conclusion

Through our analysis of the central factors animating the relationship between capital, the state and workers, we have tried to outline a framework within which to understand more deeply the class and racial complications of the present period. In particular, we have pointed to the fact that restructuring is more than a set of technical economic

processes or manipulative capitalist definitions. Indeed, there is a very real impact on the lives and social conditions that are being touched and remapped by the economic transitions of the era. And a critical part of defending the interests of the working class as a whole is to recognise the racialised nature of contemporary monetarism.

There is not space here to elaborate, but central to the assault on the working class as a whole is the campaign against affirmative action. Winning this particular battle requires a sustained discourse from elected officials, the media and conservatives to the effect that racism has been eliminated from American life. This chicanery is used to rationalise the end of any social programme that has race as a consideration. As legal scholars Charles Lawrence and Mari Matsuda point out: 'The assumption that Americans are no longer racist is central to the argument against race-based affirmative action.' As noted above, evidence to the contrary is abundant. Yet the terrain on which this battle is fought is not that of logic or historical and social knowledge, but of an ideology which taps into well-known and bigoted narratives regarding racial minorities.

We also want to note briefly the cultural dimensions of the containment state. In the service of labour management, a rigid cultural parochialism and quarantine has been created where the new labour entrants of women, people of colour and immigrants are disciplined for not adhering to what are projected as cultural 'norms', but are, in fact, workplace control mechanisms. For instance, in what has become an 'English-only' work environment, two women of Latino background were fired for speaking their native language, Spanish, during their lunch break.

Finally, a good measure of the staggering differences in America, which captures both the economic and racial dimensions of the problem, may be gleaned from the 1999 United Nations Development Program Report: if the US ranking in the Human Development Index is racially disaggregated, white Americans would come first in the world and African Americans would come forty-third. This staggering gap is symptomatic of the fundamental and very real disparities in opportunity, life chances, and hopes experienced by different racial groups in the contemporary US political economy.

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Closing ranks: racism and sexism in Canada's immigration policy

Historically, the Canadian state has contended with the conflicting interests of preserving the 'whiteness' of the nation while simultaneously ensuring an adequate supply of labour. These conflicting interests remain no less significant in late twentieth-century Canada. In the mid-1990s, the state undertook a major restructuring of the immigration programme, the Immigration Policy Review (IPR), which included extensive public consultations across the country. Through this Review, the state identified the most salient 'problems' connected with immigration and, by way of consulting Canadians, proposed subsequent policy changes as 'solutions'.¹ By means of the public consultations, the state reformulated colonial/racial definitions of Canadians *as members of the nation*, drawing them into supporting the imminent restructuring. In reproducing this racial/colonial definition of the nation and its citizens, the IPR played a significant role in the state's contemporary nation-building practices. Today, Canadian nation building relies in no small measure upon the construction of immigrants in general, and immigrant women in particular, as one of the most potent threats to the nation's prosperity and well-being. It was against this 'threat' that the state sought to define a 'national' interest, and to 'unite' the nation. In organising the closing of the

Sunera Thobani teaches in the Women's Studies Department at Simon Fraser University, British Columbia, Canada. Her current research focuses on colonisation, racialisation, immigration policy and nation building in Canada.

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nation's ranks against immigrant women in the 'national' interest, the state sought to suppress ideologically the internal divisions of race, class and gender which exist in actuality, as well as legitimise itself as representing the nation's interests.

Founding the nation

The very founding of the Canadian nation was accomplished through the colonisation/racialisation of Aboriginal peoples and the appropriation of their resources.² During this first phase of capitalist globalisation, Europeans gained control over Aboriginal people's lands through racialised land policies, establishing the new nation's 'national' economy on its 'national territory'. And colonisation/racialisation remains the basis for Canada's 'national' economy in the current phase of globalisation.

Together with the appropriation of Aboriginal lands, immigration policies were central to the production of the nation. Racialised immigration policies enabled the settlement of these lands by Europeans who were being integrated into the 'national' population. Overtly distinguishing between immigrants of 'preferred races' (initially British and French and, later, other European nationalities) and 'non-preferred races' (from Asia, the Caribbean and Africa), immigration policies worked to racialise the nation and access to citizenship until the 1960s and 1970s. Even as the Head Tax, the Exclusion Act, the Continuous Passage requirement and the 1910 Immigration Act³ all sought to tightly restrict the immigration of Third World peoples for permanent settlement, European immigrants were actively and aggressively recruited to replenish the nation. Women from 'non-preferred races' were particularly targeted for exclusion, while the men from these communities were allowed into the country to provide cheap labour. Keeping the women out was thought to be an incentive to persuade the men to go back, once their labour was no longer necessary, as well as advisable for preventing the nation from being 'polluted' by 'non-preferred race' women and their children. This racialised and gendered immigration enabled the British and French to be defined as the two founding 'races' of Canada. Today, of course, they have come to be officially designated the two founding 'nations'.

In the period after the second world war, the global economy underwent major change, as did Canadian immigration policy. National liberation movements in many colonised countries forced the dismantling of the British and other European empires, and challenged their racialisation as 'inferior'. Likewise, growing anti-racist and anti-fascist movements in advanced capitalist countries challenged the legitimacy of the 'scientific' racist theories which had previously held sway among European peoples. The post-war economic boom also

resulted in the decline of emigration from Europe and, in these changed circumstances, the Canadian state pragmatically removed overt references to race in immigration policy. In the late 1960s and 1970s, the state developed the point system, entrenching it in the Immigration Act 1976–1977. This organised immigration under two main categories, the independent and family classes, basing selection criteria on levels of education and occupation for the former, and on family relations for the latter.⁴ The introduction of the point system enabled a shift in source countries to take place, so that European countries no longer remained at the top. By 1993, 51.08 per cent of all immigrants came from Asia and the Pacific, 14.31 per cent from Africa and the Middle East, 13.28 per cent from South and Central America, with 3.14 per cent from the United States and 18.19 per cent from Europe.⁵ Thus, while immigration from Europe continued to remain significant, the domination of European immigration in absolute numbers, as in the pre-1960 period, was over by the 1990s. The post-war economic boom in Canada was underwritten by the significant labour provided by Third World immigrants.

The Act also enabled Third World women to gain relatively increased access to immigrate into Canada and, subsequently, to make claims to Canadian citizenship. Under the family category, Third World women have entered Canada in relatively large numbers since the 1960s and 1970s, albeit under gendered and racialised conditions which bordered them as outsiders to the nation and gave them restricted access to the social entitlements of citizenship.⁶ It is in this context that the state organised the Immigration Policy Review in 1994, as part of the process of restructuring Canadian society and seeking to curtail the increased access of the previous three decades. Restricting the future immigration of Third World peoples, and specifically Third World women, as permanent residents can be expected to force would-be immigrants to enter the country as temporary migrants, documented or undocumented, without access to citizenship and its consequent entitlements.⁷

The mandate of the IPR was to develop, through extensive public consultations, an immigration strategy for the twenty-first century.⁸ Policy changes were necessitated by changing global conditions which posed 'challenges' to the 'effective management' of the programme, argued the state.⁹ But, even though the immigration minister repeatedly stated his commitment to including Canadians in 'making choices' for the future, the Review effectively began with a private meeting of thirty individuals.¹⁰ Ten key issues for discussion in the public consultations were identified in this meeting, as were the 'elements of an approach' for 'the most productive discussion of these issues'.¹¹ Extensive public consultations were then organised across the country.

Although the public consultations gave the appearance of a democratic process, allowing Canadians to raise their concerns about immigration, the prior identification of the issues for discussion meant that the specific 'problems' which Canadians were to be concerned about were pre-determined by the state. The framing of the particular issues, and the specific questions raised for discussion, would, of course, shape the responses and policy recommendations which participants would make. In this way, the public consultations enabled the 'problems' defined by the state to be made into the major 'concerns' of Canadians. The consultations therefore became an exercise to draw Canadians into a pre-set agenda and popularise it, first by getting participants to agree that these were, indeed, the most urgent 'problems' and, second, by giving them a stake in 'solving' them. Constructing immigration as a 'problem-in-common' shared by the state and Canadians, but defining this 'problem' from the ruling state perspective invited Canadians to own the subsequent policy changes as being in the nation's, and therefore their own, interest.

Framing the consultations

The first issue identified for discussion was developing a 'vision of Canada'. The discussion document asked specific questions about the impact of immigration on the population, on 'cultural' diversity and the economy.¹² According to the background information provided: 'In 1991, the Economic Council of Canada found that immigration has a small but positive impact on our economy'.¹³ This is an extraordinary starting point for a discussion on immigration policy in a settler colony which has been established relatively recently and populated by European immigrants. It makes sense only if the reader directs discussion to recent immigration (predominantly of Third World peoples) and 'forgets' pre-1970s immigration (predominantly of European immigrants). This particular reading of Canadian history is racialised in that it defines Canadians as not having themselves been immigrants, and colonising ones at that. The starting point for the consultations thus naturalises the nation, assumes that it has always existed, and that its existence is not deeply connected to European colonising migrations. This starting point accomplishes the separation of '*Canadians* as members of the nation' from *immigrants* as the 'new' problem under consideration.

Having appealed to Canadians in this manner, the text informs them that immigrants make a contribution to 'our' economy. Here, 'our' economy is treated as if it belongs to all of 'us' equally and, although immigrants make a contribution by working and living in this same economy, it is not 'their' economy. Out of the three questions which frame this part of the discussion, two questions draw attention

specifically to 'cultural diversity': 'What role should immigration play in fostering the development of Canada's economy?'; 'How does immigration affect the social and cultural life of Canada?'; and 'What are the benefits of cultural diversity?'¹⁴ The text here separates the development of the economy from 'social and cultural' life, setting the stage for weighing 'economic' benefits against 'social' and 'cultural' benefits.

These questions link 'social' and 'cultural' diversity with immigration, implicitly defining Canadians as socially and culturally homogenous. Further, by questioning the benefits of 'cultural' diversity, the text makes it clear that the immigrants whose 'benefits' are to be evaluated are those who are 'culturally' and 'socially' 'diverse'. A number of critical race theorists have pointed out that 'cultural' diversity has come to stand in for 'racial' diversity in the 'new racism' of post-second world war Europe.¹⁵ Somewhat similarly, the texts invite Canadians, as culturally and socially homogenous, to collaborate with the state in assessing the impact of 'diverse' immigrants on the nation. In this very first issue, the text places Canadians who are culturally and socially 'diverse' outside the partnership being developed with the state, taking away the authority to speak from people of colour, the majority of whom are Canadian citizens, on the basis of their 'diversity'. By tying immigrants to 'cultural' and 'social' diversity, all people of colour become constructed as immigrants. This racialised use of the category 'immigrant' identifies all people of colour as part of the same problem which the immigrants of the future, who are under discussion, are said to represent.

The background information framing the second issue directs attention to two categories of immigration: the independent category – also referred to here as the 'economic' category – and the family category. I have argued elsewhere that the organisation of immigration under these two categories accomplishes the gendering of immigration: the independent category becomes masculinised by being defined as that of independent, economic agents who contribute to the economy, while the family category simultaneously becomes feminised as a category of dependants, who have to be sponsored by family members.¹⁶ The family category has thus been ideologically constructed as a feminine one, with the consequence that the economic contributions made by its members are rendered invisible by the official categorisation. In the consultation text, the reader is informed that the criteria for admission to the independent category are the education, skills and occupation of the applicant, and that this category is regulated through adjusting the allocation of points. In short, the independent category is treated as easily managed, and as making an 'economic' contribution to the nation. It allows the immigration of the 'good' immigrant, who, by making a contribution to 'our' economy, is a future member of the

nation. Notably, this category is not linked by the texts to 'social' or 'cultural' diversity, nor is it associated with any costs to the nation.

The text's presentation of the family category, however, stands in stark contrast. No reference is made to its economic contribution; instead, those from this category are presented as having easy access to entering Canada, so long as they have family members in the country and meet 'standards for good health and character'.¹⁷ The text does not point out that immigrants under this category can only be sponsored by particular family members who have to meet specific financial criteria. Annually, numerical targets are tabled by the immigration minister for this category, as they are for the independent category. The text therefore hides the reality that the family category is *also* subject to control and management, presenting it instead as allowing potentially limitless and uncontrollable immigration.¹⁸

Since the family and independent categories have been defined in this particular way, the question, 'Should immigration be managed according to business cycles or long-term social goals?', poses a choice between opposing 'economic' and 'social' goals. When the document asks, 'How much importance should the principle of family reunification be given?', it calls into question the fundamental *raison d'être* of this category, and suggests that the right of immigrants to family life is a 'choice' Canadians are entirely suited to make.¹⁹ Considered in the light of the first issue, in which immigrants are responsible for 'cultural' and 'social' diversity, while the independent category is an asset to the nation, it is the family category which becomes defined as the source of this diversity, as *not* making an economic contribution *and* as allowing potentially limitless entry into the country. In this way, the discussion document sets up the family category as the 'problem' requiring increased 'control' and 'management'.

Six of the ten issues raised for discussion ask specific questions about the costs of immigration and link 'increased' demands on social programmes with immigrants. 'Have recent immigration and economic trends created needs which current programming and resources cannot meet?'; 'Should newcomers receive materials explaining the rights and responsibilities of consuming public services?'; 'How far are Canadians prepared to go to ensure their generosity and openness are not abused?'; 'What are the groups, institutions and programs which need to be protected?'; 'What factors should we consider in shaping our immigration programs to increase economic benefits at low cost?'; 'How do we build partnerships among all levels of government' to 'improve the detection of abuse?'²⁰ These questions all direct attention to the range of fiscal, social and political 'problems' with immigration, and the need to 'protect' Canadians from immigrants. Three out of the ten issues directly construct immigrants as threatening

national institutions by abusing social services. The text's linking of immigrants with criminality and abuse of social services sets up every *Canadian* as vulnerable to being taken advantage of by *immigrants*.

The discussion document erases the reality that regulations not only require sponsors to undertake financial responsibility for sponsored family members but also expressly forbid the family category from accessing social security programmes such as social housing and social assistance.²¹ Further, the text's linking of immigrants with increased demands on social services provides the motive for the direct involvement of all Canadians in the subsequent restructuring of the immigration programme. Even as the text links immigrants in general – and the family category in particular – with economic costs and 'abusing' the 'generosity of Canadians', it constructs all Canadians as citizen-taxpayers who are equally in danger of being taken advantage of by the potentially 'abusive' immigrant women who enter under this category and, legitimately or otherwise, over-burden social programmes. The text constructs for Canadians, as taxpayers, an interest-in-common in restricting the access of immigrant women to social programmes, and gives Canadians a direct stake in further restricting the immigration of the family category.

None of the issues identified for discussion address the inequalities immigrant women are subjected to in Canada, nor do they address the deeply entrenched racism of Canadian society. The only exception is one question which raises the non-recognition of 'foreign' educational and professional credentials in Canada.²² The document remains silent on the reality that sponsored immigrants are turned into second-class citizens by regulations which give them unequal access to social entitlements: although sponsored immigrants can become citizens after living in the country for three to five years, financial dependency on the sponsor lasts for ten years. Nor does it mention that sponsors, who are themselves citizens and landed immigrants, may forfeit their own claims to social assistance in order to sponsor family members. Throughout the document, it is immigrants who are presented as a 'problem', not the various agencies of the state which reproduce the racialised inequalities of immigrants.

Similarly, none of the ten issues refer to the unequal treatment of workers who enter the country under the Live-in Care Giver Program, which only allows domestic workers to apply for landed status after doing domestic work for two years, during which period they are dependent upon their employers for their continued stay in the country.²³ Nor is any mention made of the Non-Immigrant Employment Authorization Program which has allowed increasing numbers of workers to enter the country on temporary work permits.²⁴ The existence of both these programmes is rendered invisible in the immigration discussion.

In producing the conceptual framework for restructuring the immigration programme and identifying the ‘problems’ to be solved, the state adroitly imposed an ideological ‘knowledge’ of the ‘problems’ on to the lived experiences of the consultation participants, shaping their relationship to reality through the lens of these ‘problems’ known-in-common.²⁵ Where the framework produced by the state conflicted with the lived experiences of individual participants, the consultations would compel those individuals to articulate their lived experiences as a subjective, individual reality – while the discussion documents were made to represent an objective, collective ‘knowledge’ of the problem, held by the state and the nation. Where the individual experiences of participants contradicted the document’s definition of ‘problems’, their individualised experiences became juxtaposed in the consultations with the ‘collective’ problems facing state and nation. Hence, once the state’s conceptual framework was accepted and entered, as was necessary for engaging in the consultations, it could only be challenged by individual participants within its own terms of reference. Participants’ lived ‘knowledge’ of ‘problems’ would be awed by the state’s ‘knowledge’ of the ‘problems’ confronting the nation. In short, the consultation texts mediated the relation of participants to reality; the conceptual framework became the grid on which participants, as *Canadians*, were asked to ‘see’ and ‘know’ *immigrants*.

