

expected at every grade level.

To what effect? The exact results remain an industry secret, reports Vinikas. But it

is probably fair to say that after 1927, Americans were cleaner and the soap industry greener than ever before.

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## SOCIETY

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### *Prisons Without Walls*

"Punishing Smarter: Penal Reforms for the 1990s" by John J. DiIulio, Jr., in *The Brookings Review* (Summer 1989), 1775 Mass. Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

America's jails are bursting at the seams. Nine hundred thousand criminals were behind bars in 1987, up by a third since 1983. The number on parole or probation grew even faster, reaching 2.6 million. The price tag for federal, state, and local corrections has soared to some \$25 billion annually; state corrections budgets are growing faster than is spending on education.

Most of that money buys only failure, says DiIulio, a Princeton political scientist. One study shows that 70 percent of young adults paroled from prison are arrested for new crimes within six years. Not surprising since parole officers must handle up to 300 cases each, often with little more than a monthly phone call. Lax supervision hits urban ghettos hardest: Ten percent of the nation's black men are in prison or on parole or probation.

But there are promising alternatives to conventional incarceration, parole, and probation. For example, 20 states and localities have experimented with intensive supervision programs (ISPs). Offenders live in strictly governed centers and are required to work, attend classes, perform community service, and submit to drug tests. Of 2,300 criminals studied in a Georgia ISP, 25 percent were later rearrested, compared to 40 percent of the state's jailed

prisoners. Moreover, ISP costs Georgia taxpayers \$6,000 per prisoner annually (most of which is recouped through tax and other payments by the prisoners); a Georgia prison bed costs \$14,000.

Not all programs have been so successful. In New York City, a less intensively supervised system of community service sentences produced recidivism rates no better than the city's jails. Yet the program costs only \$920 annually per prisoner.

Even if "prisons without walls" can be made to work on a large scale, says DiIulio, the only place for most violent or chronic offenders is behind bars. Hundreds of new jails and prisons will be needed by the end of the century. These, too, must be reformed. A system of "small unit management" pioneered by the federal Bureau of Prisons may be the answer. It has reduced prison crime and increased prisoner participation in training and education classes.

But state and local governments deal with the vast majority of the nation's criminals. DiIulio believes that if experimentation and professional management are to make any headway against the nation's crime and corrections crisis, Washington will have to take a much more active role in showing how it can be done.

### *The End of Black Progress?*

"Black Economic Progress After Myrdal" by James P. Smith and Finis R. Welch, in *Journal of Economic Literature* (June 1989), 1313 21st Ave. S., Suite 809, Nashville, Tenn. 37212-2786.

A half-century of remarkable black economic progress in the United States is in jeopardy. Today, older black men are get-

ting ahead, while younger black men are losing ground.

In 1940, according to Smith and Welch,

of the RAND Corporation and UCLA, respectively, employed black men earned \$4,956 annually (in 1987 dollars), while white men made \$11,441. By 1980, blacks' earnings had quadrupled to \$20,480, outpacing the gains of white men, who made \$28,212. Then, young black men began falling behind their white peers.

Almost all of the black gains during the 1940-1980 period resulted from two factors, according to Smith and Welch: economic growth (which accounted for 45 percent of the gain) and black migration from southern farms to cities, mostly in the North. Migration created better job opportunities, but more importantly it boosted the amount and quality of black schooling. In 1940, the typical black worker entered the labor force with only a sixth-grade education from an inferior country school in the South. By 1980, the same worker possessed a high-school diploma; his white counterpart had only one additional year of schooling.

Surprisingly, blacks made the greatest strides during the 1940s; the 1960s were the second most important decade. Since 1970, the real incomes of both whites and blacks have grown little. Yet, black males narrowed the wage gap until 1982, when they earned 68.9 percent of what white men did. (Affirmative action had very little

effect, say the authors.) By 1986, the ratio fell to 68.2 percent.

This small drop is less disturbing than another trend. During the 1982-86 period, older black males actually continued to narrow the wage gap with their white peers—the black middle class expanded. But the gap *widened* among men under age 35.

In 1980, for example, employed black men aged 20 to 24 earned 76 percent as much as young white men; by 1986, they earned only 69.1 percent as much. (Moreover, fewer black men are working. In 1970, 17 percent of all 24-year-old black men were unemployed, out of the work force, or in jail; in 1980, the latest figures available, 28 percent were.)

The decline in the relative earnings of young black men may be the result of changes in the labor market, such as a reduction in the number of high-paying jobs for unskilled workers. Such changes may be temporary. But the growing wage gap could be a reflection of the deterioration of the inner-city schools that helped earlier generations of blacks get their first foot on the ladder of American success. And if history tells us anything, say Smith and Welch, it is that blacks have no hope of improving their status without both economic growth and decent schools.

## *Train to Nowhere*

"U.S. Transit Policy: In Need of Reform" by Martin Wachs, in *Science* (June 30, 1989), 1333 H St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005.

Save the cities! Slow suburban flight! Clean the air! These were among the goals Congress had in 1961, when it began subsidizing local bus and subway systems. Twenty-eight years and nearly \$40 billion later, mass transit is off the track.

Even as bus and subway service has expanded by 50 percent, reports Wachs, an urban planner at UCLA, ridership has stagnated. Americans now take 8.3 billion trips annually on mass transit, an improvement over the nadir of the late 1970s, but still the same number as 1965. Moreover, these trips account for only 2.6 percent of all local travel, down from 3.6 percent during

the late 1960s. Mass transit has continued to lose out to the automobile.

Meanwhile, costs have soared. Between 1965 and 1983, operating outlays per vehicle-mile rose by 419 percent, more than twice as fast as inflation. The reason? Chiefly, the growing number and declining efficiency of mass transit employees. Labor costs account for 70 percent of mass transit's operating budget. Today, a Los Angeles bus driver who works for the city's public transit system makes \$49,777 in wages and benefits; his unionized counterpart in the private sector makes \$34,426. More competition between public and pri-