
THE GREAT AMERICAN JOB HUNT

During the past dozen years, the U.S. economy has created vast numbers of new jobs. Not only have the usual newcomers and millions of immigrants found work, but unprecedented numbers of women have been accommodated as well. Yet "good" jobs—offering reasonable security and steadily rising pay—have become increasingly scarce. Jobs may be plentiful, but massive layoffs, stagnant incomes, and families struggling to get by on two paychecks make it hard to cheer. Our authors explain what is happening, and why. Paul Osterman surveys the prospects of the young. Paul Krugman examines the impact of new technology. Thomas Muller sizes up the effects of immigration.

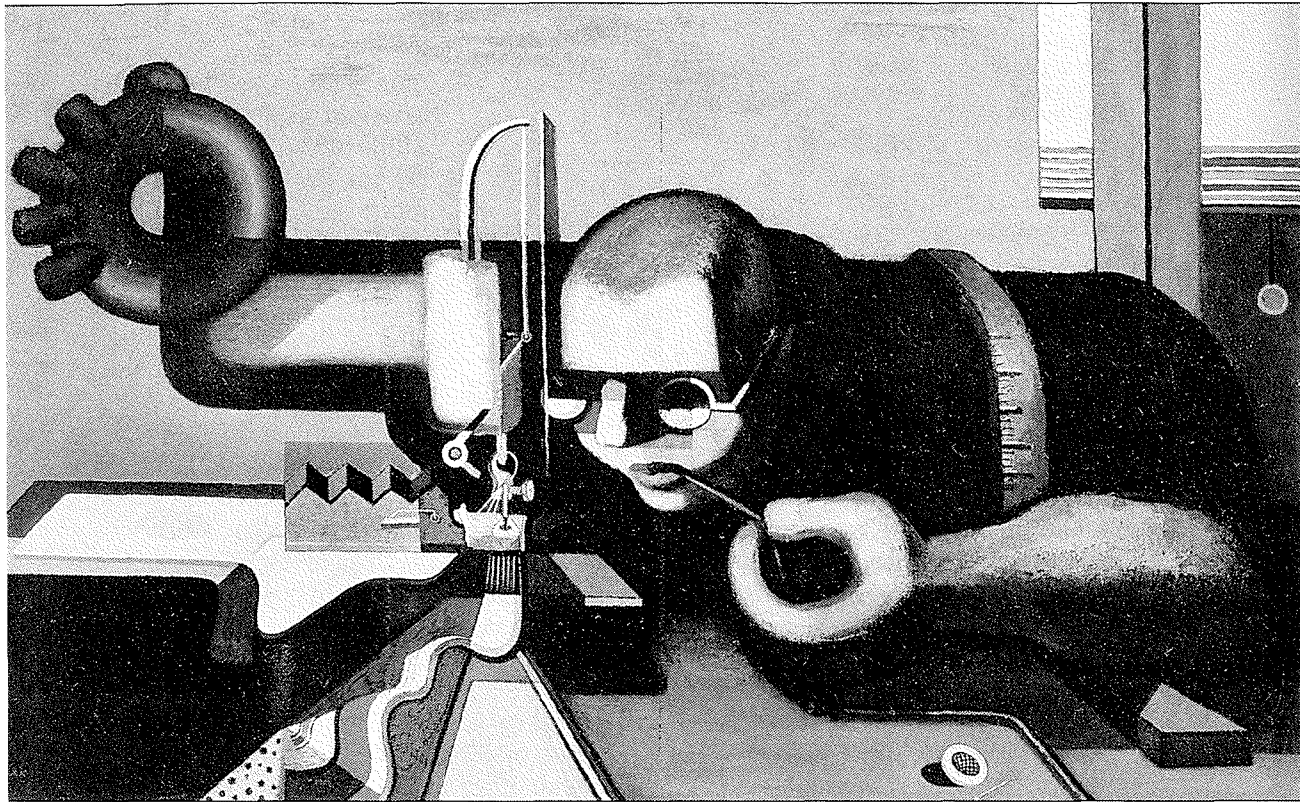
Laura L. Nash considers the "virtual job" of the future.

GETTING STARTED

BY PAUL OSTERMAN

We live in an age of anxiety about jobs, and perhaps the greatest anxiety is felt by young people searching for their first employment. All the other dangers and discontents of the world of work—from stagnant wages to insecurity bred by corporate "re-engineering"—seem to form a dark ceiling over those who are putting their feet on the lowest rungs of the ladder. Not only must today's young endure a larger-than-usual share of the uncertainties of starting out, but they must contemplate a future that

seems truncated and unpromising. The news media have cast them as an "edgy," cynical, and disheartened "Generation X," the first generation in American history, we are constantly told, that cannot look forward to a future better than its parents had. A staple of the Generation X story is the young person who invested in four years of college and yet finds himself in a job well below what he expected, both in terms of what it demands and what it pays. The *Washington Post* tells of college graduates forced to take unpaid internships because real jobs are unavailable. *Time* says it



Man at Machine, by Theodore Roszak

all in a headline: "Bellboys With B.A.'s."

There is a crisis among young people who are trying to get started in life, but it is not quite the crisis that the news media describe and its causes are not quite what one might expect. The facts simply do not support a terribly gloomy view of the immediate prospects for the middle-class, college-educated kids who are generally labeled Generation X. It is true that wage growth, an important part of the escalator of upward mobility, has slowed or ended, and it is far from certain that the old more-or-less automatic increases will resume. College-educated men aged 25 to 29, for example, earned an average of \$28,963 in 1992, roughly the same amount in real dollars as in 1983. (Their female peers, however, improved their earnings by a bit more than 10 percent.) But while average pay may not have increased, college grads still get good jobs, jobs

that give them responsibility, decent pay, room for a little creativity, and opportunities for advancement. In the boom years of 1984–86, about 47 percent of newly hired college grads in their twenties landed jobs in top-shelf occupations, as executives, managers, or professionals. The years 1989–91 saw a slight decline, to 45 percent, but this hardly represents a collapse of the job market. And another 40 percent of the 1989–91 crowd landed jobs in other desirable areas: technical work, sales, and administration, including jobs as various as air traffic controller, cashier, stockbroker, and ticket and reservations agent.

Slow economic growth has increased the risks facing college graduates and ratcheted up their anxiety. On university campuses a more somber career-oriented atmosphere prevails, shock-



Don't cry for today's college graduates. They may sometimes have trouble finding jobs, but they earn about \$9,000 more than high school graduates.

ing the visiting journalists who came of age in sunnier and, some would say, dreamier days. It takes more time and more effort to get a good job, and often the pay is disappointing. Nonetheless these young people are still in relatively good shape.

The young people who face true difficulty are those with less education. They are in fact the great majority of young jobseekers. In 1992, only 23 percent of 25 to 29-year-olds had a college degree. Another 48 percent had some college or an associate's degree. Sixteen percent had only a high school diploma, and 13 percent lacked even that. In the past, there was a fairly reliable route that kids without college could follow. After high school and perhaps a year or two of college, they churned through a succession of less-than-desirable jobs before settling down. Instead of learning job skills in school, they went through an extended period of what economists call "labor market adjustment." They might work a string of jobs as retail clerks, construction workers, or unskilled factory hands, punctuated by short spells of more-or-less voluntary unemployment. Then, as now, many twentysomethings were not ready for permanent jobs. They

were mainly interested in earning some spending money for an apartment and a car and, perhaps, in having a little fun with their coworkers on the job. Few cared much what kind of job it was.