What the state heard

The contributions made in the public consultations fall into four major themes: defining a ‘national’ vision for the twenty-first century; identifying the desired ‘quality’ of immigrants; finding an appropriate balance between the independent and family categories; and ‘protecting’ the security of Canadians and national institutions.²⁶

Defining a national vision

The first theme defines both a ‘national’ vision for Canada, and a ‘national’ character, calling for its preservation to be a key goal of future immigration. The views of the majority of Canadians are summarised as being in cautious agreement with continuing immigration, although some participants called for an end to immigration altogether, and others for a reduction in the numbers. But even as the texts record support for continued immigration, they immediately counter it by drawing attention to the ‘problems’ with immigration. The benefits of immigration are defined as ‘economic’ and the ‘problems’ as social and cultural diversity which ‘inflammes’ racial ‘intolerance’.

The cautious support presented for continuing immigration is, therefore, made conditional on recognising its potential 'dangers' which include racial diversity, as the following comments demonstrate: 'the importance of the whole must be emphasized. We must be a choir, not a cacophony' and 'ethnic diversity has no benefits, it only creates tension'.²⁷

The text's construction of 'diversity' as the characteristic of immigrants – not of Canadians – and a divisive and fractious one at that, is achieved through its repeated warnings about the dangers 'diversity' presents to the national 'vision' and values shared by Canadians. National values are seen to include 'freedom', 'democracy', the 'rule of law', 'the principles of justice, fairness, tolerance, and respect for our fellow citizens', and 'equality'.²⁸ One submission is singled out for special mention as 'capturing' the Canadian character:

Canadians value honesty and fairness. They respect hard work and people with integrity. And they are willing to give people a second or even third chance. But Canadians also expect their fellow Canadians to respect the system that is in place, and to not take advantage of their generosity.²⁹

The text's repeated appeals to 'Canadian' identity and core 'Canadian values' construct a national self-image, a national character, which Canadians are said to have defined. Yet it is the texts themselves which have constructed this national character out of the thousands of submissions made by participants, and it is the texts which now invite Canadians to claim it as their own. The ideological construction of this national character as committed to 'tolerance', as 'accepting of differences', and as 'humane' stands in sharp contrast to the actual recommendations of many of these Canadians to end immigration altogether, allow it only from European source countries and to contain, and even eliminate, 'cultural' diversity. Frequent recommendations to 'close the doors' to all immigrants are not allowed to interfere with the text's construction of the Canadian character as 'fair' and 'just'.

The texts hide the reality that people in Canada are divided by social relations of race, class and gender. The significance of the production of a 'unified' national character is that it counters, at an ideological level, the increasing material polarisation of the 1990s. Race, class and gender inequalities have increased significantly in the 1990s. This polarisation, which intensifies economic inequalities and hence further entrenches differing interests among Canadians, is not allowed to enter the reality being constructed by the texts, of the national character as a unified one with a shared national interest.

Significantly, the national character is given substance and concrete meaning in direct counterpoint to immigrants, who are defined as threatening its continued existence:

Throughout the consultation process, Canadians have expressed concern that their Canada is disappearing; that . . . *'its values and lifestyle are being eroded and degraded'*.³⁰ (emphasis added)

The problem constructed by the texts is not so much that immigrants do not share national values, as that they 'erode' and 'degrade' the values and the cohesiveness of the nation. The values of immigrants are constructed as being in direct opposition to Canadian values; the texts actually delineate the ideological borders of the nation in direct relation to immigrants. Where Canadians are defined as respecting 'the rule of law', 'honest', 'hard-working' and 'fair', immigrants are defined as 'abusers'. Again and again, immigrants are deemed to represent criminality, disease and laziness, as well as ignorance of democratic values and the rule of law. In defining immigrant values through the discourse of cultural and social diversity, racialised definitions of immigrants and Canadians are reproduced. In the process, all people of colour are placed as outsiders to the nation (regardless of their actual legal status) on the basis of sharing immigrant 'values' and 'character'.

Improving the 'quality' of immigrants

While the first theme racialises the 'values' and 'character' of immigrants, the second theme genders this 'problem' of 'quality' by constructing immigrant women in particular as threatening the destruction of the nation through their allegedly boundless fecundity. Immigrants who 'threaten' the national 'way of life' are then associated by the texts with the dangers of over-population and the overwhelming of the nation's resources. The following statement is offered as one which 'reflects the views of many':

Growth as an ever increasing and self-sustaining way of life, leading to increased consumption, has been our North American way of life. All of these treasured ideas and much of what we call 'our way of life' is now ending.³¹

Here, the IPR associates immigration with the ending of 'our way of life'. The text's definition of 'our' 'treasured' 'North American way of life' as leading to 'increased consumption' negates, of course, the reality of Aboriginal existence whose experience of 'our' way of life has been anything but 'treasured'. The actuality that 'our way of life' is underwritten by the ongoing colonisation of Aboriginal peoples, and that increased 'consumption' has been enjoyed only by some sectors of the population at the expense of Aboriginal peoples, is concealed, as is the reality that it is over-consumption of resources by majority populations in the West which threaten the very future of the planet, not 'over-population'.

In particular, the text presents the 'dangers' of over-population as a widespread 'concern' among Canadians. Canada has a 'fragile ecology', and 'climatic conditions' and 'geography' are cited as unable to sustain more than the 'ideal population' which has already been 'surpassed'.³² The use of geographical and climatic conditions to justify curtailing immigration from Third World countries is a familiar theme in Canadian history: arguments that Asian and African immigrants were incapable of adapting to the climate were used to restrict their immigration in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.³³ As the IPR gives new currency to these older rationales, the present 'dangers' of population growth through immigration are summed up as follows:

The effect that population growth will have on our environment and quality of life, seems to be of primary concern. Environmental deterioration, air and water pollution, traffic congestion, increased crime rates, over-burdened social services, garbage disposal problems and shortages in housing, food and energy, are some of the problems that people identify with over-population. They are concerned as Canada's population grows, these problems will increase in severity.³⁴

Here, immigration is associated with 'population growth' which is then immediately equated with over-population. So, immigrants become responsible for 'environmental deterioration', 'pollution', 'increased crime', 'over-burdened social services', food and housing 'shortages', etc. The complexities of these wide-ranging problems are neatly reduced to the presence of immigrants, directing attention away from the consumption patterns of Canadians, as well as from the impact of capitalist economic growth on the environment. In making immigrants the cause of these various and extremely serious problems, the text seeks to negate the responsibility of the state for them. The texts accomplish a reversal of actually existing social relations: immigrants are attributed with the power to devastate and overwhelm both the nation and the environment. Although population levels in Canada actually face decline and will fall below replacement levels by the year 2010 without continued immigration,³⁵ the texts incorporate and, more importantly, legitimise this unfounded 'concern' of Canadians.

The texts also clearly signal that the 'problem' of population growth does not apply to the growth of the *Canadian* population, indeed, it puts forward a specific proposal for increasing population levels, by giving Canadians incentives to reproduce.³⁶ The population growth of Canadians is therefore not the 'problem'; it will not devastate the environment as will the population growth of immigrants.

In blaming immigrants for over-population and all the specific problems associated with this, the texts make immigrants responsible for the 'problems' that, historically, Third World peoples have been associated with in the western imagination, such as increased crime, disease, pollution, 'excessive' breeding, and 'excessive' demands on scarce resources. Indeed, one would be hard-pressed to find a more racially charged representation of immigrants than the one constructed in this discussion of over-population. In contrast, *Canadian* society is said to be 'dedicated to the preservation of a healthy environment'.³⁷

The gendered consequences of the text's linking of immigrants with over-population are also unmistakable. It is women, after all, who 'populate', and Third World women in particular have been linked with 'over-populating' the planet. Contemporary population debates draw upon Malthusian theories which define population growth in Third World countries as an 'explosion', endangering the very survival of the human species. Over-population is blamed for economic stagnation, environmental devastation and poverty, and population control, runs the popular argument, is the only solution. Third World women have been targeted by population control programmes in India, Bangladesh and Brazil, as well as in the West.³⁸ Indeed, the fertility of Third World women has long served in the Canadian imagination as posing the 'danger' of 'polluting' the whiteness of the nation. So, for example, in the early twentieth century, South Asian and Chinese women were identified as a threat to the 'purity' of the nation, and were judged undesirable for entry into Canada because their power to reproduce would undermine the whiteness of the nation.³⁹ The IPR report's discussion of over-population draws on the racialised/gendered historical underpinnings of previous immigration policies and uses these 'concerns' in the 1990s to rally Canadians against the alleged menace of the abundant fecundity of immigrant women, who become attributed with the power literally to reproduce 'garbage' in sufficient quantities to overwhelm the nation. Immigrant women and their fertility come to be equated with 'garbage' and 'pollution' by the writers of these texts.

That the 'problem' of over-population also applies selectively to different categories of immigrants becomes clear in repeated recommendations for increasing the recruitment of the independent category, as well as of English and French speakers.⁴⁰ The text repeatedly and explicitly states that the problem is one of the 'quality' of immigrants, not their quantity, and records numerous recommendations to return to the original European source countries to attract immigrants who will be compatible with the nation.⁴¹ Fluency in English and French is recommended as the criterion by which the 'quality' of potential immigrants should be evaluated. Using the criteria of social and cultural compatibility with the nation in conjunction with strengthened

language criteria for selection processes can, of course, be expected to privilege Europeans.

The defining of the 'problem' of over-population thus operates at two levels: the presence of immigrant women themselves and their fertility become the 'problem'. The 'problems' of the 'quantity' and 'quality' of immigrants became, specifically and literally, inscribed on to the bodies of immigrant women.

Balancing immigration categories

The third theme relates to identifying an appropriate balance between the independent and family categories. The way that these two categories were framed by the discussion document shaped the subsequent responses from participants in the public consultations. For, with very few exceptions, most responses reproduced the state's ideological construction of the independent and family categories, defining the independent category as making an economic contribution and those in the family category as dependants responsible for the 'costs' of immigration and for over-burdening social programmes. As in the discussion document, the final reports do not associate the independent category with social, cultural and linguistic diversity, nor with any costs to the nation. The 'economic' contribution of this category is repeatedly recognised, and its compatibility with the nation is not questioned. It is the family category, and immigrant women in particular, who are made responsible in the reports on the public consultations for 'lowering' the 'quality' of immigrants.

So, the responses to questions regarding the criteria for immigrant selection call for increasing restrictions and for reducing the family category because it is unaffordable.

Weight must be given to official language ability, education levels and potential to contribute to Canada . . . Potential to contribute to Canada must be viewed in terms of (a) ability to demonstrate willingness to integrate socially and culturally; and (b) proven ability and demonstrated willingness to be productive economically.⁴²

Given that the starting point for the public consultation was the construction of the family category as not economically productive, recommendations for increasing the 'economic' benefits of immigration inevitably translate into recommendations for reducing the family category, as well as for increasing internal controls to limit the access of sponsored immigrants to social programmes. Recommendations urge that immigrants pay the costs of settlement services themselves,⁴³ and that 'immigrant communities' fund settlement services for new immigrants:

Immigrant communities can play an important role in the integration of new arrivals. They should be encouraged in this respect to provide language and settlement services to other immigrants, particularly where existing delivery mechanisms are underfunded or overburdened and if possible to provide Canadian job experience as a transition into the broader labour market (perhaps through a form of sponsorship). These measures will help raise the economic contribution of immigrants while reducing the costs of traditional settlement delivery mechanisms.⁴⁴

This extraordinary recommendation constructs all people of colour as 'immigrant communities', regardless of their citizenship status, and makes them responsible for 'their' own kind. The reality that 'immigrant communities' – as taxpayers – fund 'our' national social programmes is made invisible by this recommendation. Other measures recommended to reduce the costs of immigration include the introduction of a sponsorship bond, with one specifically calling for this to be set at the rate of \$20,000.⁴⁵ Another calls for raising the income levels at which prospective sponsors should qualify,⁴⁶ yet others recommend the outright ending of family sponsorship for low-income immigrants, arguing that 'being separated from one's family is a choice that every immigrant must make'.⁴⁷

While the text recommends restricting numbers in the family category and curtailing its access to social programmes, it simultaneously recommends the 'aggressive' recruitment and 'promotion' of the independent category; increasing the numbers of 'economic' immigrants and correspondingly decreasing the family category to keep overall immigration levels low. In this way, the feminised family category and immigrant women come to be defined as one of the major burdens that the immigration programme places on the nation.

Protecting national institutions

The fourth theme focuses on the 'threats' to national institutions from immigrants who are portrayed as engaged in widespread criminal activities and abuse of social services. Every Canadian, as a taxpayer, is said to be in danger:

There is increasing concern that immigrants are not respecting these responsibilities (of sponsorship), thus placing demands on already over-burdened social support programmes, funded by Canadian taxpayers.⁴⁸

Participants are said to want 'a government which takes effective action against abuse of our systems instead of allowing chronic abusers of our immigration and welfare systems to go unchecked'.⁴⁹ And state officials are reported to be frustrated with a system which stops them

from dealing quickly and efficiently with abuse. They are disturbed by the fact that some people arrive at 'our' borders with 'instructions on how to use the system to their advantage'.⁵⁰ Here, the effective use of the system by immigrants becomes equated with fraud and abuse. The texts present immigrants who know how to use the system as a 'problem' because they 'abuse' it, and those immigrants who don't know 'our' system as also a problem because they don't 'know' democracy and the 'rule of law'!

Very few contributions from the consultation participants explicitly challenging the racialised construction of immigrants can be found in the summaries from the study groups. And even these were, in any case, simply left out of the final reports of the IPR consultations. Contributions which challenged the racist stereotypes that immigrants 'live off the fat of the taxpayer' were ignored, as were contributions which challenged the view that Canadians and immigrants have opposing values.⁵¹

The practices of the state during the IPR did not allow oppositional views to enter the conceptual framework being constructed for the immigration programme. Such contributions would have challenged its fundamental assumptions about the nation, as well as about the 'threats' immigrants present to it. Not surprisingly, these contributions were silenced by being simply left out of the final report, which ends by reiterating the numerous 'threats' immigrants present to the health and safety of Canadians and their national institutions.

Significantly, the conceptual framework produced through the IPR brought both right-wing anti-immigrant views and more traditional liberal views to the same conclusion. If it is accepted that immigrants are engaged in massive abuse of the social services, as many right-wing groups claim, then the 'solution' to cutting costs becomes one of cutting back immigration. A more liberal view might reject this wholesale stereotyping and, instead, define immigrants who claim assistance as victims of economic conditions beyond their control and, as such, unwittingly precipitating a crisis in social services. The 'solution' to reducing costs in this liberal view would also be to reduce immigration levels, even if only as a temporary measure. The 'problem' constructed in the IPR framework is such that only one 'solution' becomes possible from within it.

The important point here is not whether immigrants do or do not use social services. After all, the very basis for the creation of social programmes, especially social assistance, was the recognition that individuals are not personally responsible for the labour market conditions which create unemployment and poverty, and that they need protection from economic cycles by having access to social programmes. What matters is that defining immigrants as outsiders to the nation legitimises their unequal access to these programmes; that the state normalises

their unequal rights and entitlements through its ideological practices. 'They' should not have the same rights as 'us'.

What the consultations accomplished

By reaching out to Canadians in overtly racialised ways, the state sought to nationalise them into defending its policies and practices. The IPR is a fascinating study of a massive public 'education' campaign launched by the state, albeit in the guise of public consultation, educating Canadians-as-members-of-the-nation on the threats presented to them by immigrant outsiders, while presenting itself as the defender of the 'national' interest against immigrants in general, and immigrant women in particular. The process enabled the state to claim a partnership between 'government and its citizens' on the basis of 'shared goals' and 'shared responsibilities'.⁵² In the textual reality produced by the state, whether 'economic', 'social' or 'cultural' criteria are used for immigrant selection, the family category is placed in a no-win situation. It comes up short on economic criteria, having been ideologically constructed as making no economic contribution to the nation. And it comes up short on social and cultural criteria, having been ideologically constructed as 'culturally' and 'socially' diverse, so undermining the national character, fragmenting national cohesiveness and increasing racial 'tensions'. Once the textual reality produced by the IPR is entered, the only way to maximise the 'economic' contribution of the immigration programme and to reduce 'racial tensions' lies in reducing the family category. The text's construction of this particular 'problem' leaves no other option, its logic rules out any other possibility, unless, of course, the textual reality, its entire conceptual framework and its underlying assumptions are rejected. Throughout the Review texts, the construction of *immigrant* women as presenting various forms of 'threat' to the nation remains constant, as does the construction of the state as the defender of the interests of *Canadians* against them. The IPR process, as well as the textual reality produced through it, enables the state to present itself as committed only to 'protecting' the nation and using a 'democratic' process to build a partnership with an active 'citizenry' in resolving their 'problems'.

In presenting itself as the protector of the nation, and by constructing immigrant women as a 'problem-in-common' shared by nation and state, the state created the political climate for closing ranks against these women. In the process, it also built the political support necessary for reducing the access of Third World women to Canada as permanent residents and, therefore, to subsequent claims to citizenship. Increasing the policing of access of all immigrant women to social security programmes was made not only feasible but

absolutely necessary, in the name of protecting Canadians and 'our' economy and national institutions.

The IPR resulted in the tabling of a report, *A Broader Vision: immigration and citizenship*, which outlined immigration levels set by the government for the years 1995–2000, as well as of *Into the Twenty-first Century: a strategy for immigration and citizenship*, a long-term plan. This outlines the direction for immigration policy into the new millennium, and a number of its recommendations have been implemented since 1995.

