

view communism as a threat and an enemy." Lee says that they have refused to pay guerrillas' "revolutionary taxes" and have even ordered their private armies to spearhead local self-defense efforts.

At the same time, they have used their great wealth to play Robin Hood in the rural lands they control. "They argue openly," Lee reports, "that drug dealers are essential to economic stability and to the public welfare." They have been most successful as spokesmen against Yankee

imperialism. A writer in a Medellín newspaper controlled by Pablo Escobar, for example, claims that the "nation's face has been disfigured by the imperialist boot of the [extradition] treaty." Such views have broad appeal in Colombia.

What Colombia and other Latin nations need most to combat the cocaine mafia is not weapons or helicopters and not stepped up extraditions, Lee concludes, but stronger and more effective courts, police, and other civilian institutions.

### *Britain's Underclass*

"Underclass" by Charles Murray, in *The Sunday Times Magazine* (Nov. 26, 1989), 1 Pennington St., London, E19 XW, Great Britain.

Charles Murray arrived in England as "a visitor from a plague area come to see whether the disease is spreading." The disease is underclass poverty, and Murray, the author of *Losing Ground* (1984), found plenty of it.

"Britain does have an underclass," he writes, "still largely out of sight and still smaller than the one in the United States. But it is growing rapidly. Within the next decade, it will probably become as large (proportionately) as the United States's underclass. It could easily become larger."

Murray points to three disturbing trends. Until the late 1970s, Britain had one of the lowest rates of illegitimate births (about 10 percent) in the industrial world. By 1988, however, 25.6 percent of all births were illegitimate. This year, Britain's illegitimacy rate may well pass that of the United States. Moreover, the increase has been concentrated among the lowest social class, especially in depressed cities such as Nottingham and Southwark.

Murray was further shocked to discover that the rate of property crimes is as high in England and Wales as it is in the United States. By some measures it is higher. In 1988, for example, there were 1,623 burglaries per 100,000 population in England, versus 1,309 in the United States. Violent crime is still nowhere near as bad as it is in the United States, but it is growing rapidly.

Finally, Murray found a fairly large con-

tingent of young, lower-class British men who are neither employed nor looking for work—"definitive proof that an underclass has arrived."

Britain lags far behind the United States in only one way, Murray believes: its perception of the problem. Like their American counterparts of a decade ago, British journalists and academics tend to minimize rising rates of illegitimacy, crime, and withdrawal from the work force. They tend to blame Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's penny-pinching approach to social welfare policies, ignoring the fact that these negative trends began accelerating before she took office in 1979—just as they accelerated in the United States during the liberal 1960s and '70s. They refuse to recognize the destructive synergy these problems generate in lower-class neighborhoods. "Just as work is more important than merely making a living, getting married and raising a family are more than a way to pass the time," Murray writes. "Men who do not support families find other ways to prove that they are men." And young fatherless boys who see only shiftless men around them tend not to become prime candidates for responsible citizenship.

Murray offers the British the same prescription he offered Americans in *Losing Ground*: Dismantle the welfare state and decentralize government.