With age, maturity, and new family responsibilities later in their twenties, these people settled down into "adult jobs," but the paths they followed were many and varied. Credentials were less important than personal

contacts, and many found their adult jobs through the help of parents, relatives, and friends. The young man who followed his father into a particular factory or mine might not have been typical, but his informal way of getting started was. Uncle Bob might pull some strings for you at the union hall or Mom's best friend might tip you off to an opening in the billing office. This system, if it can be called that, succeeded for most people because jobs were plentiful and because most of the skills workers needed could be learned on the job. Today many young men and women cannot count on either the old routes or the old destinations. The factory likely is silent, the union hall half empty, and the help-wanted ads full of jobs requiring specialized skills. Ready to make the leap into adulthood, these young people find there is no obvious place to land.

The system still works for large numbers of high school graduates; most move gradually from "youth jobs" to "adult jobs." The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, which followed a group of young people between 1979 and 1988, offers a sharper picture of the problem areas. It found that 44 percent of 16 to 19-year-olds worked in wholesale or retail

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trade, which offers mostly low-paying and high-turnover positions. But by ages 29 to 31 the fraction employed in this sector was down to only 17 percent. Moreover, the study shows steadily growing work commitment among the young people. Only 3.5 percent of the oldest men in the study and four percent of the oldest women were unemployed at the time of the last interview. All of this suggests that the process of integrating the young into the workplace is going fairly well. Yet one also needs to know whether the jobs are steady and whether people are enjoying long stretches without unemployment. Here the news is more troubling. Among employed 29 to 31-year-old high school graduates who did not go to college, more than 30 percent had not been in their position for even a year. Another 12 percent had only one year of tenure. The pattern was much the same for women who had remained in the labor force for the four years prior to the survey. These are adults who, for a variety of reasons—a lack of skills, training, or disposition—have not managed to secure “adult” jobs.

For blacks and Latinos, the malfunctioning of the job market has reached a critical stage. In 1993, only 50 percent of young blacks between the ages of 16 and 24 who were not in school even had jobs. Among young Latinos the figure was 59 percent. By contrast, nearly three-quarters of their white counterparts had jobs. (A college degree significantly narrows but does not close the gaps. Ninety percent of white college graduates in the age group were employed, as were 82 percent of the black graduates and 85 percent of the Latinos.)

Young people in many other industrialized countries have a lot more help getting started. In Germany, virtually all students except the small number bound for universities spend the last three years of high school in an apprenticeship system that combines part-time schooling with training in factories, labs, and offices. For each of some 400 recognized occupations there is a standardized curriculum that specifies the

skills to be taught on the job and the content of schooling. The system is overseen by committees of representatives from government, business, and unions. After formal examinations at the end of high school, new graduates are placed in “adult” jobs, often with the company that trained them.

Not all German apprentices can find employment in their field; the Germans, a notoriously well-fed people, joke that they always seem somehow to turn out too many bakers. Yet inculcating the essentials of workplace behavior—be prompt, dress properly, follow instructions—is nearly as important a function of the system as teaching particular skills. The German system has other drawbacks. Women are still “gender tracked” into fields such as hairdressing, and the system can be slow to react to technological change in the workplace. Still the training and placement help German youngsters receive are far superior to what is available to their American peers.

In Japan, the process of launching the young into the world of work is not so highly organized as it is in Germany, but it is still far more structured than in the United States. Teachers maintain contacts with employers and play an important role in placing high school graduates. In Japan, as in Germany, the first job is a giant step into the work world. The years of casual, American-style “job shopping” are virtually unknown in these countries, and especially in Japan the young are expected to remain with their first employer for a long time. Yet if the American system is less orderly, it also provides much more freedom for the individual to experiment and change his or her mind—highly prized qualities that should not be lost in any attempt at reform.

Finding a steady job is only half the challenge of getting started. Finding one that pays relatively well is the second, and lately most daunting, hurdle. Pay for college graduates has at least stayed even over the years, but high school graduates and (especially) dropouts have lost a lot of ground. There now exists a huge

Does Job Training Work?

If superior skills and education are the keys to success in the job market, then it may seem logical for government to underwrite job-training programs. Yet ambitious initiatives by the Clinton administration have been beaten back and scaled down in Congress. The skeptics' view is summarized by The Economist (March 12, 1994).

Improved training is not the royal road to success in all places at all times. What works for a manufacturing-dominated economy like Germany does not necessarily work for a services-oriented economy like the United States. What works for computer makers does not necessarily work for discount stores. Heavy investment in training cannot compensate for poor management or misguided product strategies, as IBM has found to its cost.

What is more, low skills are not a sentence to unemployment, nor high skills a guarantee of job security. The United States still employs 1.5 times as many janitors as it does lawyers, accountants, investment bankers, stockbrokers, and computer programmers put together. Highly skilled people are losing their jobs as firms "de-layer" middle management and as the federal government cuts its defense budget. . . .

Above all, the pro-training camp hugely overstates the ability of training to curb long-term unemployment. For a growing number of people, particularly in the United States, the real problem lies not in a lack of job-specific skills but in a surplus of social pathologies—too many people with too little self-discipline, self-respect, and basic education to fit easily into any workplace. For another group, the problem lies with age. Most firms prefer 20-year-old recruits to 45-year-old ones because 20-year-olds usually cost less and because they are thought—rightly or wrongly—to be more flexible, more malleable, more likely to turn into "company men."

Even in a world without ageism or an underclass, there would still be huge problems in translating the vision of a "high-skills, high-wage economy" into practice. In theory, the case seems irrefutable for state intervention in the training market through company levies and national schemes; in practice, it is fraught with problems. Training levies, which oblige firms to train their workers or else pay a training tax to the government, squeeze small firms in unprofitable businesses and frequently end up subsidizing useless conferences. National schemes quickly crowd out private schemes, burdening the exchequer and limiting choice; and no scheme can be better than the people who run it, a standard which in practice is not always very high.

The assumption . . . that countries can borrow the

best bits of each other's training systems is also questionable. Training systems rely for their success on the structure of employment in the economy concerned and on the workings of a host of social institutions, informal as well as formal. Intent on producing the caretakers of a sophisticated manufacturing economy, the Germans put great emphasis on teaching the young how machines work, and how to fix them if they break down. But most new American jobs are in the service sector, requiring both social skills and familiarity with information technology.

The German system also depends on a set of social relationships which are entirely absent in the United States. Respected and well-coordinated business organizations allow employers to set national standards; stable shareholdings and long-term bank financing shield companies from some of the pressure for short-term profits. National collective bargaining makes poaching a rarity. Above all, the three members of the "social partnership" play a well-recognized part in making the system work, with employers devoting a proportion of their budgets to training, government providing vocational schools for young trainees, and trade unions moderating wages for new entrants into the labor market.

The Americans ought to be grateful that training systems travel so poorly, because both the German and the Japanese models are beginning to look somewhat tarnished. Although still immensely proud of apprenticeships in public, Germans are beginning to worry about them in private, whispering that a vital source of strength may one day become a fatal source of weakness. Some of these problems are short-term. Unification means that Germany has to find apprenticeships for large numbers of ill-educated and poorly motivated east Germans. The recession is making it hard for big firms, particularly in the car-making and metal-working industries, to afford to keep up their toll of apprenticeships, or to keep on those apprentices once they have spent 3 and 1/2 years training them. Last year, fewer than half of the metal industry's 130,000 apprentices managed to stay on in their firms.