First, a head tax of \$975 was placed on all immigrants and refugees. Given the use of the head tax in the earlier part of this century to restrict Chinese and South Asian immigration into the country, its reintroduction is ominous. Although defenders of the head tax point out that it is applied to all immigrants and refugees regardless of race, the tax will have a disproportionate, racialised impact on immigrants and refugees from the Third World, given their unequal access to financial resources.⁵³

Second, the plan for the years 1995–2000 made an outright reduction in immigration levels overall, and in the levels for the family category. Restrictions on eligibility for sponsorship were increased and include a sponsorship contract. The federal immigration department committed itself to working with provincial social service agencies to ensure that sponsored immigrants do not break the sponsorship agreement by making claims upon social assistance. This means that the immigration department will use the social service system for surveillance of immigrants, which can be anticipated to impact negatively on all people of colour who make claims on these services, regardless of citizenship status. It is not unreasonable to suggest that, having been constructed as immigrant/outside, the claims of all people of colour will be viewed with suspicion and subject to increased scrutiny.

In 1998, the state released a report it had commissioned from a number of independent consultants, *Not Just Numbers: a Canadian framework for future immigration*.⁵⁴ Not surprisingly, this report shares the same conceptual framework as the IPR and, in its 172 recommendations, echoes many of the recommendations made in the IPR documents. These include: standardised language testing in English and French for all immigrants; requiring the family category to demonstrate emotional and financial dependency on the sponsor; requiring immigrants to pay the costs of all settlement services; and placing greater emphasis on recruiting more highly skilled workers. The report also calls for a new immigration act and for restricting the grounds upon which claims to Canadian citizenship can be made. In January 1999, yet another report was released, *Building on a Strong Foundation for the Twenty-First Century*, rehashing many previous recommendations. All these reports are setting the stage for

the state to introduce new legislation on immigration and citizenship in the near future.

Notes towards strategies for resistance

People of colour communities, and immigrant and refugee rights groups, have responded to the policy changes discussed above by organising campaigns, for example, against the head tax and against making fluency in English and French criteria for selection. While these are certainly important initiatives which challenge state racism against immigrants and, more particularly, against women of colour, a much more radical and fundamental challenge has become urgent. Rather than feminist and anti-racist organisations focusing only on the discriminatory treatment of Third World immigrants – and these policy changes are specifically aimed at them – what is urgently required is to challenge the racialised foundation of the Canadian nation itself, and work towards its transformation.

A fundamental principle underpinning the Canadian nation is the ongoing colonisation of Aboriginal peoples. Ending this colonial/racial domination through the resolution of the struggles of Aboriginal peoples for self-determination and title to land is key to any progressive social change in Canada. As long as Canada remains a white settler colony, reproducing colonial relations, the nation will continue to be racialised. The second principle underlying the Canadian nation is the racialisation of all non-Aboriginal peoples: white immigrants have historically been, and continue to be, integrated into the ranks of the 'nation', while people of colour continue to be marginalised as immigrants, as outsiders to the nation. Therefore, challenging the racialised construction of the nation as bilingual and bicultural is necessary if the processes of racialisation are to be transformed in a socially just and progressive manner. As long as a racialised definition of the nation is accepted, its membership will remain exclusionary, and the racialised bordering of immigrants inevitable. An examination of how nation building is currently being organised demonstrates that, although the specific content of the 'nation' and 'national' interest has changed over time, what has not changed is the state's construction of both as 'white'. As long as the nation is defined by racialised cultural, linguistic and social characteristics, women of colour will continue to be defined as 'outsiders' who undermine the 'unity' of the nation.

My discussion of immigration also recognises that there is an urgent need to build coalitions between Aboriginal women and women of colour to challenge the Canadian state's nation-building practices. A dialogue between Aboriginal communities and people of colour communities on immigration is urgently needed if we are to stop the state from pitting these communities against each other. Aboriginal

voices were given no space in the Immigration Policy Review and, likewise, the struggles of Aboriginal peoples receive very little support from people of colour communities. Coalitions of Aboriginal women and women of colour committed to working across our historical divisions have to be given priority in anti-racist organising.

While women of colour are organising against racist immigration policies, it is up to Canadians to challenge their own racialisation, which is the basis of their membership in 'their' nation, and to rupture their 'partnership' with 'their' state.

The question women of colour need to ask *Canadians* is this: if the state does not act in your interest in closing the nation's doors to *immigrant* women, then where are your voices?

References

- 1 While the categories 'Canadian' and 'immigrant' ostensibly refer to legal status in Canada, these terms have historically been racialised and express everyday forms of racism in 'common-sense' terms.
- 2 See J. A. Green, 'Towards a détente with history: confronting Canada's colonial legacy', *International Journal of Canadian Studies* (Vol. 12, Fall 1995), pp. 85–105; D. Culhane, *The Pleasure of the Crown: anthropology, law and first nations* (Burnaby, Talonbooks, 1998) and L. Maracle, *I Am Woman: a Native perspective on sociology and feminism* (Vancouver, Press Gang Publishers, 1996).
- 3 The Head Tax was imposed on Chinese and South Asian immigrants, the Exclusion Act prevented all immigration from China, the Continuous Passage requirement restricted immigration from India and Japan, and the 1910 Immigration Act defined 'race' as a category which would prohibit immigration into the country. For a fuller discussion of these laws, see B. S. Bolaria and P. Li, *Racial Oppression in Canada* (Toronto, Garamond Press, 1985) and F. Hawkins, *Canada and Immigration: public policy and public concern* (Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1972).
- 4 In addition to these two categories, the Immigration Act also organised the immigration of temporary workers, 'business class' immigrants and domestic workers. The refugee programme, of course, was organised under different selection criteria, based on the United Nations Convention.
- 5 Citizenship and Immigration Canada, *Facts and Figures: overview of immigration* (Ottawa, Minister of Supply and Services, 1994).
- 6 Among the objectives of the Immigration Act 1976–77 is the enhancement and preservation of the nation, and the strengthening of its cultural and social fabric. I have argued elsewhere that, along with defining the nation as bilingual (i.e. English and French), this objective maintains the racialisation of the nation and of immigrants-as-outsiders. See S. Thobani, 'Nationalizing Citizens, Bordering Immigrant Women: globalization and the racialization of women's citizenship in late twentieth-century Canada' (PhD thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1998).
- 7 A number of studies have analysed the increasing numbers of workers entering Canada with temporary immigration status. See, among others, B. Singh Bolaria, 'From immigrant settlers to migrant transients: foreign professionals in Canada', in V. Satzewich (ed.), *Deconstructing the Nation: immigration, multiculturalism and racism in 90s Canada* (Halifax, NS, Fernwood, 1992), pp. 211–228 and N. Sharma, 'Cheap myths and bonded lives: freedom and citizenship in Canadian society', *Beyond Law* (Vol. 6, no. 17, 1997), pp. 35–62. The subject of my article, restricting the immigration of Third World peoples as permanent residents, is necessary to the

- expansion of the migrant workers programme as a permanent feature of the Canadian economy. Indeed, expediting the processing of temporary work permits was identified as a priority in the Immigration Policy Review.
- 8 My analysis of the IPR is based on an examination of the documents prepared for the public consultations, the reports of working committees and study groups, the report of the National Conference, the interim and final reports of the IPR and the reports tabled in Parliament. All documents were published by Citizenship and Immigration Canada and the Minister of Supply and Services, Ottawa.
 - 9 Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), *Canada 2005: a strategy for citizenship and immigration: background document* (Ottawa, CIC, 1994) p. 1.
 - 10 This meeting was said to have been organised by the Public Policy Forum, drawing participants from the three levels of government, from 'international and social organizations, business, labour, academic institutions, and media representatives', as well as 'public safety and service agencies'. No organisations representing immigrants, refugees or women are identified as having been present. (*Ibid.*, p. 2).
 - 11 CIC, *Immigration Consultations Report* (Ottawa, Minister of Supply and Services, 1994) p. 2.
 - 12 This paper does not address the refugee programme, although it, too, was included in the IPR. The principles and criteria underlying it are different from those applied to immigrants and for this reason among others an analysis of the refugee programme is beyond my scope here.
 - 13 CIC, *Canada and Immigration: facts and issues* (Ottawa, CIC, 1994), p. 3.
 - 14 *Ibid.*
 - 15 See the work of M. Barker, *The New Racism* (London, Junction Books, 1981); P. Gilroy, *There Ain't no Black in the Union Jack* (Chicago, IL, University of Chicago Press, 1991); and E. Balibar and E. Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: ambiguous identities* (London, Verso, 1991).
 - 16 Thobani, *op. cit.*
 - 17 *Canada and Immigration*, *op. cit.*, p.3.
 - 18 So, for example, in June 1989, immigration policy allowed the sponsorship of single adult children of sponsors. Adult offspring had not been previously eligible for sponsorship. This change in policy attracted more applicants than the department had anticipated, and changes were introduced in April 1992 to end the eligibility of this group.
 - 19 *Canada and Immigration*, *op. cit.*, p.3.
 - 20 *Ibid.*, pp. 3–6.
 - 21 *Employment and Immigration Canada (EIC), Canada's Immigration Law: an overview* (Ottawa, Minister of Supply and Services, 1983).
 - 22 *Ibid.*, p.5.
 - 23 For a fuller discussion of the domestic workers programme, see S. Arat-Koc, 'Immigration policies, migrant domestic workers and the definition of citizenship in Canada', in Satzewich, *op. cit.*, pp. 229–42.
 - 24 See Sharma, *op. cit.* and Bolaria, *op. cit.*
 - 25 See the work of D. Smith, *The Conceptual Practices of Power* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1990), for a discussion of how the social construction of knowledge and the framing of 'reality' through textual practices are central to the reproduction of the relations of ruling in advanced capitalism.
 - 26 These themes were summarised in the interim and final reports. See *Immigration Consultations Report*, *op. cit.* and CIC, *Public Meetings: summaries of discussion* (Ottawa, CIC, 1994).
 - 27 *Immigration Consultations Report*, *op. cit.*, p. 19.
 - 28 *Ibid.*, p. 21.
 - 29 *Ibid.*, p. 20.
 - 30 *Ibid.*, p. 22.

- 31 Ibid., p. 17.
- 32 Ibid., p.18.
- 33 See Hawkins, op. cit. and Bolaria and Li, op. cit.
- 34 *Immigration Consultations Report*, op. cit., p. 18.
- 35 See Hawkins, op. cit.
- 36 *Immigration Consultations Report*, op. cit., p.18.
- 37 Ibid., p.21.
- 38 See S. Corea, *Population and Reproductive Rights: feminist perspectives from the South* (London, Zed Books, 1994) and C. Barroso and C. Bruschini, 'Building politics from personal lives: discussions on sexuality among poor women in Brazil', in C. T. Mohanty et al. (eds), *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism* (Indiana, Indiana University Press, 1991), pp. 153–72.
- 39 See A. Adhopia, *The Hindus of Canada* (Inderlekh Publications, 1993) and T. Adilman, 'A preliminary sketch of Chinese women and work in British Columbia 1858–1950', in B. Latham and R. Pazdro (eds), *Not Just Pin Money: selected essays on the history of women's work in British Columbia* (Camosun College, 1984), pp. 53–78.
- 40 *Immigration Consultations Report*, op. cit., pp. 26, 65.
- 41 Ibid., pp. 26, 61.
- 42 Ibid., p. 26.
- 43 CIC, *Employee Consultation Report* (Ottawa, CIC, 1994) p. 7.
- 44 *The Report of Working Group No. 8* (Ottawa, CIC, 1994), p. 11.
- 45 D. J. DeVoretz (ed.), *Diminishing Returns: the economics of Canada's recent immigration policy* (C. D. Howe Institute, 1995).
- 46 *Report of Working Group No. 8*, op. cit., p. 11.
- 47 *Immigration Consultations Report*, op. cit., p. 28.
- 48 *Report of Working Group No. 8*, op. cit., pp. 10–11.
- 49 *Canada 2005*, op. cit., p. 42.
- 50 *Employee Consultation Report*, op. cit., p. 6.
- 51 See CIC, *Report of Working Group No. 6A* (Ottawa, CIC, 1994) and *Report of Working Group No. 8*, op.cit.
- 52 *Immigration Consultations Report*, op. cit., p. 1.
- 53 In the federal budget of February, 2000, the head tax on refugees was rescinded. However, it will continue to be implemented on all immigrants.
- 54 See R. Trempe, R. Kunin and S. Davis, *Not Just Numbers: a Canadian framework for future immigration* (Ottawa, Minister of Public Works and Government Services, 1998).

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RONALD N. HARPELLE

Bananas and business: West Indians and United Fruit in Costa Rica*

Of all the episodes of racial discrimination in modern Costa Rican history, the banana contract agreed between the government and the United Fruit Company in 1934 stands out as the most significant in terms of its effect on the West Indian community. For, among other things, the agreement enabled the multinational corporation to extend its complex of plantations and its infrastructural resources to the Pacific coast region – giving United Fruit a new lease of life in Costa Rica and helping to reinforce divisions within the labour movement.¹ The Costa Rican government's interests in the bargain were threefold. To begin with, it was able to regain control over an extensive area on the Atlantic coast that was occupied by United Fruit.² Second, jobs and other spinoffs were guaranteed in a new region that was to be brought into the country's active economic sphere. Finally, the government was able to contain the West Indian population in the province of

Ronald N. Harpelle teaches Latin American/Caribbean history at Lakehead University, Ontario, Canada. He is currently working on a history of the West Indian experience in Central America and on a film about bananas.

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Limón, from where they could be induced to leave the country or be assimilated.

While the 1934 contract proved to be a catalyst for resident West Indians to seek solutions to the problem of their position in the country, it also marked a turning point in Costa Rican relations with the community. There is ample evidence to suggest that, after 1934, a conscious effort was made by Costa Rican authorities to force the integration of West Indians in Limón. English schools were closed, farmers were pushed off their land and people were deported in order to purge the province of its 'foreign' character. However, the 1934 contract was not the only precursor to the heightened levels of discrimination against people of African descent.

Animosities towards West Indian immigrants in Costa Rica was, in a sense, a continuation of the colonial rivalry between Britain and Spain. Moreover, after independence, Costa Rican nationalism had developed a unique character within Central America. Costa Ricans saw themselves as members of a racially pure society, the direct descendants of poor Spanish immigrants. Consequently, minority groups could be ignored – the insularity of highland Costa Rican society meant there was no room for non-Europeans in the image presented by nationalists. In fact, it was not until the beginning of the twentieth century that Costa Ricans began to acknowledge the existence of people in the country who had different ethnic backgrounds.³

* * *

The largest minority group in Costa Rica was the community of West Indians who lived mostly in the province of Limón. They had been recruited by United Fruit to work on the extensive banana plantations along the Atlantic coast. Not a passive labour force, they were willing to move to remote regions of the Caribbean in search of the economic security that they could not find on their islands of origin.

Initially, United Fruit encountered few problems with its image in Costa Rica. Immigrant labour was permitted to work on its plantations because Costa Ricans were unwilling to move to the Atlantic coast for employment. Banana exports increased at a rapid rate until the second decade of the twentieth century and labour requirements paralleled the success of the new industry. However, as the fruit company's role in the economy grew, its interests began to run counter to those of Costa Rica's growing middle class. Costa Rica's political development mirrored that of the rest of Latin America in that, by the end of the nineteenth century, an emergent middle-class sector had begun to challenge the power of the traditional elite which controlled the coffee industry in Costa Rica.

During the first quarter of the twentieth century, a new generation of business leaders, lawyers and other professionals began to insist on the redistribution of power in Costa Rica. They represented the forces of change, initiated with independence, that had developed throughout the nineteenth century when Costa Rica was defining itself as a nation. Along with the emergence of a middle class to challenge the national bourgeoisie came the development of a consensus on Costa Rican nationalism. In addition to creating a set of national symbols, Costa Ricans successfully developed a national identity, but one that belied reality. According to popular lore, almost all Costa Ricans were the descendants of 'white' settlers because the country was said to have been nearly empty when the first colonists arrived. The middle class used ethnic nationalism as a platform upon which to build a case for its share of power.

Among the many concerns of the new middle class was the United Fruit Company's monopoly over banana production and marketing in Costa Rica. United Fruit's control over land, labour, communications and commerce in the Atlantic region meant that it was impossible for individuals or other companies to compete. The middle class was anxious to challenge the status quo and it saw the power of United Fruit as an expression of the ineptitude of the traditional leadership. In the eyes of the critics, the fruit company was cheating the national treasury and holding back the country's development. It was argued that Costa Ricans should control their own national resources, and the land in the company's possession was a case in point.

For the new nationalists, the agreements that previous Costa Rican governments had negotiated with foreign enterprises like United Fruit had limited the country's sovereignty over entire regions. For example, in 1881, the government signed a contract with Minor Cooper Keith to build a railway line between San José and the port of Limón. The Soto-Keith agreement gave a vast amount of land to the railroad builder and exempted his company from paying export taxes for a period of ninety-nine years. Attempts were made in the 1890s to impose some sort of tax on banana exports, but Keith's special relationship with the ruling elite kept his critics at bay.⁴ However, in 1899, Keith's Tropical Trading Company amalgamated with the Boston Fruit Company to form the United Fruit Company and all the old contracts came into question. Given the new arrangement, the government passed a decree in 1900 that established a timetable for a new contract. In 1910, the government and the United Fruit Company signed a contract that imposed a tax of one US cent per stem exported from the country. The new contract was to expire in 1930, at which time new terms for the company's continued operation in Costa Rica were to be negotiated.

