

maintains, a land-owning aristocracy can sustain itself only by turning other people into serfs or slaves. That happened in the American South, but not in the North. There, free land led instead to free labor, which, in turn, led to the rise of manufacturing (and to the development after the mid-19th century of the "American System," a production process based on the use of interchangeable parts).

Thanks to a protective tariff against foreign competition, American industry was able to pay both interest rates high enough to attract investors and wages high enough to draw laborers away from farming. American manufacturing, Temin says, "owed its vigor partly . . . to the structure of the federal government which could support a favorable commercial policy," despite the influence of Southern plantation owners. The different economic paths taken by North and South had led to a divergence of interests. Whereas Northern congressmen favored tariffs to encourage industrial growth, Southern representatives wanted free trade to encourage export of raw cotton.

The showdown between the agricultural and the industrial regions came with the Civil War. The North's victory "showed the dominance of the society based on free labor," Temin notes. It also resulted in a national government "strongly sympathetic to the growth of industry."

The big industrial corporations that emerged as the American System was be-

ing transformed into mass production were "an American phenomenon," Temin says. Large companies in Europe were limited to a much narrower range of industries. The American firms flourished in a favorable legal setting. Court decisions, for instance, blunted the impact of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act of 1890. The Supreme Court in 1895 in effect left much of the antitrust policy to the states, which then were busily competing for the charters of new firms. Federalism thus played a role in gutting the antitrust policy.

Today, however, federalism "is ever more tenuous in its economic effects," Temin writes. With economic problems national, rather than regional, in scope, it is chiefly Washington that now regulates and supports business activities. Other key elements in America's extraordinary economic growth also are much diminished now, he says. Free land, of course, disappeared long ago. "And, although the modern business enterprises that grew from this fertile soil are still dominant economic institutions, there is a suspicion that they are becoming obsolete," with other sorts of organization and management now having the advantage. He believes that the future lies not with hierarchical Big Business but with flexible specialization and "matrix management." The conditions that enabled the industrial behemoths to flourish—and to produce America's unrivaled economic growth—now belong, in Temin's view, to the past.

SOCIETY

Canon Fodder

"The Storm Over the University" by John Searle, in *The New York Review of Books* (Dec. 6, 1990), 250 W. 57th St., New York, N.Y. 10107.

Much ink has been spilled in the debate over the status of the "canon" of the great books of Western civilization. But Searle, a professor of philosophy at the University of California, Berkeley, contends that the underlying issues that divide the members of the "cultural Left" and the defenders of

traditional liberal education are seldom brought out into the open.

Cultural leftists such as Mary Louise Pratt, a comparative literature professor at Stanford, argue that the canon is unrepresentative, inherently elitist, and covertly political. But their underlying objection,

Searle says, is that the canon consists of the "official publications" of the "system of oppression" known as Western civilization. As they see it, this civilization subjugated women and ethnic and cultural minorities, and fostered imperialism and colonialism. These critics won't be satisfied by the addition of a few works by blacks or women to the canon. Many of them believe that the primary purpose of teaching the humanities should be to help transform or revolutionize society.

Unless their underlying assumptions are accepted, Searle says, the cultural leftists' explicit arguments seem weak. "From the point of view of the tradition, the answers to each argument are fairly obvious," he observes. Thus, "it is not the aim of education to provide a representation or sample of everything that has been thought and written, but to give students access to works of high quality. [Education therefore] is by its very nature 'elitist' and 'hierarchical' because it is designed to enable and encourage the student to discriminate between what is good and what is bad, what is intelligent and what is stupid, what is true and what is false." And the fact that the humanities, like everything else, have a political dimension, doesn't mean that ef-

forts to teach the humanities should be assessed primarily by political standards.

Yet the defenders of tradition have their own failings, in Searle's view. Roger Kimball, author of last year's *Tenured Radicals*, for instance, "simply takes it for granted that there is a single, unified, coherent tradition, just as his opponents do, and he differs from them in supposing that all we need to do to rescue higher education is to return to the standards of that tradition." But, Searle says, there never really was a fixed canon, just "a certain set of tentative judgments about what had importance and quality. Such judgments . . . were constantly being revised."

The debate over the canon, Searle observes, is mainly concerned with what is usually just "a single required freshman course in the humanities, together with other courses in literature which the scholars who describe themselves as the 'cultural Left' may seek to control, and which may (or may not) therefore be vehicles for promoting ideologies of 'social transformation.' Most undergraduate education . . . is largely untouched by this discussion. Neither side has much to say about what actually happens in most college classrooms."

The Rat Race

"The Pace of Life" by Robert V. Levine, in *American Scientist* (Sept.-Oct. 1990), P. O. Box 13975, Research Triangle Park, N.C. 27709.

Everyone knows about Type-A individuals, but are there Type-A cities, too? Apparently so, according to Levine, a California State University psychologist.

Levine and his colleagues examined the "pace of life" in 36 U.S. cities—nine in each of four regions—by taking careful note of: how fast folks walked along a main downtown street on a clear summer day; how long bank clerks took to change two \$20 bills; how long postal clerks took to explain the differences among regular, certified, and insured mail; and what proportion of men and women observed in downtown areas during business hours were wearing a wristwatch.

As expected, the researchers found that

people in the Northeast walk faster, make change faster, talk faster, and are more likely to wear a watch than people in other parts of the country. A little surprisingly, perhaps, New York City did not head the list of fast-paced urbs; Boston held that honor, followed by Buffalo, N.Y. (!), and then Gotham. The slowest urban pace was on the West Coast, with mellow Los Angeles taking slowest city honors. L.A.'s laid-back denizens ranked 24th of the 36 cities in walking speed, next to last in quickness of tongue, and dead last in making change. Their "only concession to the clock was to wear one," Levine observes. (The city was 13th highest in the proportion wearing a timepiece.)