Other problems, however, are deeper. First, apprenticeships are inflexible and antiquated, good at

turning out skilled car workers but bad at producing software programmers or television producers. One result is that Germany has one of the least developed service sectors in Western Europe. Second, the system produces narrow specialists, intent on making their careers as machine engineers or production managers, whereas modern manufacturing techniques demand flexible generalists, capable of turning their hands to a wide range of jobs. In addition, it allows almost no room for retraining, assuming that workers will remain in the same jobs throughout their lives. Third, the system depends on a cooperative relationship with the trade unions, including worker representation on company boards and national wage agreements, which is coming under increasing strain. Worse still, the system is enormously expensive, helping to keep German labor the most expensive in the world. . . .

The Japanese system, which is based on a mixture of a broad, general education in school and prolonged on-the-job training thereafter, is also under unprecedented strain, thanks to the combined forces of recession and a new individualism among the young. The system requires two things to succeed: a guarantee of lifetime employment from the company, and a willingness on the part of the employee to sacrifice all for the firm. The guarantee of a long-term future with the company compensates workers for low starting wages, long hours, company-specific training and job rotation. It also gives them a broad mix of skills and a commanding knowledge of the company's strategy. Employee loyalty gives firms the confidence to invest heavily in training without fear of poaching, and the flexibility to move workers from product to product and place to place as the market demands.

In the short term, the biggest threat to this system comes from recession, with large firms cutting back on recruitment and introducing short-term contracts. In the longer term, however, the biggest threat may come from individualism, with more and more workers opting for higher salaries and individual freedom rather than a lifetime of subordination to a single master.

Surprisingly, the training system which seems to be coping best with technological innovation and global competition is the most maligned of the lot, the American one. The standard criticisms of this system, about poaching, short-termism, and amateurism, have always been overstated. Sensible workers do not

leave firms with good training records for fly-by-night operations just because they are offered a few dollars more. Successful firms take a long-term view of the skills of their work forces, even if they are subject to relentless hounding from the stock market to produce profits. Thanks to the pressure of competition, American plumbers, electricians, and pest controllers are usually as competent as their certificate-toting counterparts in Germany.

Indeed, the American tradition of providing people with masses of general academic education, including a start at university for half the population and plenty of second chances for everyone, and leaving specific training to the market, is becoming more, rather than less, relevant. Economists have long argued that the returns on general education are higher than those on specific training, because education is transferable whereas many skills tend to be job-specific. Today, this case is becoming more compelling still as jobs become less secure, the service sector expands, the life-cycle of vocational skills diminishes, and the market puts an ever greater premium on the ability to deal with people and process information. The most urgent task facing the United States is to reform its highly uneven school system (perhaps through rigorous national exams) rather than to re-invent an apprenticeship system.

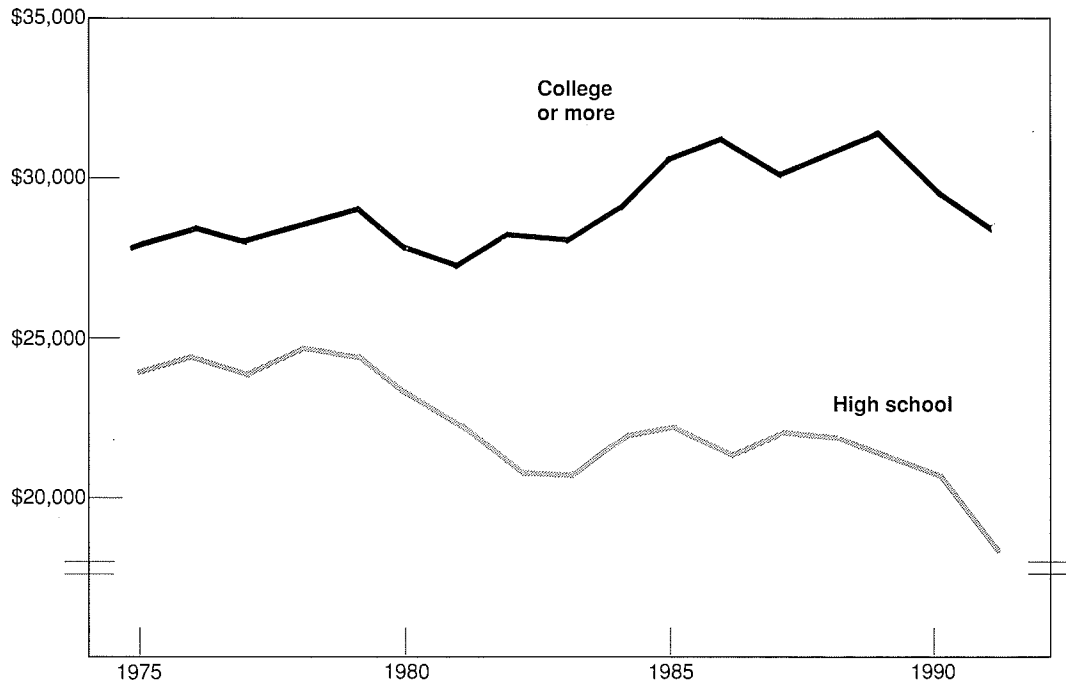
Moreover, a lot of American firms are proving to be remarkably flexible, innovative, and imaginative in their approach to on-the-job training. Shaken by the recession of the early 1980s, and impressed by Japan's capacity to mass-produce customized goods at extraordinary speed, large numbers of American firms are now taking training more seriously than ever.

When General Motors opened a new lorry factory in Fort Wayne, Indiana, it offered its 3,000 workers 633 hours of training each, in order to teach them how to handle new technology and work together in teams. Advanced Micro Devices, a circuit maker, allocates 40,000 hours and \$1 million a year to training its 400 employees. Quad/Graphics . . . treats all workers as "students," organizing them into six-person teams, providing them with "mentors," who are responsible for developing their skills, and giving them one day a week in the classroom.

Clearly, there is much that other rich industrial countries can learn from the United States about the value of general education, the virtues of flexibility, and the desirability of local and corporate initiative.

A Tale of Two Degrees

(Annual Earnings of Men Aged 25 to 29, By Education, in Constant Dollars)



Source: Housing and Household Economic Statistics Division, U.S. Bureau of the Census

pay gap between the college educated and their less fortunate peers. Between 1979 and 1991, the real wages of high school dropouts fell more than 20 percent, and the wages of high school graduates without college degrees fell more than 11 percent. People equipped with only a high school degree are finding it increasingly difficult to earn a decent living. According to a recent U.S. Census Bureau report, nearly half of all 18 to 24-year-olds who worked full time in 1992 still had annual incomes below \$14,335, the poverty line for a family of four.

The labor market is sending a clear signal. While the American way of moving youngsters from high school to the labor market may be imperfect, the chief problem is that, for many, even getting a job no longer guarantees a decent standard of living. More than ever, getting ahead, or even

keeping up, means staying in school longer.