The imposition of the export tax on bananas came just before production levels peaked and the industry began a long period of decline.

Banana production had begun in the second quarter of the nineteenth century and, by 1900, over three million stems of bananas were exported annually. Exports reached their highest point in 1913 when Costa Rica became the world's leading producer of bananas, with a total of 11,117,833 stems. After 1913, exports of bananas from Limón declined quickly and, by 1917, they had stabilised at about 8,000,000 stems per year. Banana production remained constant between 1918 and 1929, but the onset of the global economic crisis in 1929 lowered export levels again. In 1930, production began to decline to the levels of the turn of the century and, in 1943, no bananas at all were reported to have been exported from Limón port. Banana exports from Limón did resume after 1943 but they remained at nineteenth-century levels until the 1950s.⁵

Labour and small private planters found themselves at the mercy of United Fruit throughout the period of decline. Workers were forced to accept reductions in real wages, higher levels of unemployment and fewer opportunities. And, of course, United Fruit's right arbitrarily to refuse export quality bananas from private producers exacerbated the situation. There were also problems with the contracts that bound producers to the company and many were dissatisfied with the treatment they received.

* * *

As the expiration date of the 1910 contract grew near, the company's critics began to organise in opposition. A protracted public debate began between United Fruit's Costa Rican friends and enemies. As usual, the company enjoyed the favour of the presidential administration but, by the late 1920s, a coalition of opposition forces had come together. In Congress, opposition parties had sufficient clout to cause both the government and the company concern.

Given the increased strength of opposition forces, President Ricardo Jiménez initiated a new round of negotiations long before the expiration date of the 1910 contract. At the time, Jiménez was serving his second term in office and he had a history of cordial relations with the fruit company.⁶ On 2 November 1926, Jiménez presented the Congress of Costa Rica with a new banana contract that permitted the further expansion of banana plantations to new regions of Limón and allowed for another modest increase in taxes. United Fruit was interested in the early renegotiation of the 1910 contract because diseases had been affecting its plantations, and new lands in an isolated region were needed to maintain production levels.⁷ A slight increase in the level of taxation was acceptable to the multinational in order to guarantee the continued viability of the industry on the Atlantic lowlands.

The new agreement failed because Congress used its powers to slow the passing of the contract: a congressional commission was formed to examine the contract and offer a critical assessment. (One of the most elaborate presentations to the commission was from a group known as the *La Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País*.) While the commission's enquiry was under way, United Fruit discovered that the land it had initially coveted was less suitable for plantation development than originally forecast. Consequently, at the last minute, the United Fruit Company pulled out of the negotiations and the government was forced to reconsider its position. With the failure of the 1926 contract talks, the Costa Rican government lost the advantage it had had, because the subsequent negotiations that took place in 1929 were framed within the context of a global economic crisis. The government was caught off guard by the economic crisis and was forced to sweeten the deal in order to keep the most important source of foreign investment in Costa Rica.

The economic crisis also brought the company's middle-class opponents together with Hispanic workers. These middle-class opponents successfully used the economic crisis and the impact of rising levels of unemployment to garner the support of Hispanic workers in Limón. Hence the working-class struggle for better wages and working conditions was given a nationalist dimension by those who sought more control over United Fruit's operations. High-profile opponents of the company encouraged ethnic tensions within the workforce by portraying the struggle with United Fruit as a nationalist crusade. So, whereas previous discussions of the problems posed by United Fruit in Costa Rica had tended to ignore the West Indian presence, in the late 1920s the middle class introduced the threat of 'Africanisation'. The West Indian community was a perfect target because public support could be rallied against such an easily identifiable group. The West Indians were different in terms of culture, colour, language and religion. The West Indian community was also defenceless because of its tenuous legal position in the country. For example, government documents indicate that, in 1927, only twenty-five out of about 20,000 West Indians in Costa Rica had become citizens.⁸

One of the best examples of how the middle class used nationalism and xenophobia as tools to generate opposition to United Fruit can be seen in the activities of the *Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País*. The society's charter not only called for the nationalisation of United Fruit's holdings but also for the possession of all land by Costa Ricans.⁹ Joaquín García Monge, the president of the society, was known to be sympathetic to Costa Rican labour and small producers.¹⁰ García Monge was also an exponent and defender of the concept of a racially pure Costa Rica. His view of Costa Rica as a 'white settler' society was shared by the other members of the

commission. For example, one of the first communications from the society's secretary-general, M. A. Zumbado, stated that West Indian immigration was not desirable because of their criminality and because they threatened to 'mongrelise' the white race. His solution was to stop immigration and to sterilise those already in the country.¹¹ Unsurprisingly, the final report of the society attacked United Fruit for its monopolisation of resources in the Atlantic region and for introducing a 'race' which was thought to be predisposed to tuberculosis, syphilis and insanity.¹²

Another example of the use of scare tactics came from the director of the Oficina Nacional del Censo in 1930, Dr José Guerrero.¹³ Guerrero, who was also a member of the Sociedad Económica Amigos del País, wrote an article entitled '*Como se quiere que sea Costa Rica, blanca o negra?*' It was published in *La Tribuna*, one of future President Otilio Ulate's newspapers, and reprinted in the *Reportorio Americano*, whose editor was Joaquín García Monge. Guerrero's criticisms were based on the findings of the 1927 census and concentrated on the 'alien' nature of the United Fruit Company and its 'immigrant' labourers. The information gathered in the 1927 census, the first since 1892, brought Costa Rica face to face with the dimensions of the West Indian presence and showed that people of African descent formed the majority of the population in Limón. To make matters worse, 431 'negritos' were already living in San José.

Coincidentally, the article appeared at the same time that Congress was putting the final touches to the 1930 contract. By that time, United Fruit had begun purchasing land on the country's Pacific coast. Between 1926, when the contract put forward by President Jiménez had failed, and 1930, the world economy had changed, and United Fruit was able to use its position in the country to its advantage. Guerrero's article opposed the contract on nationalist grounds, but he chose to draw particular attention to the fact that, where United Fruit went, West Indians always followed. Guerrero depicted the situation as a challenge to the survival of the 'white' race and a problem in which 'sentimentalism had no part, because it was biological in character or more concretely, eugenic'.¹⁴ His concerns echoed the statements of opposition politicians and marked a new stage in West Indian relations with Costa Rica.

Despite strong opposition, the contract was pushed through Congress and many people thought that the company had won again. One of the provisions that most upset the critics was permission for United Fruit to begin new operations on the Pacific coast. Although allowing United Fruit to spread its tentacles to the western side of the country was seen as one way of dealing with the unemployment in the highland region, there was also concern that West Indian labourers would migrate to the new plantations, thereby spreading

their African genes from coast to coast. The concerns were reflected in a statement published in Otilio Ulate's daily newspaper and signed by several congressional deputies. Primarily an attack on the economics of the contract, there was nevertheless one phrase that characterised attitudes towards West Indians. In addition to the imposition of an economic system that was disadvantageous to the country, the authors of the statement indicated that United Fruit had succeeded in obtaining permission to 'Africanise' another sector of the national territory.¹⁵

Published in *La Tribuna*, the statement insisted that 60 per cent of the workforce be Costa Rican. However, despite strong support in Congress for the amendment, the new contract merely required United Fruit to hire Costa Ricans whenever they were equal in aptitude and suitability. In effect, the wording of the clause allowed the company to continue using its existing labour force. Nevertheless, an initial step had been taken to guarantee positions for Costa Ricans within the company and it was soon followed by other restrictions on the foreign labour force. With the adoption of the contract in 1930, Costa Ricans like José Guerrero and Joaquín García Monge entered a new phase in their struggle against the United Fruit Company and its West Indian employees.

The contract's reception in Limón was a different matter. *The Searchlight*, the local West Indian newspaper, ran several articles on the industry and the impending contract. The newspaper gave its unconditional support to the United Fruit Company and its editor, Samuel Nation, appealed to the government to give the fruit company a 'chance to develop the banana industry'.¹⁶ In an editorial on 12 July 1930, Nation wrote that the people who were critical of the banana contract only envied the care and attention that the company had taken of the West Indian community. By portraying the fruit company as the protector of the 'coloured labourer', he added credibility to what the critics had been saying all along. He was encouraging solidarity between his community and the United Fruit Company in the face of the threat posed by those who sought to rid the country of West Indians.

The opposition to the 1930 contract did not disappear with its implementation. Several congressional deputies were furious at the concessions granted to the United Fruit Company and they continued to attack the government for its acquiescence. Consequently, in August 1932, Congress created a special commission to look into the United Fruit Company's compliance with the 1930 contract.¹⁷ Otilio Ulate, Adriano Urbina and Jorge Ortiz E., deputies who had opposed the contract in the first place, were elected to conduct the enquiry. The commission travelled to Limón where it met many farmers, workers and businessmen who complained about the United Fruit Company and its operations.

The commission's report stated that United Fruit was in violation of almost every clause in the contract and recommended a stern response from the government. The congressional deputies found that the company had not met its commitment to plant more land and to grant additional contracts to private planters. In addition to attacking the company, the commission's report also singled out the West Indian community. In the report's introduction, Ulate and his colleagues remarked on 'the problem of the predominance of workers from the coloured race which prejudices the creole worker'. Once again, West Indian workers and their families were tied to United Fruit and it is they who were portrayed as the everyday symbol of foreign domination in Costa Rica.

Congressional hostility added to the discomfort caused by the already acute global economic crisis, but President Jiménez, who had been re-elected for a third term in 1932, remained determined to maintain high levels of foreign investment. Consequently, with the cooperation of United Fruit, and in an effort to deal with congressional concerns, the Jiménez government initiated discussions on yet another contract. The new contract was designed to supersede that of 1930 and its objective was twofold. It was both an effort to appease the opponents of the previous concessions and an attempt to increase foreign investment in Costa Rica.

* * *

Since the opposition to the company's presence in the country had not abated, the struggle for middle-class advantages continued. One important aspect of the negotiations for the 1934 contract was that they presented Costa Rican producers with an opportunity to play a larger role in future banana production. A number of influential Costa Ricans had purchased land on the Pacific coast alongside the United Fruit Company and were ready to take advantage of the development of a new banana industry. These were not peasant farmers like the West Indians on the Atlantic coast who were looking for an opportunity to sell a few hundred stems of bananas to United Fruit. They were land speculators who purchased large tracts of land that were to be either converted into plantations or sold for a profit.

One of the prerequisites of the successful development of banana plantations on the Pacific coast was a sizeable labour force. The problem was that, by the early 1930s, the working class in the banana regions had been radicalised by the economic crisis. However, ethnic nationalism of the sort presented by *La Sociedad Económica Amigos del País* served to divide workers in Limón at a time when unity was essential. Evidence of the seriousness of the split in the working class came in the form of a petition in 1933.

In July 1933, a petition with over 500 signatures was sent to Congress from people who referred to themselves as residents of Limón.¹⁸ The petition attacked the United Fruit Company and its West Indian labourers, and requested the prohibition of 'Negro' immigration.¹⁹ It argued that the 'Negro race' had a privileged position in Limón because of United Fruit Company hiring preferences and that the 'white race' was left out on the street. Along with the usual statements about racial inferiority, promiscuity and the threat posed by the 'Negro' invasion of the highlands, the petition made reference to the tense relations between the two groups. West Indians, it was said, harassed Costa Ricans continuously and made no secret of their access to arms. Although no link between the petition and congressional attitudes can be made, it is an example of one of many attempts by a well organised group to attack the West Indian community.²⁰ The appeal of such radical solutions to the problems facing the working class increased as the economic situation deteriorated in Limón.

Hispanics could easily blame West Indians for their plight because the fruit company maintained a divided workforce as a part of its management strategy. Segregation was a fact of life in Limón and over the years there had been many confrontations based on ethnic divisions. Upon arrival in Limón, Hispanics discovered that West Indians had the best jobs with United Fruit because they had been there longer and spoke English. It was not unheard of for West Indians and Hispanics to cross one another's picket lines. For example, in April 1911, the United Fruit Company brought two hundred men in from the highlands to replace striking West Indian dock workers.²¹ A story about labour unrest in Limón in the *Diario de Costa Rica* on 8 February 1920 told how 'white' workers had taken the jobs of 'blacks' in a recent strike and that the opposite could happen in future.²² The divisions that surfaced between Hispanic and West Indian workers had been in existence long before 1934.

* * *

The only organised group in Costa Rica that sought to bridge the gap between West Indians and Hispanics was the Communist Party. The communists fostered solidarity because they sought to unite all workers in a struggle against United Fruit. The Communist Party had its origins in the global economic crisis of 1929, was founded in 1931 and, within a few years, had obtained a degree of popular support among the Hispanic working class. In Limón, the communists recruited a few members of the West Indian community but the majority of them shied away. United Fruit was on its guard against radical politics in Limón and West Indian leaders used their influence to obstruct the

spread of communism within their community. The Party had benefited from the increased despair of labouring Costa Ricans and enjoyed particularly strong support on the banana plantations where the struggle to survive was compounded by the nature of employment with the company. The Party managed to make significant inroads in Limón at the beginning of the 1930s, despite strenuous efforts by United Fruit and the Costa Rican authorities to curtail organisation on the plantations. The success of the Communist Party was first evidenced on 8 August 1934 when the largest strike in the country's history took place in Limón.

The work stoppage was organised by the *Sindicato de Trabajadores del Atlántico*, a union affiliated with the Communist Party. Although higher wages and better working conditions were desires common to all banana workers, unity between Hispanics and West Indians did not exist. However, West Indian abstention from the 1934 banana strike should not be viewed as indicative of a lack of class consciousness. Newspaper reports, United Fruit Company correspondence and government documents indicate that the West Indian workers were as politicised as any comparable group. The problem was that United Fruit used 'racial' segregation as a means of dividing the workforce to hinder labour organisation. The growing animosity between different ethnic groups accounted for a large part of the West Indian community's reluctance to join the strike, but there were other important reasons for West Indian abstention.

One serious concern among West Indians was the effect that participation in the strike would have on their residency in Costa Rica. By 1934, petitions, newspaper articles and attacks in Congress had made the entire West Indian community aware of the tenuous nature of its residency in the country. Among the initial reports on the strike in Limón's West Indian press was a warning from a group called the Sojourners Committee. West Indians were warned not to participate in the strike because the government and company would seek retribution against individuals. In the same issue, it was reported that the West Indian labourers had declined to associate themselves with the movement but had stayed away from work because they were intimidated by Hispanics.²³

One informant who remembered the strike stated that it 'was not a black man's fight' and that the West Indians 'stayed home because they didn't want trouble'. The point was emphasised by the Sojourners Committee which attacked the leaders of communism in Costa Rica as 'anti-Negro' and as 'propertyless foreigners from adjoining Spanish-American countries'.²⁴ One week later, the same anonymous committee warned West Indians that the British government would not protect them from ill treatment for 'taking part in the strike, or aiding and abetting the strikers'.²⁵ In the end, propaganda and threats

kept the West Indians out of the strike while at the same time perpetuating ethnic divisions.

The other significant factor that kept West Indians from participating in the strike was their ideological perspective. The Sojourners Committee was actually a creation of the Limón division of Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association and it represented the interests of community leaders who openly questioned the participation of West Indians in a strike led by the Costa Rican Communist Party.²⁶ West Indians were not attracted to the Communist Party because a large percentage of the community was made up of small landowners who relied on good relations with United Fruit to market their produce.

Nevertheless, despite the absence of significant West Indian participation, 'foreigners' were cited by the government and the mainstream press as agitators in the strike. Since the presence of foreigners in the workforce was a popular complaint and because the mainstream press led the way in attacking the government for allowing Costa Ricans to sit idle while others worked, it was easy to insulate the rest of the country from the strike. Threats were made by the government in both the English and Spanish press to revoke naturalisations or deport foreign participants in the strike.²⁷ But West Indians were not leading the strike. Most foreign 'agitators' were Nicaraguan labourers who had come to Costa Rica from the hyper-politicised atmosphere of a country that had recently experienced a lengthy US occupation.²⁸

That Nicaraguans and not West Indians were targeted for expulsion after the strike is indicative of the levels of participation of the two groups. The failure of the West Indians to participate in the strike is attributable to the economic position they held in Limón by 1934. The best source of information on the position of various groups in the economic structure of Limón is the 1927 census, which revealed that the two most important immigrant groups in Limón were at different places in the socioeconomic scale.

A sampling of 748 individuals in the two communities shows that the groups did indeed have different economic interests.²⁹ To begin with, the peak of West Indian immigration to Costa Rica had been between 1905 and 1915, when around 47 per cent had arrived, with some 13 per cent coming before 1900, and around 15 per cent between 1901 and 1905. In contrast, the majority of Nicaraguans had arrived between 1920 and 1927 (around 58 per cent), with just under 15 per cent arriving between 1916 and 1920. The different periods in which the immigrants arrived in Costa Rica is reflected in the data on employment. The 1927 census shows that West Indians were more likely to be self-employed or the owners of small farms or businesses than were the Nicaraguans. In the sample, 47 per cent of all West Indian males were either

self-employed or employers, as compared with 13 per cent for the Nicaraguans in the sample.

West Indian absence in the largest strike in Costa Rica's history was also due to the fact that they were less likely to be company employees *per se*. Almost 77 per cent of the Nicaraguans in the sample were directly employed in the banana industry, whereas only 34 per cent of West Indians worked on the banana plantations, with another 33 per cent working on cacao farms. Moreover, Nicaraguans were much less likely to have secure jobs because the majority of them were day labourers who were not entitled to company benefits like family housing, access to land and bonuses. Seventy-seven per cent of the Nicaraguans in the sample were day labourers as compared to 32 per cent of the West Indians. Their participation in the workforce could not have been much different at the actual time of the strike.

Then, too, the percentage of West Indians in Limón who were farmers was also much higher than the national average. Whereas a mere 4.5 per cent of Costa Ricans were farmers, the sample showed that 29 per cent of West Indians farmed for a living. They relied on sales to United Fruit and could not afford any retribution by the company. West Indians remained loyal to the company throughout the strike, at the cost of further alienation from Hispanic society. However, despite their loyalty, United Fruit was willing to sacrifice the West Indian community in the interests of business.

During the strike, the government and the United Fruit Company were also finalising negotiations on yet another banana contract. In the middle of the strike, Congress submitted a set of reforms to the contract which were accepted by the company. Along with a commitment to favour private planters, pay higher prices and expand production on the Pacific coast, United Fruit agreed to favour Costa Ricans in the workforce and, in a companion law, not to introduce 'Negroes, or Jamaicans' to the new banana zone.³⁰ The exclusion of West Indians from jobs on the Pacific coast at a time when their Spanish-speaking counterparts were on strike can only be seen as having a dual intent: José Guerrero, Otilio Ulate and their ilk could rest assured that the west coast would not be 'Africanised', and workers on the Atlantic coast would be further divided in their conflict with United Fruit. The contract essentially guaranteed employment on the Pacific coast to any and all Hispanic workers who were not jailed or fired for participation in the Atlantic coast strike.

Coincidentally, on 28 August 1934, three days after United Fruit accepted the reforms proposed by Congress, an agreement was reached in the office of the secretary of labour between representatives of the banana planters and the workers. United Fruit did not meet with the strikers because the company refused to recognise the work stoppage as a strike. However, the agreement reached between small producers

and labourers in Limón was submitted to United Fruit for its approval because the company's acceptance was a prerequisite for labour peace. United Fruit remained adamant about its opposition to the strikers' demands and rejected the agreement. The result was a brief but unsuccessful resumption of the strike two weeks later. The second phase of the strike was more violent and resulted in the incarceration of the strike's leaders. Although there was no link drawn between the strike and the new banana contract with United Fruit, there can be no doubt that strike negotiations were held under the shadow of a business arrangement with the company.

United Fruit and the Costa Rican government sought advantage from the lack of labour solidarity in Limón. The 1934 contract allowed the fruit company to divide its workforce in order to reduce the effectiveness of labour organisation further. Strike leaders were either exiled or jailed; passive Hispanic workers were rewarded with employment on the new plantations, and the West Indians were kept isolated on the Atlantic coast. The Costa Rican government received a commitment to new investment in the country and obtained absolute control over the Atlantic coast region.

The final version of the contract contained few surprises but its intent was clear. In exchange for investment, the United Fruit Company was given control over the banana industry on the Pacific coast. In terms of the workforce, Article 5 of a 'companion law' regulating conditions of work demanded preference for Costa Ricans in the banana industry and the prohibition of 'coloured people' from employment on the Pacific coast. The ratification of the contract by the government provided bleak testimony of United Fruit Company's attitude towards the most faithful segment of its labour force.

The only public effort to defend the rights of people of African descent was in *Trabajo*, the Communist Party newspaper. The newspaper appealed for solidarity with Costa Rican workers to fight the contract that was being debated in Congress.³¹ The tone of the appeal placed the onus on West Indians to join the Communist Party and so fell on deaf ears. The appeal was penned by Harold Nichols, a young West Indian who was living in San José at the time. Nichols, however, was not representative of his community because he was one of only a few hundred West Indians who had left Limón for the highlands. He had moved to San José where he was obliged to make the kind of commitment to Costa Rica that the majority of the community was reluctant to make. He moved away from his community and its West Indian identity to become an Afro-Costarican. Nichols may have been known in Limón but his affiliation with the communists and his apparent desire to become Costa Rican meant that his appeal went unheeded.

For their part, the West Indians of Limón did little to express their displeasure with the restrictive clause in the contract. Other than one

letter to the editor, the local West Indian newspaper did not respond to the impending restrictions while the contract was being negotiated.³² There are two reasons for the community's failure to defend itself. In the first place, West Indian workers were assured of more work with the company in Limón as Hispanic workers went to the Pacific coast plantations. Second, West Indians feared retribution from the company because United Fruit was still the most important source of employment in the region. Therefore, without opposition from the West Indian community, the ratification of the contract proceeded through Congress.

With the sole exception of a petition sent to the two deputies from Limón by a small number of Costa Rican-born West Indians and a motion by Manuel Mora, the Communist Party deputy, no opposition to the clause occurred in Congress.³³ Although Mora was not alone in his opposition to the entire agreement, it is important to note that both deputies from Limón, Juan E. Romagosa and Virgilio Chaverri, supported the contract, despite its overt discrimination against their own constituents and the impact that it would have on the economy of the province they represented. In early December 1934, the Cortés-Chittenden contract became law with a vote of twenty-nine deputies for it and only twelve against. Article 5 was buried in the contract and became part of the new reality for West Indians in Costa Rica.

The contract also provided United Fruit with a stronger position in the Costa Rican economy. Under the terms of the agreement, land-owners on the Pacific coast received more for the bananas they produced than did private producers on the Atlantic side. The company was also permitted to maintain its monopoly over the transportation and marketing of the banana crop in Costa Rica. Workers lost much of their organisational strength because the physical separation of United Fruit's operations combined with legislated segregation to inhibit future strike action.

* * *

The 1934 contract marked the culmination of efforts to restrict the West Indian presence in Costa Rica. Overt discrimination against West Indians in Costa Rica continued to grow throughout the 1930s and 1940s. In addition to the denial of job opportunities on the Pacific coast, West Indians had to deal with a series of laws designed to force them either to legalise their position in the country or leave. For example, the laws concerning foreign residents became more stringent throughout the 1930s and, in 1942, the immigration of 'visible minorities' was banned.³⁴ Also, as the company withdrew from the province of Limón, it ripped up railway lines and bridges, and dismantled the

infrastructure that the West Indian community depended on for its survival.

The result was that, in the years that followed, thousands of West Indians left in search of a more secure future elsewhere and those who remained behind had to confront Costa Rican efforts to assimilate the West Indian community. The number of people of African descent living in Costa Rica declined from 21,257 in 1927 to 15,188 by 1950 – a net loss of 6,139 or 29 per cent. However, if out migration had not occurred and the West Indian community had increased at the same rate as the country's national average, the total West Indian population in 1950 would have been as high as 34,000. Consequently, the real loss to the community amounted to almost 19,000 people or 62 per cent of the community's potential population.³⁵ In addition, the drain on the community was aggravated by the fact that the emigrants were primarily young men. Women, the elderly and anyone who was less likely to obtain employment outside Costa Rica stayed in Limón.

The West Indian community relied traditionally on the benevolence of the United Fruit Company to press for its rights in the country, but the events of 1934 showed its faith was misplaced. A small number of people in the community had kept their counterparts on guard against discrimination, but it had been the omnipresent company that, until 1934, sheltered West Indians. What people had failed to realise was that West Indian interests were only protected as long as United Fruit required their services. When it became obvious that plant disease was resulting in a gradual reduction in the Atlantic coast crop, the only solution was for the company to move to the Pacific. United Fruit willingly turned its back on the people who had made the sacrifices that maintained its profitable enterprise. It simply abandoned the community it had helped to create.

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- 6 Within months of coming to power for the first time in 1910, Jiménez had signed into law the contract that set the modest taxation levels that prevailed until 1930.

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- 8 Government of Costa Rica, *Indice Completo de Opciones, Inscipciones y Naturalizaciones: 1824-1927*.
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- 29 The data is taken from the original forms of the 1927 census. The two communities were Cahuita on the Atlantic coast and Siquirres, located inland from Limón.
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- 32 *The Voice of the Atlantic* (3 November 1934).
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- 34 See R. Harpelle, 'The social and political integration of West Indians in Costa Rica: 1930-1950', *Journal of Latin American Studies* (Vol. 25, no. 1, February 1993), pp. 103-20, for a complete discussion of the period.
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Commentary

Australia

Racialised punishment and mandatory sentencing

*Write of life | the pious said
Forget the past | the past is dead
But all I see | in front of me
Is a concrete floor | a cell door | and John Pat*

*Agh! Tear out the page | forget his age
Thin skull they cried | that's why he died!
But I can't forget the silhouette
Of a concrete floor | a cell door | and John Pat*

Jack Davis¹

Jack Davis's lament for John Pat, found dead in a West Australian prison cell at age 16 in 1983, was dedicated to 'Maisie Pat and to all mothers who have suffered similar loss', thus linking this individual killing with those of numerous other young indigenous men over the years in the Australian penal system. A new name was recently added to this register of pain, injustice and death, that of a 15-year-old boy, found hanging in his room in February 2000 while in juvenile detention.²

But this death, though part of a chillingly familiar sequence, also foreshadows new, even more frightening, possibilities. It is the first fatality to result from mandatory sentencing laws introduced in

Australia's Northern Territory in 1997. Under these laws a minimum jail sentence is mandated for a 'property offence' – or, in the case of juveniles, for a second offence. Here and in Western Australia, where slightly different 'three strikes and you're in' laws operate, sentences predetermined by parliament dispense with judicial discretion and any notion of the punishment fitting the crime. Judges and magistrates, who strongly condemn the system, are left with no option but a prison sentence for the most trivial of acts. In 1999, Kevin Cook, a homeless indigenous man, was imprisoned for one year for stealing a towel (value \$15) off a clothesline to dry himself; Margaret Nairyirri Wyndbyne was sentenced to fourteen days in jail for receiving a stolen can of beer (value \$2.50); Robert of Nhulunby for stealing two cartons of eggs (value \$8); Brett Willoughby for stealing a bottle of Stolli (value \$2.04).³ A 15-year-old boy who broke a window after hearing about the suicide of a close friend was imprisoned for damaging property, and then he himself attempted suicide.⁴

Operating like the 'three strikes and you're out' laws in the United States, mandatory sentencing is another case of politicians 'actin' like life's a ball game' (to quote Mumia Abu Jamal).⁵ For those whose lives they are playing with, the consequences are deadly. In the case of the 15-year-old boy from Groote Eylandt, the offence was the theft of \$50 worth of pens and paints. For this he was subjected to a mandatory 28-day sentence in a juvenile detention centre in Darwin, two hours away by plane and worlds removed from his accustomed home. Here he was apparently sent to his room one evening for refusing to help clean up after dinner. Five minutes later, he was found hanging on the sheets from his bed.

Defenders of mandatory sentencing cling to the argument that the law applies alike to offenders of all racial and ethnic groups and is therefore not discriminatory – Anglo-Australians are also subject to mandatory sentencing for minor offences. But this 'colour-blind' conception of the law ignores both the *sorts* of crime targeted by mandatory sentencing ('property offences' as opposed to the white-collar crime committed by more affluent groups) as well as the *structurally* racialised nature of the penal system in colonising societies like Australia. In this racialised system, as the findings of a Royal Commission into Black Deaths in Custody revealed, a jail term has specific, devastating consequences for indigenous peoples. The Commission urged against imprisonment as a form of punishment for indigenous people, especially for minor offences where a number of other options are available.

The impact of imprisonment on indigenous Australians cannot be separated from a linked historical and ongoing sequence of race, incarceration and punishment. In her essay 'Racialised punishment and prison abolition', Angela Davis provides an alternative to Foucault's

genealogy of the prison with its obliviousness to questions of race. A different genealogy of the prison in the US, Davis writes:

would accentuate the links between confinement, punishment and race. At least four systems of incarceration could be identified: the reservation system, slavery, the mission system, and the internment camps of World War II. Within the U.S. incarceration has thus played a pivotal role in the histories of Native Americans and people of African, Mexican and Asian descent. In all these places people were involuntarily confined and punished for no other reason than their race or ethnicity.⁶

A racialised genealogy of the Australian prison system shows that since colonisation the history of institutionalisation and incarceration of indigenous peoples has taken varied forms – expulsion away from traditional country to distant camps and reserves as the most productive lands were claimed for sheep and cattle grazing; incarceration in detention centres or penal settlements for people deemed ‘uncooperative’; and the systematic forced removal of children for confinement in missions for the purposes of assimilation. And, as the 1997 inquiry into this history shows, the removal of Aboriginal children continues today in different forms, through practices such as detention, child substitute care and creation of wards of the state.⁷ Mandatory sentencing is, in effect, the latest mechanism in a long continuum of dislocation and dispersal of Aboriginal community and family life.

Currently, remote communities are being hit hard by mandatory sentencing. Given the lack of meaningful work or leisure facilities, young adults and children are particularly vulnerable to compulsory jailing for trifling actions. Just days after the death of the 15-year-old boy, 21-year-old Jamie Warramara, also from Groote Eylandt, was given the mandatory sentence of one year in jail for a third ‘property offence’. What ‘property offence’? Stealing \$23 worth of biscuits from the mess at the GEMCO mine (the world’s richest manganese mine) last Christmas, because he was hungry.⁸ To date, three young men have been sentenced to a total of twenty-seven months jail for this single theft of biscuits. Such events, as Social Justice Commissioner William Jonas pointed out following the death of the 15-year-old, are not tragic. They have nothing noble or inevitable about them: they are simply obscene.⁹

As opposition grows in the rest of Australia, opponents of the laws point out that it is counter-productive to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars jailing an offender for petty thefts often amounting to a few dollars. These arguments miss the actual logic of the penalty: mandatory sentencing is not about saving money for the system, or even reducing the crime rate (which it has manifestly failed to do), but about entrenching a racialised ‘justice’ system. This system enshrines

and upholds specific racial and cultural values: the sanctity of (non-indigenous) 'property' and the hallowed role of (Anglo-Australian) 'law and order'.

Supporters of mandatory sentencing represent the issue as 'law and order' and the problem as 'crime', allowing no space to articulate the central issues of race/ethnicity on which this system is premised. The federal government repeats the same line in a slightly different way, suggesting that the problem is not the law itself but 'Aboriginal disadvantage'. To again cite Davis's comments on the US system:

when the structural character of racism is ignored in discussions about crime and the rising populations of incarcerated people, the racial imbalance in jails and prisons is treated as a contingency, at best as a product of the 'culture of poverty' and at worst as proof of an assumed black monopoly on criminality. The high proportion of black people in the criminal justice system is thus normalized.¹⁰

The logic of mandatory sentencing is a racist logic, whose continuity depends on eliding the relations between imprisonment and race. The racialised function of these laws is demonstrated by the fact that, since their introduction, imprisonment rates have increased for indigenous young people and adults in both the Northern Territory and Western Australia. According to the Top End Women's Legal Service, imprisonment rates for indigenous women have grown by more than 400 per cent.¹¹ Rates of imprisonment for the non-indigenous population have actually declined.

In March 2000, the UN Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) presented a report 'seriously questioning' whether mandatory sentencing was compatible with Australia's international treaty obligations. The muted language was the result of frantic lobbying by Australian diplomats but, even so, the federal government turned on the UN, announcing a 'review' of its participation in the UN committee system. This comes on top of a shameful domestic performance by the government in stifling any opposition to mandatory sentencing in its own party ranks, and gagging discussion of a bill passed by the Senate to override the laws. The retaliation against the UN is a laughably transparent show of petulance from a government that has now been censured twice by CERD in the last two years. Under Prime Minister Howard, Australia has become the only western nation to have been brought before the committee for its racial policies.

As Marcia Langton, Professor of Indigenous Studies at Melbourne University, asks:

What is at stake for a wealthy, democratic, underpopulated, relatively crime-free nation like Australia, to flagrantly breach the

International Rights of the Child, United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (The Riyadh Guidelines), United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for Non-custodial Measures (The Tokyo Rules), and other standards accepted by the civilised world?¹²

Part of the answer, according to Langton, is the ‘dumbing down’ of Australian politics in response to the support gained by the racist One Nation party. The rise of Pauline Hanson’s One Nation is inseparable from the climate in which the Howard government was elected in 1996, and the general relicensing of racism that flowed from it.¹³ This escalation in racism was accompanied by a whole raft of retrograde policies introduced by the government: just a few days after the CERD report, the ILO issued a condemnation of the government’s industrial relations agenda. In the last few months, both Amnesty International and CERD have also expressed concern about recent moves against refugees and asylum-seekers.