While many things may have contributed to the erosion of wages over the past two decades, including the oft-cited influxes of cheap immigrant labor and cheap imported goods, the new premium on skills explains much of what has happened. When new technologies are combined with new ways of organizing work, such as team production or total quality management programs, the need for various kinds of skills rises. Today, employees are asked to understand and analyze certain kinds of data, to think about ways to improve the processes and products of the workplace, and to work with others to bring improvements about. No longer is it enough to perform rote tasks on an assembly line.

In part, employers are looking for better command of "hard" skills such as math,

and the best evidence for this is the fact that they are willing to pay for such hard skills with hard cash. Economists Richard Murnane, John Willett, and Frank Levy recently found that, six years after graduation, members of the high school class of 1986 who had scored in the top third of a standardized math test were earning 16 percent more than those who had scored in the bottom third. In the class of '72, by contrast, top scorers enjoyed an edge of only five percent six years after graduation.

This is a graphic illustration of the growth in demand for relatively simple math skills. And they are "relatively simple." Skills of this sort are not out of reach for most people. The question is whether the schools can do a good job of providing them. The answer is a little more textured than the bitter criticisms of political leaders and employers suggest. In fact, there is little reason to believe that schools are providing worse training than in the past. Scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, which declined during the 1970s, generally rose during the 1980s. Kids in most age groups scored slightly higher on most tests at the end of the '80s than they did in the early '70s. High school dropout rates have even improved a bit: In 1972, 16.1 percent of 19 to 20-year-olds lacked a high school diploma and were not enrolled in school. By 1991, that number was down to only 14.3 percent.

The real problem appears to be that jobs (and employers) are requiring ever-higher levels of skill, and that the schools, though moving slowly forward, are failing to keep up. Test scores have not declined, but they are not very impressive either. The National Assessment of Educational Progress, for example, offers the depressing claim that 30 percent of young people lack basic literacy skills (e.g., the ability to collect information from different parts of a document) and that 44 percent of 17-year-olds cannot compute with decimals, fractions, and percentages.

And while it is nice that dropout rates are not rising, they are still too high, especially among minority groups: 17 percent of young blacks and 36 percent of Latinos are dropouts.

Employers, moreover, are not simply looking for technical skills. The workplace of the 1990s, with its team-oriented approach and quality programs, requires people who are able to work cooperatively with others. They need good interpersonal skills. The same is true in the service sector—from fast-food restaurants to airlines—where there is a growing emphasis on pleasing the customer. When asked in a survey conducted by the National Association of Manufacturers why they rejected job applicants (more than one reason could be given), 37 percent of employers cited writing skills and 27 percent cited math skills, but 64 percent cited ability to adapt to the workplace.

Thus, despite all the talk of a "de-skilled" nation of hamburger flippers, the American labor market is demanding more and more skill. Although unskilled service-sector work has certainly grown, so has the quantity of more demanding work. Indeed, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that between now and 2005 the occupational group with the fastest growth rate will be "professional specialty" jobs—such as engineering, the health-care professions, and teaching—almost all of which require at least some college. Growth in executive, administrative, managerial, and technical occupations will also be faster than average.

It is important for those who would fix the American system to put aside utopian thoughts. Getting started will always be a difficult, anxiety-producing experience. Moreover, young people are and will continue to be marginalized in virtually every labor market in the world. Even Germany does this, albeit subtly, by placing them mostly in apprenticeships at small firms, where long-term career prospects are not good. Young people simply lack the skills and maturity of their elders, and in any

The Minimum Wage Debate

U ntil the Clinton administration took office last year, the federal minimum wage was largely a moot issue. Stuck at \$3.35 an hour during the 1980s, it was finally raised by 1989 legislation to \$4.25, still roughly \$1.50 less in real terms than it was in the 1970s. It was not only the opposition of a Republican White House that kept the minimum down until 1989, however, but the fact that economists generally agreed that increases in the minimum wage cost jobs.

Today the White House is occupied by a Democrat and the chief economist at the U.S. Department of Labor is one of the authors of intriguing new research that suggests that increases in the minimum wage are pain free. Economists Lawrence Katz, then of Harvard University, and Alan Kreuger of Princeton, looking at a collection of Burger Kings, Wendy's, and other fast food emporia in Texas, found that the increases actually *raised* employment a bit. (Perhaps, they reasoned, the old minimum was so low that the restaurants that offered it were not able to attract and keep enough employees.) Their study appeared in *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* (October 1992). It was accompanied by a report by David Card, also of Princeton, who compared employment in states that raised minimum wages before Washington did with those that did not. Card backed up Katz and Kreuger. Increasing the minimum put more money in the pockets of hamburger flippers and janitors without causing employers to trim jobs.

These challenges to the conventional wisdom have not gone unanswered. Other recent studies have confirmed the earlier view: A 10 percent increase in the minimum, they suggest, causes roughly a one to two percent loss in employment.

Meanwhile, many observers note that the minimum wage is not nearly so important as it once was. Because many employers increased wages on their own, the number of Americans working for the minimum wage or less dropped from eight million in 1980 to four million in 1993. That equals 6.6 percent of the labor force.

Moreover, a lot of those \$4.25-per-hour-and-under workers are teenagers from relatively affluent families working part-time for

pocket money. More than two-thirds of all minimum wage workers are part-timers, and the vast majority are single and without family responsibilities. Only about 20 percent live below the poverty line.

Since its inauguration in 1939, the minimum wage has been seen chiefly as a poverty-fighting tool—and by organized labor as a useful floor under wages. Today, critics argue, more effective antipoverty tools exist. In a study for the employer-backed Employment Policies Institute, for example, Richard Burkhauser of Syracuse University and Andrew Glenn of Vanderbilt University argue that upper-income households were the biggest beneficiaries of the 1989 minimum wage hike, reaping a bigger share of the estimated \$4.2 billion one-year income boost it produced than did poor and near-poor families. A much more effective way to help the working poor, Burkhauser and Glenn contend, is by expanding the federal Earned Income Tax Credit. If Congress had increased this tax break for low-income workers by \$4.2 billion in 1989, they estimate, poor and near-poor families would have captured two-thirds of the benefits.

The problem with this approach, of course, is that it would cost the U.S. Treasury \$4.2 billion. The minimum wage can be raised without directly increasing the federal budget deficit.

The bottom line, many economists seem to agree, is that a minimum wage increase of roughly 10 percent, as the Clinton administration has been contemplating, would be relatively harmless. At worst, it would cost 80,000 jobs. Without question, it would boost the pay of a full-time minimum wage worker, now earning \$8,840 annually, to around \$10,000. It might help some young people who are just starting out, and it would lift a number of families over the poverty line. But an increase to something like \$6 per hour, which organized labor reportedly favors, would be an entirely different issue.

In any event, the minimum wage once again seems largely a moot issue. As long as health-care reform, with its own potentially job-killing employer mandates, dominates the national agenda, there will not be much eagerness to risk raising the minimum.

event it makes sense to reserve most good jobs for people with adult responsibilities.

Harkening to the German example, American policymakers have focused on the need to strengthen links between local schools and employers. The Clinton administration's new School to Work Opportunities Act, budgeted at \$100 million this year, encourages employers to provide on-the-job training and encourages schools to reformulate their curricula to include real-world examples that can be used both to motivate and to teach. The new "tech-prep" education, unlike the old vocational education, seeks to give teenagers serious instruction in traditional academic disciplines. The hope is that by appealing to a bigger slice of the teenage population, the low-prestige, second-rate taint of old-fashioned vocational education will be avoided. Making all of this work in the highly decentralized American system will be difficult. Individual school systems must be persuaded to rethink how material is taught. Without strong Euro-

pean-style employers' associations, there has to be firm-by-firm recruitment of "good" employers to train students and hire graduates. Still, the effort is well worth making.

Ultimately, however, helping the young find good jobs is more than a matter of tinkering with what happens to teenagers in school and on the job. One of the top requirements in today's job market is schooling beyond high school. This means that increased financial aid to help more youngsters attend college must be a high priority. Likewise, the employment problems of black and Latino youngsters owe much to a daunting array of larger urban ills, from crime to inferior education, for which narrowly focused programs—with the exception of the tiny Job Corps—have been unable to compensate. Overcoming this group's special problems will require large helpings of collective as well as individual ambition and initiative.

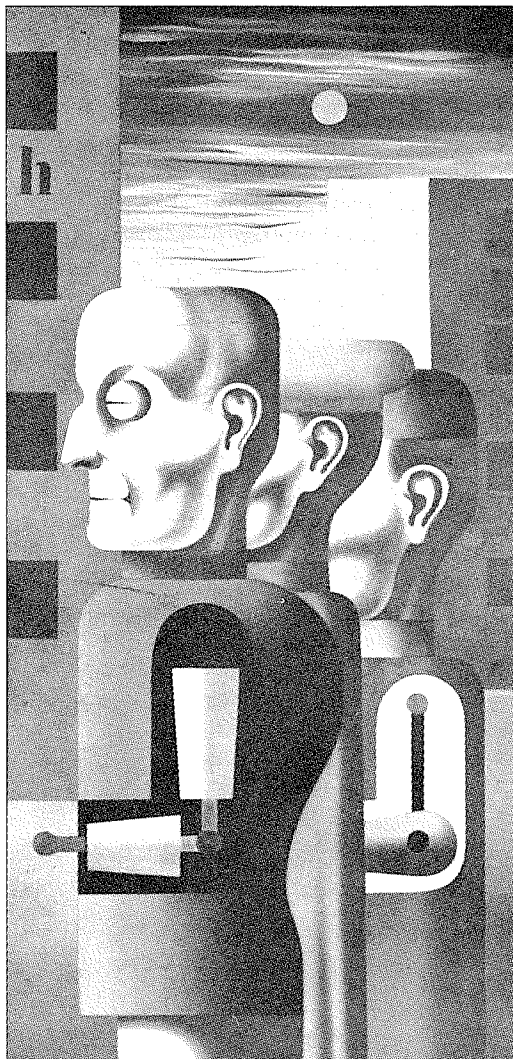
TECHNOLOGY'S REVENGE

BY PAUL KRUGMAN

In his science-fiction novel of 1952, *Player Piano*, Kurt Vonnegut imagined a future in which the ingenuity of engineers has allowed machines to eliminate virtually all manual labor. The social consequences of this technological creativity, in his vision, are disastrous: Most people, instead of finding gainful employment, live on the dole or are employed in pointless government make-work programs. Only the most creative and talented can find meaningful work, and their numbers steadily shrink as more and more jobs are automated out of existence.

For the first 20 years after *Player Piano* appeared, it seemed that Vonnegut could not have been more wrong. Between World War II and the early 1970s, the world's advanced economies were spectacularly successful at creating precisely the kind of employment that he imagined automation would destroy: well-paying jobs for workers of average skills and education. Social observers waxed eloquent over the unprecedented prosperity of the working class. Thanks to the 30-year "Go-Getter Bourgeois business boom," writer Tom Wolfe announced, "the word *proletarian* can no longer be used in this country with a straight face." Economists, who had always regarded most fears about automation as nonsense, felt confirmed in their dismissal of the issue.

But the past 20 years have not been good ones for ordinary workers. Even as the earnings of many college-educated workers soared in the United States, young men



Maschinenmänner (1930), by Heinrich Hoerle

without college degrees have seen their real wages drop by 20 percent or more—this in spite of productivity growth which, while disappointing, nonetheless allowed the average American worker to produce about 25 percent more in 1993 than in 1973. In Europe, the growth of wage inequality has been less dramatic, but there has been a

steady, seemingly inexorable rise in unemployment, from less than three percent in 1973 to more than 11 percent today (versus six percent in the United States).

Many economists believe that the American and European experiences are two sides of the same coin. For whatever reason, employers have been increasingly reluctant to pay for the services of those who do not offer something exceptional. In the United States, where unemployment benefits are relatively skimpy and of relatively short duration (26 weeks), and where the unemployed often find themselves without health insurance, workers have little choice but to accept jobs no matter how low the pay. Thus, U.S. labor markets have been, in the fine euphemism of official documents, "flexible." In Europe, much more generous social benefits make it easier for workers to turn down jobs they find unacceptable, and various government regulations and restrictions make employers less willing and able to offer low-wage jobs in any case. Thus, the same forces that lead to less pay for the less skilled in the United States lead to rising unemployment for the same group in Europe. The larger outcome is the same on both sides of the Atlantic: The broad equality of economic outcomes that the postwar West had come to take for granted seems to be receding into memory.

Most people who read intellectual magazines or watch public television know why this is happening. Growing international competition, especially from low-wage countries, is destroying the good manufacturing jobs that used to be the backbone of the working class. Unfortunately, what these people "know" happens to be flatly untrue. The real reason for rising wage inequality is subtler: Technological change since 1970 has increased the premium paid to highly skilled workers, from data processing specialists to physicians. The big question, of course, is whether this trend will continue.

Before we can get to that question, how-

ever, it is necessary to clear away some of the underbrush. Much public discussion of jobs—even among people who consider themselves sophisticated and well-informed—has been marked by basic misunderstandings of the facts. Consider this statement: "Modern technologies of transportation and communication make it possible to produce anything anywhere. This technological shrinking of the world has only been reinforced by the fall of communism, which has made the Third World safe for multinational corporations. As a result, a massive redeployment of capital and technology from the high-wage countries of the West to low-wage developing nations is now occurring. This redeployment of capital along with the flood of low-cost imports is destroying the well-paying manufacturing jobs that used to support a large middle class in the United States and Europe. In short, globalization favors Western capital, but it is devastating to Western labor."

Convincing as this may sound, the statement is specious. In fact, I made it up to illustrate a view of the world that passes for sophistication among many policy intellectuals but is almost completely refuted by the available evidence.*

At the basic level, this conventional view suggests that capital and technology are in fixed supply, and that growth in new countries necessarily comes at the expense of the more established countries. The reality is that the diffusion of technology, while it increases competition faced by the leaders' exports, also expands their markets and reduces the price of their imports. For example, the United States must buy virtually all of its laptop computers from foreign producers, but the growth of overseas produc-

*For a fuller discussion of this point, see my article in the *Harvard Business Review* (Summer 1994). In a comprehensive survey of the literature on job creation, *High and Persistent Unemployment: Assessment of the Problem and its Causes* (1993), economist Jørgen Elmeskov flatly concludes that "trade seems an unlikely prime candidate for explaining increased unemployment."

tion has enlarged markets for U.S.-made microprocessors and cut the price of laptops. In principle, the net result of the diffusion of technology could be either to raise or to lower First World income. In practice, there is little discernible effect.