Combined, recent state and federal government actions on indigenous and refugee issues have made for a massive boom in the incarceration industry. Even as Northern Territory and Western Australian jails bulge as a result of mandatory sentencing, a \$100-million plus ‘detention centre’ for asylum-seekers is being constructed in the desert at Woomera, the site of a former cold war spy base. Its destined inhabitants are mostly Iranian and Afghan asylum-seekers, who for several months have been demonised by the government and popular media. Underlining the connections Davis makes between ‘confinement, punishment and race’, this ‘reception centre’ for asylum-seekers is run by Australasian Prison Management, which also manages privatised prisons elsewhere in Australia.¹⁴

Civil disobedience measures and protests continue but, to make an impact on mandatory sentencing, strong international as well as domestic pressure is required, perhaps coupled with tourist boycotts of the Northern Territory. At the same time, the historical links between confinement, punishment and race in Australia need to be highlighted. ‘Crime’, Davis indispensably points out, ‘is . . . one of the masquerades behind which “race” with all its menacing ideological complexity, mobilizes old public fears and creates new ones.’¹⁵ Stripping away the flimsy semblance of respectability that ‘law and order’ gives to mandatory sentencing reveals the ugly realities of a ‘justice’ system that finds new and improved ways to reproduce racism.

SUVENDRINI PERERA

Suvendrini Perera teaches in the School of English at La Trobe University. She is the author of Reaches of Empire and editor of Asian and Pacific Inscriptions: Identities/Ethnicities/Nationalities.

To protest against mandatory sentencing in the Northern Territory, email the Chief Minister at: [denis.burke@nt.gov.au]. Protests can be made to John Howard, the Prime Minister of Australia, through his homepage at <http://www.pm.gov.au>

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US

Me Disney, you Tarzan

Disney is one of the top three media giants in the world today (along with AOL Time Warner and News International). It is a huge corporation with a global reach. Disney owns film and television production studios, theme parks and resorts in the US, France and Japan, a world-wide chain of over 600 retail stores, record labels, publishing companies, television and radio stations, newspapers and magazines

and sports clubs (ice hockey and baseball), and has extensive television interests in Europe. Disney, not News International, is the global leader in the lucrative field of sports broadcasting, with 165 countries, including China, receiving programmes in twenty-one languages. In 1998 Disney's revenue nearly reached an incredible \$23 billion. Of this, over \$10 billion was generated by 'creative content revenue' (films and books), \$7 billion from broadcasting (television and radio) and over \$5 billion from theme parks and resorts. Disney is one of the giants of American capitalism out to conquer the world.

Film production, particularly the production of children's films, is still at the centre of Disney's operations, generating profits not just from cinema performance but from videos, CD-ROMs and a host of joint promotions and merchandising deals. As well as generating profits, Disney's children's films have also played an important ideological role, purveying 'the American Way' to a global audience.

It is important not to see 'the American Way' as something that has continued unchanged and unchanging since the reactionary anti-Semitic Walt Disney was himself at the corporation's helm. Under the current chairman, Michael Eisner, Disney moved from the Republican Right to an association with Bill Clinton's Democrats, although at the moment Eisner is apparently backing George Bush Jr for president. On a number of occasions, Disney has found itself under attack from the Right, whether it be Christian fundamentalists in the United States or fascists in France. There has also been an important change in the ideological slant of Disney's children's cartoon films. *Mulan* (1998) with its tough, resourceful warrior heroine is, for all its limitations, a very different film from *Snow White* (1937) with its flight-prone heroine as victim, who is given to tidying up.

What of Disney's cartoon films? One recent book, *Deconstructing Disney* by Eleanor Byrne and Martin McQuillan, focuses on the second wave that was launched by *The Little Mermaid* (1989).¹ This volume identifies the pitfalls that it is possible to stumble into when interrogating Disney. Baudrillard, Derrida and other luminaries provide a licence for wild forays into film studies that take the breath away. Disney's cartoons are treated as if they are propaganda on behalf of the US State Department. *Aladdin* (1992), for example, is, on one level, a cinematic representation of Operation Desert Storm: 'one might think here of the elision between "magic carpet" and the magic carpet bombing of the allies'. On another level, the Aladdin character can be seen as representing both Israel and/or the PLO! And then there is *The Lion King* (1994). This is obviously a cinematic endorsement of Chief Buthelezi against the ANC, a cartoon apology for apartheid, a warning against the danger of a communist takeover in South Africa. Certainly, the film is conservative, with its royalism and its celebration of hierarchy, but it is not the crude propagandist

tract that Byrne and McQuillan suggest. And as for *Hercules* (1997), it is a stirring endorsement of Bill Clinton: ‘The opening lines of the film, “Long ago in the far-away land of ancient Greece” put us in mind of . . . Bill Clinton’s own initials, BC’.

While Byrne and McQuillan see themselves as writing for socialism and obviously have their loyalties in the right place, the crudity of their analysis only serves to discredit their enterprise. Moreover, in their determination to identify the propagandist intention of Disney’s cartoons, they fail to even consider why so many children find them enjoyable. One cannot help feeling that they should not be allowed to see any more of these films unless accompanied by a child!

What of Disney’s most recent offering, *Tarzan* (1999)? While the Tarzan character has been the subject of many Hollywood feature films over the years, there are dangers involved in tackling Edgar Rice Burroughs’ stories. The original novels are adventure stories quite explicitly celebrating empire and white supremacy, propagating a sometimes positively homicidal racism.² Burroughs’ own ideological excesses were considerably watered down for the cinema even while he was still alive. More recently, Tarzan has been recast as some sort of eco-warrior defending Africa against imperialist despoliation. The Disney cartoon triumphantly embraces this reworking of the Tarzan myth. This in itself is obviously significant. It doesn’t tell us anything about US foreign policy, but it does tell us about what is acceptable to the film’s target audience.

With *Tarzan*, Disney has produced an entertaining children’s cartoon that is funny, exciting, sometimes breathtaking. A new computer technique, ‘Deep canvas’, creates some tremendous effects that leave children gasping. As for the story, it is the traditional raising of a white baby to adulthood by a tribe of gorillas. The young Tarzan behaves irresponsibly, putting the tribe at risk but, with the help of his jungle friends, he saves the day, defeating the schemes of the villainous white hunter, Clayton, who planned to sell them to zoos. The story presses all the right buttons with Tarzan coming to recognise his obligations to the tribe. At the end of the film, Tarzan is the leader of the tribe, living with his partner Jane: Adam and Eve in a jungle paradise.

While one dreads to think what Byrne and McQuillan would make of this, nevertheless, the film does not escape its imperial origins. It is about a white man mastering the African jungle, not about the black people who have lived in that jungle for millennia, indeed there are no black people portrayed in the film. This is a telling point. The original stories had relations between black and white as one of their central themes with Tarzan’s very name meaning ‘white skin’. The film evades these issues by not having any black characters. What

Disney has created is an Africa without Africans. This is how the film deals with the question of Tarzan's racist identity!

While these are important issues, the film's central ideological drive is a progressive one. Its audience is captured by the film's ecological stance, by the way it takes its stand with the gorillas against Clayton, the white hunter, against the despoilers of nature. The question of racism is evaded, but the identity of the eco-warrior is wholeheartedly embraced. The villainous white hunter (a reincarnation of Captain Hook) is worsted to the great delight of an appreciative audience. The film gives a knowing acknowledgement of its imperialist antecedents because Clayton is the original Tarzan's real family name.

The problem is, of course, that Disney's Tarzan is very much a myth. Disney can make this film while at the very same time despoiling nature itself. In real life, Disney has opened Animal Kingdom, a new theme park covering 500 acres in Florida. This incorporates a recreation of the African savannah with over a thousand animals (lions, warthogs, giraffes, zebras, etc.). Disney have even imported real Africans to make the illusion more convincing. Wayne Ellwood has described the experience of going on safari in Animal Kingdom:

The safari is on a high-powered, open-sided truck which lurches over a rutted concrete path, engine screaming, splashing through streams and charging up and down the 'African' countryside. The scrubland was first flattened, then doctored with imported flora, rocks and soil to create the landscape. The smaller baobab trees and termite mounds look real though I discovered later they . . . are cast from concrete . . . A full safari vehicle was leaving once a minute when I was there and I can't help but wonder about the cumulative impact on the animals' sanity of the relentless noise and exhaust from the roaring vehicles!³

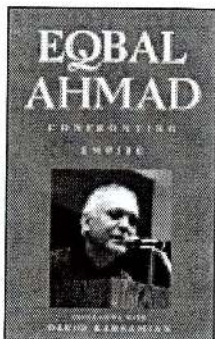
In real life, Disney is not Tarzan, the eco-warrior. In real life, Disney is Clayton, the white hunter, pillaging the world for a profit, and exploiting its inhabitants.

JOHN NEWSINGER

John Newsinger lectures in history at Bath Spa University College and is the author, most recently, of Orwell's Politics (1999).

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- 2 See my 'Lord Greystoke and darkest Africa: the politics of the Tarzan stories', *Race & Class* (Vol. XXVIII, no. 2 Autumn 1986).
- 3 Wayne Ellwood, 'Inside the Disney dream machine', *The New Internationalist* (No. 308, December 1998), p. 10.



Eqbal Ahmad

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Eqbal Ahmad was a peace activist and scholar born in India. In 1947, he left with his brothers for the newly created state of Pakistan. He was active in the civil rights movement and the anti-Vietnam War movement in the United States. Ahmad passed away in the spring of 1999.

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Book reviews

Nationalism and Cultural Practice in the Postcolonial World

By NEIL LAZARUS (Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 1999), 294pp. £13.95.

Post-Colonial Literatures: expanding the canon

Edited by DEBORAH L. MADSEN (London, Pluto Press, 1999), 237pp. £14.99.

Atlas of the European Novel 1800 – 1900

By FRANCO MORETTI (London and New York, Verso, 1998), 206pp. £12.00.

‘Excellencies, gentlemen-members and those responsible in Europe. . . . It is to your solidarity and generosity that we appeal for your help in Africa . . .’. The letter thus addressed was found on 2 August 1999 in Brussels together with the bodies of its authors, two young Africans, teenagers from Guinea who had stowed away in the landing gear of a Sabena airliner. Presumably, the authorities said, they had frozen to death en route to Brussels from Conakry with a stop-over in Mali (*Guardian*, 5 August 1999). The layers of trousers, pullovers and jackets that the young men wore were no proof against the -55°C cold that they experienced during their flight, and it is not at all clear what the European traditions of ‘solidarity’ and ‘generosity’ to which they appealed might eventually prove. But it is just those traditions and

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protocols that are provocatively challenged by Neil Lazarus in *Nationalism and Cultural Practice in the Postcolonial World*, that are rather differently invoked in *Post-Colonial Literatures*' endeavour to 'expand the canon', and that are otherwise mapped by the itineraries presented by Franco Moretti in the *Atlas of the European Novel*.

It was a proper enough salutation – 'excellencies, gentlemen-members, and those responsible in Europe' – that the two prospective, if fugitive, immigrants used, but what was the sort of tradition that they might have been seeking recourse to, hidden away in an airplane's landing gear as they were? Neil Lazarus introduces his study of the history that might be found to lie behind their discreet passage and the indiscretions of their written missive, with a discussion of 'hating tradition properly'. The phrase is taken from Adorno's *Minima Moralia*: 'One must have tradition in oneself, to hate it properly', and Lazarus glosses his use of it in order both to highlight the Frankfurt Schooler's elitism and Eurocentrism and to insist on the paradoxical formula that it provides in order to 'think in a politically engaged fashion about intellectual and cultural practice today', think, that is, from a position that is 'athwart, rather than across, the imperial divide in the modern (more specifically: capitalist) world system'. That very divide is a nonetheless precarious, indeed treacherous, one, and Lazarus marks its precipices with meticulously narrated and documented circumspection in the four essays that comprise his volume, on modernity, globalisation and the 'West', on decolonisation, on cricket and national culture, and on Afropop and imperialism. But the larger project that, for Lazarus's readers, binds these interventions together is his compelling argumentation on behalf of 'thinking globally and systematically', even while forcing the inquirer's responsibility to the empirical grounds and theoretical structures that necessarily order the transitions and transformations of such thinking or, in other words – the final words of the volume – of 'ways of living that are unimaginable under prevailing social conditions'.

Whereas the contributors to *Post-Colonial Literatures* subscribe to the agenda of 'expanding the canon' of that 'geo-literary' archive rather than engaging in a critique of its currency, Lazarus insists instead on a scrutiny of the subscriptions themselves. According to the introduction by Deborah Madsen, the editor of *Post-Colonial Literatures*, the essays collected in the anthology are designed to 'contextualize the ethnic literatures of the United States as part of the developing field of post-colonial literatures' and, accordingly, the volume's fifteen articles move across the specific textual spaces of African American, Chicano/a and Native American writings in intersection with Afro-Hispanic, Canadian, South African, Australian, New Zealand and Zimbabwean literatures, in text-specific, author-focused and survey-extensive analyses. While each essay contributes

in its own way significantly to the corpus – or canon – of academic curricula, the gesture of outreach – or is it of expansionism – is perhaps itself problematic.

In his rehearsal of the ‘traditions’ of the ‘postcolonial world’, Lazarus is adamant that the ‘imperial divide’ is a persistently pressing issue, still modern and perhaps just as much postmodern. Thus, in ‘Modernity, globalization and the “West”’, he queries those theorists who have been vexed at the questions of the past as relevant and of the present as precedent. And if historical narratives are crucial, so, too, are geographical trajectories, as in the question of the very ‘westernness’ of modernity. From Giddens to Gilroy, Lazarus elicits an accounting of the perilous precipitation towards a wanton globalism that eschews the historical processes of anti-colonial struggle and national liberation agendas. In his second chapter, he warns against the ‘contemporary “second thoughts” about anti-colonial nationalist ideology and practice’, and reminds his critics of the imperative that, for all that ‘liberation movements should themselves have been responsible for egregious abuses is undeniable and deplorable, if scarcely surprising . . . it remains the case, even so, that it was in general not the national liberation movements, but *the colonial regimes* that tended to resort to the firing squad; and it was not “local resistance” but *the official suppression of local resistance* that mandated the liberation fronts’ “response” (emphasis in the original). Not unlike Jeremy Cronin’s critique of the ‘final report’ of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission as emphasising the ‘little perpetrators’, rather than the ‘little freedom fighters’ in all of us (*Sunday Independent*, 15 November 1998), Lazarus argues that it is now all the more ‘important to try and keep alive the memory of the “revolutionary heroism” that was everywhere in evidence in the struggle for national liberation’.

It is a struggle that continues to be played out in the late twentieth century, on the cricket field and in the recording studio as well, arenas which Lazarus addresses in the final two chapters on ‘nationalism and cultural practice’. Focusing in particular on C.L.R. James’s analyses and representations of West Indies cricketeering, he militates for the persistent relevance of those writings, from the distinction between the ‘Keynesian professionalism’ of some teams to the “‘West Indian” ethic’ introduced by island players who knew how to ‘hate tradition properly’. Then, in ‘Afropop and the paradoxes of imperialism’, the emphasis moves on to pop music from Zimbabwe in the decolonising and the postcolonial eras, and its amalgamation of resistance modulations and international musics. Lazarus differentiates in particular between the ‘cultural appropriations’ that often take place ‘across the international division of labour’ characteristic of Paul Simon’s *Graceland* album, for example, and the more provocative

strategies of ‘indigenization’ that distinguish Zimbabwean *chimurenga* and *jit* or South African Johnny Clegg’s music.

If Lazarus maintains his polemical position throughout the archives of debate that he presents – over globalisation, around decolonisation, about cricket and world music, a position ‘athwart rather than across’ the imperial divide, demanding a place for ‘emancipatory narratives’ within the debates over postcolonial theory – not so Franco Moretti, whose otherwise fascinating *Atlas of the European Novel* maps the literary itineraries of Austen’s female heroines, Balzac’s feckless heroes and Dickens’s undaunted detectives across the street-plans of Europe’s capital cities, even while disacknowledging their connections to a larger global and political cartography of colonialism and imperialism. According to Moretti, who sees the ‘nation as the sum of all its possible stories’ (emphasis in original), imperialism does not figure in any significant way in calculating that sum. Moretti takes a negative position on what he refers to as that ‘key historical question’ of ‘whether colonial profits financed the industrial revolution or not’, concluding in favour of a European ‘common literary market’.

Should the canon be expanded, the European novel’s continental atlas fortified, or the ‘memory of “revolutionary heroism”’ kept alive? In other words, it’s about ‘hating tradition properly’. Solidarity? Or generosity? ‘Excellencies, gentlemen-members and those responsible’, the young men from Guinea wrote, and went on: ‘If you see that we have sacrificed ourselves and lost our lives, it is because we suffer too much in Africa and need your help to struggle against poverty and war . . . Please excuse us very much for daring to write this letter.’

University of Texas at Austin

BARBARA HARLOW

Love in a Different Climate: men who have sex with men in India

By JEREMY SEABROOK (London, Verso, 1999) 184pp. £19.00.

In this book, Jeremy Seabrook is at his creative best. It is an intensely moving and passionately written account of a subject that is still considered taboo in India. The author has managed to address complex questions of blurred sexual identities and relationships in a lucid manner, providing significant insights to the reader. The book relies on detailed and intimate conversations with seventy-five men in Delhi who have sex with men (MSM). The talks mainly took place in a ‘park’, which is a cruising ground for relaxing, meeting friends and picking up partners.