Nor is the world supply of capital a fixed quantity. As countries grow, they also save—in the case of rapidly growing Asian nations, they save at astonishing rates. Third World growth may thus add to the world supply of capital as fast as or faster than it increases the demand.

Moreover, the amount of imports arriving from newly industrializing countries and the size of capital flows going to them fall far short of what is suggested in alarmist rhetoric. If there is a single piece of knowledge that separates serious international economists from fashionable popularizers, it is a sense of *how big* the world economy really is. We have all heard enough stories of particular factories that have moved to Mexico or Indonesia to form the impression that a massive global trend is underway. But even a billion-dollar investment is insignificant amid the sheer immensity of the economies of the industrialized nations. Their combined gross domestic products in 1990 exceeded \$19 trillion, and their combined domestic investment exceeded \$4 trillion. The total movement of capital to newly industrializing countries in 1993—a record year, unlikely to be surpassed in 1994—was roughly \$100 billion. That is, less than 2.5 percent of the investment of the First World actually flowed south. While it is true that tens or even hundreds of thousands of workers in advanced countries have lost their jobs to low-wage imports, the total labor force in the industrialized world is more than 400 million strong; almost every effort to quantify the reasons why more than 30 million of these workers do not have jobs

finds that Third World competition plays little if any role. That is not to say that international trade and capital mobility could not have a more important impact in the future. But declining wages and rising unemployment are not things that might happen once globalization really gets going; they are trends that have been in progress for 20 years. What is causing them?

Economists use the word “technology” somewhat differently from normal people. *Webster’s* defines technology as “applied science,” which is pretty much the normal usage. When economists speak of technological change, however, they mean any kind of change in the relationship between inputs and outputs. If, for example, a manufacturer discovers that “empowering” workers by giving them a voice in how the factory is run improves quality—and allows the plant to employ fewer supervisors—then in the economic sense this would be an improvement in the technology, one that is biased against employment of managers. If, however, a manufacturer discovers that workers will produce more when there are many supervisors constantly checking on them, this is also a technological improvement, albeit one biased *toward* employment of managers.

In this economist’s sense, it seems undeniable that over the past 20 years the advanced nations have experienced technological change that is strongly biased in favor of skilled workers. The evidence is straightforward. The wages of skilled workers, from technicians to corporate executives, have risen sharply relative to the wages of the less skilled. In 1979, a young man with a college degree and five years on the job earned only 30 percent more than one with similar experience and a high school degree; by 1989, the premium had jumped

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America's Fastest Growing Occupations, 1992–2005

(In parentheses: the number of projected new jobs, in thousands)

	Percent change
Home health aides (479)	138
Human services workers (256)	136
Personal and home care aides (166)	130
Computer engineers and scientists (236)	112
Systems analysts (501)	110
Physical and Corrective therapy assistants and aides (57)	93
Physical therapists (79)	88
Paralegals (81)	86
Teachers, special education (267)	74
Medical assistants (128)	71
Detectives, private (41)	70
Correction officers (197)	70
Child care workers (450)	66
Travel agents (76)	66
Radiologic technologists and technicians (102)	63
Nursery workers (44)	62
Medical records technicians (47)	61
Operations research analysts (27)	61
Occupational therapists (24)	60
Legal secretaries (160)	57
Teachers, preschool and kindergarten (236)	54
Manicurists (19)	54
Producers, directors, actors, and entertainers (69)	54
Speech-language pathologists and audiologists (37)	51
Flight attendants (47)	51
Guards (408)	51

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

The fastest growing occupations in percentage terms are not necessarily those that will produce the largest number of new jobs. The most growth in absolute terms will occur in the retail sales clerk category, which will grow by 786,000 jobs (21 percent) between 1992 and 2005.

to 74 percent. If the technology of the economy had not changed, this sharp increase in the relative cost of skilled workers would have given employers a strong incentive to cut back and substitute less-skilled workers where they could. In fact, exactly the opposite happened: Across the board, employers *raised* the average skill level of their work forces.

It is hard not to conclude that this technologically driven shift in demand has been

a key cause of the growth of earnings inequality in the United States as well as much of the rise in unemployment in Europe. It is not the only possible explanation. It could have been the case that rising demand for skilled workers was not so much the result of greater demand for skill within each industry as of a shift in the mix of industries toward those sectors that employ a high ratio of skilled to unskilled workers. That sort of shift could, for example, be the result of

Who Creates Jobs?

The U.S. economy may have failed to produce rising wages during the past 20 years, but it has been a prodigious creator of new jobs. Since 1980, the nation has gained some 20 million net (after subtracting those that were lost) new jobs, and payrolls continue to grow at an impressive rate. But who is creating those jobs—and how good the jobs are—has been the subject of a sometimes rancorous and ideologically charged debate. Do small, supercharged entrepreneurial firms deserve most of the credit, or do brand-name big businesses?

David Birch, then an MIT researcher, fired the debate's first shots in a series of studies beginning in the late 1970s. Small businesses (with fewer than 100 employees), he declared in a 1981 article in the *Public Interest*, were responsible for 80 percent of all new jobs between 1969 and 1976. The implications, Birch said, were clear. Policies aimed at helping small business, such as targeted tax breaks and regulatory relief, would do a lot more to put Americans to work than broad-gauged stimulus measures such as general tax incentives, easy money, and public works programs. The message went over well in the entrepreneur-oriented America of the 1980s, especially among many conservatives. But many liberals did not like hearing that small business—generally nonunion, difficult to regulate, and conservative in its politics—might be the key to national prosperity.

Birch's argument promptly touched off a battle of the data bases among researchers, as various critics attacked his data and methods. There was plenty to criticize. In his early

research, for example, Birch did not take account of the fact that many firms that seem small are actually units of much-larger parent companies. Even the U.S. Small Business Administration claimed in 1983 only that smaller companies created 56 percent of all jobs.

In *Employers Large and Small* (1990), economists Charles Brown, James Hamilton, and James Medoff (using a different data base, with a few flaws of its own) pointed out that small business's share of total employment did not grow at all between 1958 and 1982. Even today, according to government data, firms with fewer than 100 workers employ about one-third of all Americans in the labor force; those with fewer than 500 employ about half of all workers. What seems to happen, critics such as Brown, Hamilton, and Medoff say, is that smaller firms create a lot more jobs than big companies do—especially through start-ups—but they are jobs with a high mortality rate.

For once, however, ideological smoke and fire seem to be leading toward a measure of illumination. Birch and his critics now seem to be moving toward a consensus on some important points. As Birch put it recently in a report co-authored with Anne Haggerty and William Parsons for his Cognetics, Inc., consulting firm, "The closer you look, the more useful it becomes to describe firms, not in terms of how big they are, but in terms of what they are doing." These and other researchers now find that it is not the smallest firms that produce the most jobs but, as common sense would suggest, the firms that grow the fastest. Between 1989 and

increased trade with labor-abundant Third World countries. But in fact the overwhelming evidence is that the demand for unskilled workers has fallen not because of a change in *what* we produce but because of a change in *how* we produce.

Is it really possible for technological

progress to harm large numbers of people? It is and it has been. Economic historians confirm what readers of Charles Dickens already knew, that the unprecedented technological progress of the Industrial Revolution took a long time to be reflected in higher real wages for most workers. Why? A likely answer is

1993, according to calculations by Birch and his colleagues, a mere three percent of all American businesses generated 4.4 million net new jobs—virtually all of the jobs they believe were created during this period. Most of these “Gazelles,” as the authors call the job generators, are small, but only a minuscule fraction of small businesses are Gazelles. “Most small firms grow slowly,” Birch and his colleagues say.

The size issue is complicated by the fact that the larger Gazelles are the biggest job producers. In 1989, only three percent of the Gazelles had 100 or more employees, but they were responsible for 44 percent of all the new Gazelle jobs generated by 1993.

Finally, Gazelles are spread throughout the economy. They are not concentrated in “hot” areas such as finance or biotechnology, Birch, Haggerty, and Parsons note, but exist wherever people with new ideas and technologies “find a better way of doing things in their particular kind of firm—be it fish wholesaling, dental insurance, discount brokerage, lumber yards, or low-price outlets.”

But are these “good” jobs? Birch and his colleagues insist that they are. After all, they point out, the emerging growth companies tend to rely on new technologies, and so they need highly skilled (and highly paid) workers. It is a myth, moreover, that bigger payrolls equal bigger paychecks. Many large firms, from hospitals to department stores, pay mediocre wages. The nation’s relatively high-paying big manufacturers, basically the Fortune 500, employ only about five percent of all U.S. workers.

It is true, Birch and his colleagues write, that a somewhat higher proportion of the

new jobs created by small, fast-growing companies during the 1989–93 period paid low wages. But after taking account of the effects of layoffs and shutdowns, these younger firms were bigger net creators of “good” jobs. Indeed, they created 1.4 million net new “good” jobs while big companies *eliminated* a net of 2.5 million.

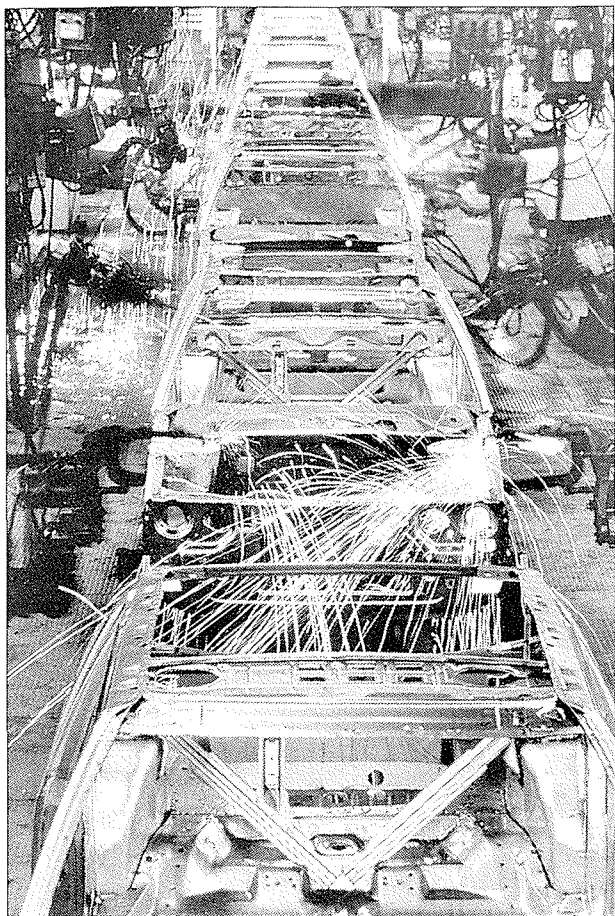
The debate over good jobs is certain to continue. Critics are sure to point out, for example, that Birch’s latest study covers a period of economic stagnation. Perhaps big firms will perform better as the economy turns up. And Birch’s study says nothing about benefits. In general, larger employers are more likely to provide such things as health insurance.

Meanwhile, an entirely new front in the big-versus-small debate has been opened by Bennett Harrison in his new book, *Lean and Mean* (1994). Harrison, a political economist at Carnegie Mellon University, takes aim not only at the statistical findings of Birch and his allies but at the whole “romantic belief in the significance of atomistic, small enterprise . . . in a modern industrial economy.” He insists that many of today’s small firms are simply creatures—by virtue of contracts or handshakes—of newly “lean and mean” big corporations. Big business still dominates the world economy, Harrison says, surviving by letting smaller players who offer smaller paychecks take over many of its peripheral functions. And in the rise of this “networked” corporation, Harrison contends, lies the source of the growing income inequality in the United States during the past 20 years.

that early industrial technology was not only labor saving but strongly capital using—that is, the new technology encouraged industrialists to use less labor and to invest more capital to produce a given amount of output. The result was a fall in the demand for labor that kept real wages stagnant for perhaps 50 years,

even as the incomes of England’s propertied classes soared.

Economists more or less agree that the same thing is happening to the Western world today, except that the benefits of biased technological change are flowing not to capital but to the highly skilled.



American industry is producing more with fewer workers: Two million manufacturing jobs disappeared between 1988 and '93.

It is easy to understand why the Industrial Revolution was capital using and labor saving. Just think of a factory full of power looms replacing thousands of hand weavers—the development that gave rise to the Luddite rebellion in early-19th-century Britain. Can we come up with comparable images that relate recent technological change in the economist's sense to its more normal usage? That is, what is changing in the way that we produce goods and service that has apparently devalued less-skilled workers?

The short answer is that we do not know. There are, however, several interesting stories and pieces of evidence.

Probably the simplest story about how

modern technology may promote inequality is that the rapid spread of computers favors those who possess the knowledge needed to use them effectively. Anecdotes are easy to offer. Economist Jagdish Bhagwati cites the "computer with a single skilled operator that replaces half a dozen unskilled typists." Anecdotes are no substitute for real quantitative evidence, but for what it is worth, serious studies by labor economists do suggest that growing computer use can explain as much as one-half of the increase in the earnings edge enjoyed by college graduates during the 1980s.

Yet there is probably more to the story. The professions that have seen the largest increases in incomes since the 1970s have been in fields whose practitioners are not obviously placed in greater demand by computers: lawyers, doctors, and, above all, corporate executives. And the growth of inequality in the United States has a striking "fractal" quality: Widening gaps *between* education levels and professions are mirrored by increased inequality of earnings *within* professions. Lawyers make much more compared with janitors than they did 15 years ago, but the best-paid lawyers also make much more compared with the average lawyer. Again, this is hard to reconcile with a simple story in which new computers require people who know how to use them.

One intriguing hypothesis about the relationship between technology and income distribution, a hypothesis that can explain why people who do not operate computers or fax machines can nonetheless be enriched by them at the expense of others, is the "superstar" hypothesis of Sherwin Rosen, an economist at the University of Chicago. Almost 15 years ago, before the explosion of inequality had become apparent, Rosen argued in the *Journal of Political Economy* that communication and information technology extend an individual's

span of influence and control. A performance by a stage actor can be watched by only a few hundred people, while one by a television star can be watched by tens of millions. Less obviously, an executive, a lawyer, or even an entrepreneurial academic can use computers, faxes, and electronic mail to keep a finger in far more pies than used to be possible. As a result, Rosen predicted, the wage structure would increasingly come to have a "tournament" quality: A few people, those judged by whatever criteria to be the best, would receive huge financial rewards, while those who were merely competent would receive little. The point of Rosen's analysis was that technology may not so much directly substitute for workers as multiply the power of particular individuals, allowing these lucky tournament winners to substitute for large numbers of the less fortunate. Television does not take the place of hundreds of struggling standup nightclub comedians; it allows Jay Leno to take their place instead.