The fundamental premise of the book is that ‘gay’ is largely an alien concept for the ordinary Indian man who engages in sexual activities

with other men. Hegemonic definitions and applications of western models of gay and homosexual culture can lead to slippages and distortions, taking us away from the heterogeneous and diverse manifestations of sexual expressions. Men who have sex with men in India often talk about it as *maza*, *masta*, *anand*, all part of 'fun', rather than as an explicit sexual encounter. The author manages to establish that, though these men say they like same-sex sex, this is very different from their assuming a gay identity, or their perceiving homosexuality as a major determinant in their lives. The sexual identities of the men are amorphous and ambiguous, culturally at a disjunction with western gay concepts. Thus, as the author says, questions of consciousness are at the very heart of the book.

Love in a Different Climate revolves around the voices of the seventy-five men and, although they are a minuscule proportion of MSM, they are mirrors of many more. They cut across regional, age, caste, class and religious lines. One hears the voices of migrant workers, men employed in the army, people who have left their families in villages, teenage runaways, unemployed, white-collar workers, teachers and small businessmen. Their ages range from under 20 to 60. They are married, single, widowed and come from eighteen states of India. Increasing urbanisation and migration feature as prominent reasons for the growing numbers of MSM, though it has much deeper roots and a larger history.

The perspectives of women, especially the men's wives, are missing here, but the author shows his sensitivity by constantly probing the men to speak about them, so giving us some insight into the women's feelings, their desires, a sense of hopelessness and inadequacy in themselves, an awareness that something is missing in their lives. The men bring out the mixture of pain and shame that they themselves experience very movingly, through intense narrations.

The book has a brief introduction and some concluding reflections, but the main substance of it lies in one chapter, which is empirically very rich. What is remarkable is that it is the people who speak more than the author. Their views and descriptions tell us their stories, and the author to a large extent avoids imposing his own presumptions and analysis. The narrative style is simple, with intimate quotes. Some of the book's flavour comes from the extensive use of Hindi words, which reflect a distinct vocabulary used by the men: *komer* is to suck, *dharki* are nipples, *khotis* are 'passive' male sexual partners who are penetrated by men, *giriya*s are their macho, sometimes aggressive, male counterparts.

In some places, the reader gets a sense of repetitiveness, with different men reiterating similar points. Yet this reiteration of similar views by many can also be seen as a strength of the book. Thus, for example,

the passivity of women in the sexual act is assumed by almost all: notions of the woman's orgasm are virtually absent.

Love in a Different Climate travels over a vast terrain. Questions of initiation, i.e., how did these men realise that they enjoyed sex with men, the role of weddings as occasions of such social contact, how sex is a forbidden subject of discussion between adults and children, the city as a site of greater sexual freedom, pervasive longings for deeper friendships, the dualism of human sexuality, the impact of colonialism – all these are covered in the interviews. But though the book is full of moving details, one is left craving for even more, since so little has ever been written on this subject. And, in some places, a deeper analysis would have been helpful. A glossary and a list of the men interviewed, with names (even if changed on occasion) and class-caste background, would have made the book even more accessible, as the reader sometimes gets lost amidst all the names and details of background as they arise.

There are no neat categories here. Even while rejecting western notions of gay culture as universally applicable, the author also hints at a more subtle interplay of East and West, where there are no binary opposites of tradition and modernity but the mixture and co-existence of both. A blind condemnation of the West has the danger of grossly homogenising power relationships or underplaying Indian patriarchal and authoritarian structures. Romanticised notions of traditional, pre-modern and pre-colonial structures often lead to complete secrecy and silence on questions like homosexuality, which are classified as western imports alone. But the author has saved himself from charges of such reductionism by showing the prudery, puritanism and hypocrisy of many of the neo-traditionalists.

A refreshing feature of the book is that, although there is an underlying concern with the spread of HIV in India and the fight against AIDS, this does not take it over. The past few years have seen that any discussion of 'alternate' sexualities or blurred sexual identities has been obsessed with AIDS, as if homosexuality or sexual practices only matter because they lead to disease and death. Love and sex are a source of tremendous pleasure, and the book ends on this immensely uplifting note:

for the great majority of human beings, sexual exchange remains a free gift, an expression of uncoerced reciprocity and desire . . . it represents one of the great reservoirs of human energy which replenishes itself freely and constantly; it is both costless and pleasurable, no matter what social and religious sanctions might seek to limit and direct its expression.

This slim but remarkable book is much needed in India today, where the forces of globalisation and the 'moral panics' of the Hindu Right

both need to be addressed. It is both crucial and long overdue. There will be difficulty in accepting it readily in India, I know, but it definitely needs to 'come out', in and from libraries, bookshops and personal bookshelves.

SOAS, London

CHARU GUPTA

Lockdown America: police and prisons in the age of crisis

By CHRISTIAN PARENTI (London, Verso, 1999) 290pp. £20.00.

Not long before he was shot dead by prison guards in California's notorious San Quentin Prison, allegedly attempting escape, George Jackson reflected on his eleventh year inside. The 'neatly arranged . . . columns of figures', so much the stock-in-trade of US criminology, gave the 'impression of well-studied, detached, scientific analysis'. But in the black political activist's experience, the facts 'hidden' behind the statistics demonstrated clearly that between 30 and 40 per cent of the prison population was black, and all were drawn from the working class.

In what was 'euphemistically called the "adjustment center" . . . far more accurately known as the hole', most of the triple maximum security cells were inhabited by 'black men – every one of them without exception from the working class'. This was the inevitable outcome of an authoritarian 'class- and race-sensitized society' whose 'ultimate expression of law is not order – it's prison'. Whatever the specificity of their crimes and personal culpability in their commission, most prisoners were 'victims of social injustice'.

George Jackson wrote *Blood In My Eye* in 1971, just four years after the report of the Kerner Commission on Urban Disorders was published. In his excellent recent text, *Crime and Punishment in America*, Elliott Currie notes that the Commission brought the US to a law and order crossroads. There was common agreement that 'we could never imprison our way out of America's violent crime problem'. Attacking violent crime meant 'attacking social exclusion . . . making a real rather than rhetorical commitment' to tackling and defeating the material realities of poverty and marginalisation.

As Currie reveals, however, the US took another road. The results, at the time so obvious to George Jackson on the inside, are, thirty years on, 'bursting prisons, devastated cities, and a violent crime rate unmatched in the "developed" world'. Enter Christian Parenti and his stunning, evocative and brilliantly written *Lockdown America*. Pinpointing the precise political and ideological moments that contextualised and shaped increasingly draconian laws and criminal justice policies across the length and breadth of America, he reveals the

punitive and corrupt practices of policing and imprisonment and the overt targeting of 'problem populations', particularly Black and Hispanic communities.

Lockdown America is a full-on critique of the cynical devaluing of the democratic process. The first part, on the political and economic crisis from Nixon through to Reagan, explores the misinformation and disinformation actively promoted by state agencies and accompanied by the distinct, but purposefully linked, moral panics of race and drugs. As authoritarian policing expanded, the 'military-corporate model alone' could not deliver a 'politics of obedience' within communities.

Parenti argues that, as 'in Vietnam, so too in the cities, the battle for "hearts and minds" was as essential as any satellite photo or high-tech fire power'. As the 'brush fires of violence' were doused and police images reconstructed, community policing became the agenda of mainstream US criminology. While conservative criminologists were determined to 'bring an end to [or reduction of] crime', their objective was the establishment of an effective and efficient, yet politically acceptable, strategy of law enforcement.

Outwardly, the struggle for 'hearts and minds' centred on new systems of management, training and 'spin' geared to police-community relations. Inwardly, in the 'police world-view, the much-storied "militant Negro" was the domestic equivalent to the Viet Cong' and 'soft-shell community police strategies . . . were domestic parallels to the "strategic hamlets" of South Vietnam'. Purposefully 'insinuating themselves into the social life of the ghetto', the police's objective was transparent: 'it was an attempt to reimpose race and class control'.

From his analysis of the political fall-out of Watergate to his discussion of the political economy of the post-war US, Parenti provides an exacting 'nuts and bolts history of profound economic crisis', covering three decades of capital reconstruction and ending in 'near melt-down'. This is Reagan's inheritance; the back-drop to his war on crime. Herein lies the unprecedented investment in the 'budget of domestic repression', aligned with the increased, pervasive powers of prosecutors.

As with Thatcherism, economic libertarianism could not be delivered without social authoritarianism. Parenti shows, chapter and verse, how the federal judiciary was stacked with 'mean-spirited, anti-crime, anti-drug zealots'; how permissive forfeiture laws were relentlessly enforced by the police and courts to pursue a campaign of racist state intervention. He establishes the behind-the-scenes connections between Reaganomics, anti-communist strategies in Central America and the 'right-wing cultural backlash' – the foundation for the ideological construction of the 'underclass'. This, as in Britain, targeted the 'idlers', 'loafers', 'scroungers', 'beggars' and 'squeegee

merchants' as marginals by choice rather than circumstance. At the heart was 'race spoken through the code of crime and welfare . . . the moral panic of crack'.

In part two, Parenti takes apart the myths of 'zero tolerance' or 'quality of life' policing, exposing its excesses and injustices. It is a tale, compelling to liberal audiences, of 'rapidly and insidiously escalating police powers', resulting in an 'American-style democratic police state'. Of course, the broken windows were fixed, the streets cleaned and the subway secured to make Manhattan presentable but, as the 'switch to zero tolerance' swept the US, so policing became 'overly aggressive', exemplified by 'rising brutality'. The clamp-down on petty crime and minor disorders, appealing to those inhabiting 'high crime' areas, exacerbated the climate of fear and intimidation within. Virtually unaccountable, the police routinely violated civil liberties. For the politicians, it was a small price to pay for urban renewal, inner-city investment and the building of 'themepark city'.

But, on the streets, urban regeneration emphasised structural unemployment and endemic poverty. Zero tolerance policing, together with revolving door prisons, offered the solution to the sins of the marginalised and excluded. Simultaneously, the reactive paramilitary policing of Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) units literally went to war, 'their task, destruction and conquest . . . the civilian community, the enemy'. This total policing, underwritten by a plethora of hardline legislation, including civil injunctions to deal with anti-social behaviour, has clearly been influential in a whole raft of legislation and policing initiatives within Britain. The close resemblance between the civil orders at the heart of the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act and those instituted a decade earlier in the US is more than an unhappy coincidence.

In the States, however, as Parenti's chapter on the militarisation of the Mexican border illustrates, total policing amounts to 'zero tolerance immigration laws . . . the massively expanded system of electronic surveillance, and increasing collusion between the police and the INS [Immigration and Naturalization Service]'. It is the '*de facto* criminalization and political marginalization of documented and undocumented immigrants alike . . . a hostile stance [which] bolsters racial and class hierarchies'. With 'family obligations' to attend to, women 'cross back and forth across the border' more regularly. The 'xenophobic regime' is nothing less than a reconstitution of apartheid primarily impacting on the 'social networks of women'.

In part three, Parenti relates the state's processes of social pathologisation to spiralling incarceration, managing 'the contradictions of restructured American capitalism' while giving politicians a bankable ballot-box currency. Yet it 'terrorizes the poor, warehouses social dynamite and social wreckage', reproducing 'apolitical forms of

criminal 'deviance'. These detailed, case-illustrated chapters are painful as Parenti catalogues the rape, torture and brutality endemic within American prisons. His argument is convincing, the evidence shocking: rape has become 'central' to the 'politics of incarceration'. In male jails, prisoner rape is condoned and utilised through managerial silence; in women's prisons 'coast to coast, guards routinely rape women prisoners with near-total impunity'.

In 1985, 500,000 were incarcerated in federal prisons. By 1998, the figure was 1.7 million. This includes a 500 per cent rise in women's imprisonment, with only 16 per cent inside for violent crimes. In several US cities, one-third of all black men are in jail, on probation or on remand. Incarceration on this scale cannot be effectively managed; the blocks are fought over by established, powerful gangs. At the end of the carceral line are the super-maximum 'prisons within prisons' run on regimes of 'extraordinary isolation' and 'unremitting idleness' producing an intense and prevailing 'insanity'. The key, literally, has been thrown away.

Prison expansion's financial rewards are staggering, with over half a million full-time employees and an annual expenditure of \$35 billion. Increasingly privatised, it is an enterprise bigger than 'any Fortune 500 company except General Motors'. For Eisenhower's 'industrial-military complex', now read 'prison-industrial complex'; a form of 'carceral Keynesianism' reviving 'economically moribund regions' and an 'anchor industry' for new investment.

Parenti's conclusion is as clear as it is simple. With 'soft forms of control easily grafted on to the most repressive police state', paramilitarism, executions and brutalising regimes are presented by the authorities as compatible with anger management, restitution and shaming: 'therapy and the gas chamber are by no means mutually exclusive'. Decarceration is the first priority, followed by decriminalisation geared to 'harm reduction'. It can be achieved only by 'more popular resistance and more economic justice'.

Three decades ago, George Jackson argued passionately that prisons 'were not institutionalized on such a massive scale by the people' but were the 'creation of a closed society', isolating those who 'disregard' or 'challenge' the excesses of a class-ridden social order and 'hypocritical establishment'. Inevitably, the current attempt to imprison away the effects of political-economic inequalities has only exacerbated social injustice. Christian Parenti has charted a terrible voyage.

Lockdown America's attention to detail is both impressive and crucial to the overarching argument. Hardly a sentence passes without reference. Direct quotes from politicians, commentators and witnesses are painstakingly reproduced. It is in the best tradition of investigative journalism, has the pace of a fine novel and carries the authority of meticulous academic research. For the UK, where institutionalised

racism and institutionalised sectarianism permeate the criminal justice system, it is a cautionary tale.

Centre for Studies in Crime and Social Justice, PHIL SCRATON
Edge Hill University College

Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel

By ISRAEL SHAHAK and NORTON MEZVINSKY (London, Pluto Press, 1999), 208pp. £11.99.

Shahak is an Israeli, a veteran campaigner for human rights and a holocaust survivor whose erudition extends far beyond his professional field, organic chemistry. Mezvinsky is an American historian who has written extensively on the Middle East and Israeli-Arab affairs. Their book is a much-needed sequel to Shahak's trail-blazing *Jewish History, Jewish Religion: the weight of three thousand years* (Pluto Press, 1994).

This body of work breaks a double taboo. First, there is the general taboo banning attack on any religion. In the West, no one will bat an eyelid if you excoriate a person's political principles and practices in the most uninhibited terms; but similar criticism of repugnant religious precepts is still superstitiously regarded as scandalous sacrilege. Religious beliefs – which are, after all, just opinions – are accorded privileged status, as though they are really sacrosanct. (This is true also of Islam, even in the present climate of rabid Islamophobia: Muslim political fanaticism is demonised as though it were worse than any other secular or religious political fanaticism, but Islamic theology is treated as politely as other theologies. Rushdie's relatively mild satire was an exception that proved the rule.)

Second, if religion (as opposed to politics) is privileged, the Jewish religion is doubly so: it enjoys the twofold protection of being both Jewish and a religion, fenced off by twin mine-fields, menacing counter-accusations of 'anti-Semitism' as well as 'blasphemy'. The fact that real anti-Semitism sometimes masquerades as a purely ideological attack on Judaism serves as a pretext for delegitimising and blocking any genuine critique of orthodox Rabbinical obscurantism and racism.

Shahak and Mezvinsky, therefore, perform a unique service in presenting an account of the ideology of Jewish fundamentalism, which – unlike all other English-language accounts – is frank and fiercely critical and, at the same time, based on familiarity with the highly esoteric Talmudic and Rabbinical source material. The ideological monster that they expose cannot be shrugged off as a quaint curiosity. Out of 120 seats in the Israeli parliament, the Knesset, as of 1999, twenty-seven are held by Jewish fundamentalist parties. The largest of these,

Shas, is Israel's third biggest party, with seventeen seats (the Labour Party bloc has twenty-six and the Likud, formerly led by Netanyahu, has nineteen); it is Labour's most important partner in the present ruling coalition. The National Religious Party (NRP), whose extremely chauvinistic and messianic brand of fundamentalism is rightly regarded by the authors as the most dangerous, has currently only five seats in the Knesset, but it (together with an even more extreme lunatic fringe) has the allegiance of a disproportionate number of members of the elite units in the Israeli armed forces (some of which it entirely controls), and is supported by a very large number of officers in the whole military command structure. Moreover, the influence of fundamentalist ideology goes beyond the electorate of the religious parties and affects to some degree well over half of Israeli Jews, including many who would define themselves as merely traditionalist rather than piously religious.

So the ideology described and dissected in this book has a very real effect on Israel's conduct in the political and military arena. The fundamentalist finger is not far from the trigger of the world's sixth largest nuclear arsenal. In view of this, some of the tenets of Jewish fundamentalism are not merely repugnant but truly chilling, and they do matter politically. It is an ideology that puts no value at all on non-Jewish lives. And the messianic fanatics – those with considerable influence on and presence in the Israeli armed forces – actually look forward to the Jewish equivalent of Armageddon in the near future.

The book's main limitation is that it deals with Jewish fundamentalism purely as ideology, without attempting to explore its socio-economic aspects and connections. These aspects are, in my view, important. For example, in the May 1999 Israeli elections, Shas increased its number of Knesset seats from ten to seventeen. This meteoric rise is undoubtedly due to the fact that Shas has managed to channel the social protest of Israel's underprivileged Oriental Jews. Many, perhaps most, Shas voters are not particularly attracted by its religious fanaticism but by its ethnic rhetoric. Theirs is, in fact, a socio-ethnic protest vote. On the other hand, the NRP lost four of its nine Knesset seats. This, too, can only be explained by the complex interplay of ideological and social factors.

Jewish Fundamentalism is less well written and much less well edited than Shahak's *Jewish History*. Some chapters, especially the final one, on the religious background of Rabin's assassination, contain long digressions into matters that have some interest or piquancy in themselves, but whose relevance to the main theme is not entirely clear. On the other hand, some topics that are merely touched upon would benefit from a more systematic treatment. Perhaps the most important example is the *Kulturkampf* that has lately developed among Israeli Jews between fundamentalist clericalism and militant secularism.

This has become a central feature of internal Israeli politics. (In the 1999 elections, a new party, Shinui, whose programme consisted almost entirely of the demand to keep the ultra-orthodox parties out of the government, won 5 per cent of the votes, giving it six seats in the Knesset! Of course, Shinui represents only a fraction of the secularist backlash.) This is a complex phenomenon: not all the secularists are politically progressive. Some are quite right wing, and their propaganda has unmistakable anti-Oriental racist undertones. The authors make several fleeting and disconnected references to the growing secularist backlash, but in my view it deserves a proper, connected, analytic narrative.

However, despite its marginal faults and self-imposed limitations, this is an important book, a must-read not only for those with special interest in the Middle East, but for anyone interested in exploring the dark corners of an ideology that has an impact on international events.

London

MOSHE MACHOVER

The Case of Stephen Lawrence

By BRIAN CATHCART (London, Viking, 1999), 434pp. £16.99.

Brian Cathcart is a journalist who covered the Stephen Lawrence inquiry extensively for the *New Statesman*. Here he has written an account, journalistic in style but exacting in method, of Stephen's racially motivated murder, the bungled police investigation and the long-drawn-out battle of Stephen's parents, which culminated in a public inquiry to discover the truth about what happened to their son.

The book is divided into three main sections; the murder and its immediate aftermath, the Lawrences' legal battles of the private prosecution and the inquest, and the public inquiry. Cathcart has produced a precise and comprehensive account of police failure. He does not skimp on detail, listing times, places and individuals involved at every stage of the investigation into Stephen's murder. As the first book to document these events with such precision, it will stand as an important and historic reference.

The focus on detail is, however, both a strength and a weakness, and it is on the context of Stephen's murder and his parents' struggle for justice that the book fails. Cathcart barely examines the background to Stephen's murder; the backdrop of constant racist violence against black communities, and the rise in racist hostility resulting from new legislation against refugees and asylum seekers at the time of the murder, do not get a mention. Cathcart's understanding of British racism is rudimentary. In the few paragraphs he spends on background to the area of Greenwich, he tells us that it was where Henry VIII received an educational visit from Erasmus of Rotterdam. Some

historical detail on the history and formation of the local black community and some information on the relationship between racist gang violence and the nearby headquarters of the British National Party would have been more useful.

More serious is the omission of the wider significance of the Lawrence case. Cathcart's voice is that of the objective reporter, and he largely fails to give a sense of the passions aroused over five long years of campaigning and how the public inquiry, with its acknowledgement of institutionalised racism, came to be a defining moment in British anti-racism. For the black community in Britain, it represented a vindication of its assertions of injustice at the hands of the police and a forcing of the establishment to challenge the racism in its ranks, which, in the process, received international interest from governments and anti-racists world-wide. But Cathcart's exclusive focus on the Lawrences' legal struggle means that there is no insight into the impact of the case on both black and white people in Britain and how it changed public perceptions of the police force. The public support received by the Lawrences, the demonstrations, the lobbying, the petitions and the huge fund-raising campaign are merely referred to in passing. Why did this case succeed in forcing the hand of the government while those of Rolan Adams, Rohit Duggal, Ruhullah Aramesh and many others were ignored? What were the unique forces that put this case on the front page of every national newspaper for weeks on end? Cathcart gives little clue.

Indeed, to claim, as he does, that it was at the point of Doreen Lawrence's impassioned speech at the inquest in February 1997 (almost four years after the murder) that it became a political, rather than legal, issue is fundamentally to misunderstand the dynamic of the Lawrence case and the interaction of the public campaign with the legal strategy.

On the conduct of the inquiry, too, Cathcart reports but does not question or analyse. The questions that still remain in people's minds about the missing witnesses at the inquiry stay largely unanswered. (Where was 'James Grant', the skinhead informant whose claim that he named the attackers the day after the murder was denied by police? Where was 'Witness B'? The police deemed his identification evidence unreliable, but the inquiry was never allowed to judge for itself. Perhaps most importantly, where were Clifford Norris, notorious criminal and father of one of the alleged murderers, and 'Officer XX', who, having been seen handing over packages to Norris in a pub, were both at the centre of the corruption allegations?)

As for the conclusions of the inquiry, Cathcart offers far less than what appeared in national newspapers when the inquiry report was released. Those looking for a dissection of the inquiry recommendations, their significance for British race relations or, even more

narrowly, a confirmation of the view that the inquiry fudged the issue of corruption will be disappointed. Detail on the Police Complaints Authority and the role of the Crown Prosecution Service would also have been useful.

The significance of the Lawrence case is the recognition that Stephen's murder, up until the attempt at private prosecution, was not unique. It formed part of a pattern of the daily disregard by the police of black people and the crimes perpetrated against them. The inquiry recognised this by including in its remit an investigation of the 'lessons to be learned' by the Lawrence case, hearing evidence from other survivors of racist attack and police mishandling of cases. Unfortunately, this passed Cathcart by.

The Case of Stephen Lawrence contains no surprises to anyone who followed the public inquiry and its reporting. But, despite this, it is an important book which demands to be read, if only to ensure that the experiences of the Lawrences are never repeated.

London

SUJATA AURORA

Authentic Blackness: the folk in the new Negro Renaissance

By J. MARTIN FAVOR (Durham, NC, and London, Duke University Press, 1999), 187 pp. £11.95.

This is as much about the concept of 'authentic blackness' as it is a study of the literary giants of the Harlem Renaissance. The introduction critically engages with the discourses of black identity generated by Houston Baker Jr and Henry Louis Gates. Both are defined as privileging the vernacular to such an extent that they risk promoting marginalisation as a permanent and preferred position for black cultural production. Baker's emphasis on the blues and Gates's on 'signifying' as foundational to the creation of 'authentic' black writing are viewed as too essentialist to be appropriate defining criteria. Martin Favor, who is assistant professor of English at Dartmouth College, prefers the broader interpretations of black culture proffered by Etienne Balibar and Cornel West since these will be less likely to foster nationalist ideologies. While bringing in some of the ideas of W.E.B. DuBois and non-literary intellectuals, such as Nathan Huggins and David Levering Lewis, the aim of the author is to give voice to taxing questions about 'the problem of racial identity'. He asks, for instance, if 'an insistence on African American authenticity to expose cultural uniqueness' eventually erases 'difference'. His own answers are positive. He argues that those who 'bend class and geographic position to their own purposes have the power to shape what "race" is. By reshaping race, they add to the complexity of the discourse of black

identity rather than impoverishing it.' But he stresses that 'the control over, or performance of, certain aspects of racial identity points out the nonessential nature of racial categories'.

In the first of his four case studies, Favor argues that the narrator in James Weldon Johnson's *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* 'uses his position of class, geography, and gender to become a guardian of folk culture. From his position as an outsider, folk culture becomes a resource to be preserved and doled out at strategic political moments.' The ability to pass for white, but to personify aspects of black culture, is construed as deconstructing existent depictions of blackness. Jean Toomer's *Cane* is also seen as confusing easy identification of any essence of blackness. It is here that the author seems to protest too much in his reluctance to acknowledge Toomer's indelible debt to the blues. It was a debt that transcended the 'liberating' incoherence of identity that has made Toomer the object of so much academic speculation. Gender becomes the focus of as many dubious, as there are stimulating, statements in the study of Nella Larsen's *Quicksand*. Women are too easily disposed of as tragic victims within the pages of Larsen's novels. Favor's generic argument is furthered by his analysis of George Schuyler's *Black No More*. He sees Schuyler as pointing to the ways in which any quest for an essentialist identity in one area is inclined to expose heterogeneity in others.

Ultimately a case is made for the performative mulatto being capable of moving the margins to the centre of American culture. This is balanced by an acknowledgement that being a confrontational 'other' cannot easily be reconciled with becoming accepted as normative. Yet this disruptive ability to be simultaneously 'outside' and 'inside', 'black' and not 'really black', is what offers hope that racism can be dismantled. What is most unrealistic, in this otherwise perceptive work, is the propensity to underestimate the significance of class.

University of Keele

MARY ELLISON

Making Race and Nation: a comparison of South Africa, the United States and Brazil

By ANTHONY W. MARX (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1998), 390pp. \$29.95.

The celebrated words of W.E.B. DuBois continue to haunt the realm of the social sciences. Indeed, the 'problem of the color line' continues profoundly to influence the major developments of the twentieth century. And, unquestionably, one of the most profound impacts of racial thinking historically has been the formation of the nation state.

Yet, there has been little discussion on the role of race and the formation of the nation state. For many, racial conflict and division within the nation state have been seen either as the fading remnants of a pre-industrial society, products of ignorance, or as a means of class exploitation. Unfortunately, these views have failed to reveal the complex interactions between race and the formation of the nation state. The question still remains why and how racial distinctions were used during the process of nation state consolidation. A first step towards capturing these complex interactions is Anthony Marx's *Making Race and Nation*.

The book is a concise and noteworthy comparative analysis of race and the formation of the Brazilian, South African and American nation states. It convincingly argues that political elites in all three countries created 'race' as a means of consolidating the nation state. The analysis itself falls into five sections: an introduction, three middle sections and a final conclusion, but the heart of that analysis revolves around the three middle sections. The first of these sets the context in which twentieth-century racial discrimination was influenced by colonialism, religion, slavery and miscegenation. While these prior experiences were not fully responsible for the emerging racial orders, their legacies were selectively interpreted to justify those emerging racial orders, based upon changing political and economic pressures. The whole section is anchored by the author's superb debunking of the myth of Brazil's humanitarian slavery.

Section two describes the process of national consolidation in each country. The author demonstrates how the problems associated with state formation were rectified by the creation of legal racial orders, which were reinforced by selective interpretations of the past. In the case of South Africa and the United States, the process of nation state building aggravated white ethnic, regional and class identities, e.g. Afrikaners and British, North and South. Racial domination and ordering were strategically and formally implemented by political elites to diminish intra-white regional, ethnic and class conflict in order to promote economic development. Simply stated, economic development increased the potential for conflict among white interests. Therefore, the political elite in each society imposed racial domination to prevent intra-white conflict by convincing whites from different regions and classes that their interests were being served. In contrast, nation state consolidation in Brazil was able to proceed without the imposed formation of racial domination due to Brazil's preserved central authority after colonisation. There was never a threat of intra-white conflict but, rather, a threat of regional conflict with blacks. In response, the Brazilian elite projected an image of nationalism that included blacks under the notion of racial democracy, despite ongoing informal racial discrimination. In order

to prevent any future strife, blacks were led to believe that their interests were being met.

The third section focuses on how the same legacies of institutional racial discrimination and economic development used to unite whites were used to reinforce black identity. Racial domination provoked a new threat to the nation state in the form of massive protests that forced the political elite to restructure the state along inclusive lines. Unfortunately, Marx's analysis of the unification of black identity and the emergence of black protest in Brazil suffers in comparison to his analysis of black protest in the United States and South Africa.

His research draws heavily upon historical archives in the United States, Brazil and South Africa, as well as numerous interviews in Spanish, Portuguese and English. Consequently, his analysis is substantiated with seventy-one pages of footnotes and an extended bibliography. Although the book is geared towards academics and advanced students in the social sciences, the extended documentation and concise writing provide even the most inexperienced reader with an intelligible analysis of racial ordering and nation state consolidation. Overall, the author's analysis is compelling but slightly timid in regard to breaking out of mainstream Marxist thought. The real significance of this work lies in its emphasis on the connections between political and economic creations of racial domination. More importantly, it helps to explain the variations in the social construction of race. Lastly, it provides a framework for the incorporation of other variables such as gender and ethnicity into its analysis, though overlooking, alas, the complex interaction among these same variables. Nonetheless, it remains a refreshing analysis of race-making and the nation state.

Clark University

TIM LEDOUX

New Tribalisms: the resurgence of race and ethnicity

Edited by MICHAEL W. HUGHEY (London, Macmillan, 1998), 373pp. £50.00.

The modern era is witnessing a number of social upheavals; this work is a scholarly collection of essays, including some 'classics' that broke new ground in their day, which explore the racial and ethnic tribalism that has intensified, especially in the United States, within the last decade.

The book is divided into three sections: 'Racial and ethnic pluralism: sociological conceptions', 'Resurgent tribalisms' and, finally, 'A new world disorder'. The first considers the framework of race and ethnicity with respect to its usage in social studies. It takes as its starting point Max Weber's essay on ethnic groups and his conclusion that inherited

physical traits play no important role in ethnic relations. As Hughey points out in his introduction, even in the realm of scholarship, it is only in this century that race and ethnicity have come to be understood as social, rather than biological, phenomena. Following on from Weber, Herbert Blumer in the second chapter shows how prejudice is determinant on a particular group's position and that a shift in group relations, particularly towards other groups, contributes to racial and ethnic discrimination. In turn, Walker Connor, in 'Beyond reason: the nature of the ethno-national bond', offers a more empirical approach to the theoretical outlook of Weber and Blumer, arguing that the core of a people's ethno-national identity is their shared historical development. This section as a whole illustrates the theoretical and sociological significance of racial and ethnic tension in today's world.

The second section, subtitled 'Foundations and implications of the new American pluralism', examines the contradictions between American practices and American ideals. Writing in the 1940s, Gunnar Myrdal in 'An American dilemma' (chapter 4) contended that universalist, liberal ideas were superior as values to those of racism and discrimination, and predicted that such liberal values would come to be considered essential components of the 'American Creed'. But Michael Hughey, in his analysis of American protestantism and nativism, counters Myrdal and contends that America's dominant groups merged their cultural heritage into a unique political community that was democratic yet exclusive, tolerant yet discriminatory. Further to this, an interesting thesis is forwarded by Stanford Lyman in 'The race question and liberalism: casuistries in American constitutional law', who takes issue with Fukuyama's thesis that the causes of inequality 'do not have to do with the underlying legal and social structure of our society . . . so much as with the cultural and social characteristics of the groups that make it up'. Lyman argues that the United States Supreme Court, in its construction of a legal framework for the social organisation of racial and ethnic relations, alienated (in the legal sense of the word) non-white groups. In a detailed analysis, Lyman shows how they were set apart and contends that affirmative action programmes are a necessary attempt at redress.

Both Arthur Vidich and Michael Hughey choose to examine, in chapter 7, the creation of a new ethno-racial system in the American context and its complex interactions and fluidity. This analysis reinforces Howard Winant's argument in chapter 8 that, when the civil rights movement ended, there was an absence of a 'clear and consensual' racial order to replace the legal segregation of the 1960s. In his view, far 'from declining in significance, the racial dimensions of political and social life have expanded'. And one of America's most pressing social issues – that of multiculturalism and its relevance

to ethnic groups – is addressed by John Higham, who argues that a multiculturalism that overlooks the salience of economic inequalities is flawed.

Given the theme of this section, however, its final two chapters do not seem appropriate here. Joane Nagel on ‘Constructing ethnicity: creating and recreating ethnic identity and culture’ chooses to identify the social processes by which identities, loyalties and cultures can be created and reinforced. Similarly, Mary Waters in ‘The costs of a costless community’ provides a strong argument that symbolic ethnicity faces the paradox of groups feeling the desire for individuality and the need to feel part of a community. However, given the nature of their focus, both essays might have been better suited for the first section of the collection.

Section 3 looks beyond the borders of the US. Entitled ‘A new world disorder: international dilemmas of racial and ethnic pluralism’, it deals with the global aspects of the resurgent tribalisms of race and ethnicity. Yossi Shain in ‘Multicultural foreign policy’ adopts a comparative approach, looking at the impact of the American model in relation to the adoption of policies in other areas of the world. One shortcoming of this chapter is that Shain tends to focus too much on the Middle East and overlooks the monumental impact on such areas as Latin America, the Caribbean and the Asian continent. Rita Jalali and Seymour Lipset provide a refreshing account of the ethno-racial conflicts facing Third World countries. Both scholars believe that these tensions have specific social, cultural and historical origins, intrinsic to those societies. Their analysis complements that of chapters 14 and 15, by Joane Nagel and Robert Wistrich respectively, which deal with external factors influencing ethnic and racial conflicts. Nagel’s examination of geopolitical factors as they relate to ethno-racial mobilisations and nationalist movements supplements Wistrich’s discussion of nationalist upheavals in Europe as linked to former tribal loyalties and grievances. Overall, the analysis in this section of the interplay between race and ethnicity, and the disastrous results that arise, is grounded in a useful historical perspective.

New Tribalisms, in its range and depth of scholarship, is a valuable asset for those seeking to understand past and present racial and ethnic upheavals, both in American society and in the global arena.

University of the West Indies

JEROME TEELUCKSINGH

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