Will technology continue to favor a few lucky people over the rest, or will the last quarter of the 20th century turn out to have been a transitory bad patch for the common man? At first sight, it seems obvious that the progress of technology must lead to an ever-growing premium on skill. How could it be otherwise in an era when sophisticated computers and information systems are becoming ever more crucial to our economy? Isn't it obvious that the only good jobs will be for those who possess exceptional intellectual talent and skills—those who, in the phrase of Secretary of Labor Robert Reich, are able to work as "symbolic analysts"?

History teaches us, however, that merely assuming a continuation of recent trends is often very misleading. Technology is less like a railroad track than a spiral staircase, with many reversals of direction along its upward path. The long-term effect of the Industrial Revolution is a case in point. To Victorian futurists, it seemed obvious that the capital-us-

ing bias of industrial technology would continue indefinitely, bringing with it an ever-greater gulf between the owners of capital and the working class. In *The Time Machine* (1895), H. G. Wells forecast a future in which workers have been reduced to subhuman status. These Victorians were wrong—indeed, if Wells had possessed the kind of data available today, he would have known that wages had begun to rise again long before he wrote his novel. During the 20th century, capital has claimed a declining share of the national income and labor has taken a growing share.

Technological advance, moreover, does not always increase the need for skilled labor. On the contrary, in the past one of the main effects of mechanization was to reduce the special skills required to carry out many tasks. It took considerable skill and experience to weave cloth on a hand loom, but just about anybody could learn to tend a power loom. What is true is that, to date, technological progress has consistently tended to increase the demand for a particular kind of skill, the kind that is taught in formal education and is most easily acquired by the kind of person who does well in formal education. Two centuries ago, only a minority of jobs required literacy; one century ago, only a few jobs required anything like a modern college education. Nowadays higher education is not a luxury for the wealthy but something intensely practical, a virtual necessity for the career minded.

But it is not at all clear that this trend will continue indefinitely. There is no inherent reason why technology cannot be "college-education saving" rather than college-education using. It is possible to see examples of how this might occur even today. This essay, for example, was written using a newly acquired word processor. I did not bother to read the manual; the graphical interface, with its menus of icons, usually makes it obvious how to do what I want, and I can easily call up on-screen help with the push of a button if I get lost. Whenever we use the term "user-friendly," we

are implying that we have a production technique that requires less skill than it used to.

But isn't this kind of reversal always going to be the exception rather than the rule? Not necessarily. In fact, I would make a speculative argument that in the long run technology will tend to devalue the work of "symbolic analysts" and favor the talents that are common to all human beings. After all, even the most brilliant specialists are actually rather poor at formal reasoning, while even the most ordinary person can carry out feats of informal information processing that remain far beyond the reach of the most powerful computers. As the artificial intelligence pioneer Marvin Minsky points out, "A 1956 program solved hard problems in mathematical logic, and a 1961 program solved college-level problems in calculus. Yet not until the 1970s could we construct robot programs that could see and move well enough to arrange children's building blocks into simple towers. . . . What people vaguely call common sense is actually more intricate than most of the technical expertise we admire." Chess-playing programs are not yet quite good enough to beat the world's greatest players, but they are getting there; a program that can recognize faces as well as a two-year-old can remains a distant dream.

Rereading *Player Piano* recently, I found the totally automated factories Vonnegut imagined more than 40 years ago completely credible, but found myself wondering who cleans them (or for that matter the houses of his industrial elite)? It is no accident that no description is given of how these mundane tasks are

automated—because as Vonnegut must have sensed, it will be a very long time before we know how to build a machine equipped with the ordinary human common sense to do what we usually regard as simple tasks.

So here is a speculation: The time may come when most tax lawyers are replaced by expert systems software, but human beings are still needed—and well paid—for such truly difficult occupations as gardening, house cleaning, and the thousands of other services that will receive an ever-growing share of our expenditure as mere consumer goods become steadily cheaper. The high-skill professions whose members have done so well during the last 20 years may turn out to be the modern counterpart of early-19th-century weavers, whose incomes soared after the mechanization of spinning, only to crash when the technological revolution reached their own craft.

I suspect, then, that the current era of growing inequality and the devaluation of ordinary work will turn out to be only a temporary phase. In some sufficiently long run the tables will be turned: Those uncommon skills that are rare because they are so unnatural will be largely taken over or made easy by computers, while machines will still be unable to do what every person can. In other words, I predict that the current age of inequality will give way to a golden age of *equality*. In the very long run, of course, the machines will be able to do everything we can. By that time, however, it will be *their* responsibility to take care of the problem.

THE IMMIGRANT CHALLENGE

BY THOMAS MULLER

Not since the Great Depression has the United States seen a tide of anti-immigrant sentiment to rival today's. So strong is public feeling that it helped drive President Bill Clinton to reverse the nation's long-held policy of welcoming any refugee who managed to escape from Fidel Castro's Cuba. Instead of a hero's welcome, the Cuban boat people received inglorious confinement in Panama or at the U.S. naval base in Guantanamo Bay.

Two years earlier, after the 1992 Los Angeles riots, Patrick Buchanan declared that

"foreigners are coming to this country illegally and helping to burn down one of the greatest cities in America." Buchanan, then seeking the Republican presidential nomination, may represent an extreme in American politics, but he was not shouted down when he made this incendiary statement. Indeed, many "moderates" simply found another way to blame the immigrants, claiming they had taken jobs from the city's poor blacks. This fall, Californians will vote in a statewide referendum on a proposition that would deny schooling and nonemergency medical care to illegal aliens.



Korean Americans demonstrate in Los Angeles after the 1992 riot. A number of Korean-owned stores and businesses were burned down during the violence.

Congress may limit health and other benefits even for those entering legally, and new barriers are being erected along the U.S.-Mexico border against illegal immigrants. Even New Yorkers, heirs to one of the most liberal traditions in the nation, tell pollsters that recent immigration has hurt their city.

Since 1980, close to 14 million Mexicans, Central Americans, Asians, and other immigrants have entered the United States, about two million of them illegally. Net immigration (excluding undocumented aliens) now accounts for over 35 percent of U.S. population growth, and its share will grow in the years ahead. Half or more of all workers entering the labor force during the next decade will be immigrants or the children of foreign-born families that arrived after the mid-1960s. Unlike earlier immigration waves, this one has washed over the entire nation, bringing foreign-born workers to virtually every community, large and small, from the rural South to the mountain West.

Anti-immigrant feeling is a simple sentiment with complex roots, some of them social and racial, and some seeming more practical. Immigrants are blamed for overcrowded schools, rising hospital deficits, and high welfare costs—indeed, for virtually everything that ails American society. Nothing ails this country more than the poverty of a large segment (one-third) of the black population, and stagnant or declining wages among Americans of all races and all but the highest income levels, and fingers are being pointed at the immigrants. Not too many years ago, the sight of a Korean shopkeeper or a Salvadoran construction worker would have been taken by many citizens as reassuring evidence of the American Dream's lasting power. Now such recent arrivals are likely to be seen as alien interlopers who are taking

good jobs from hard-working Americans.

These sentiments are strongest, of course, among groups with a disproportionately high share of low-wage and unskilled jobs. This has always been so. "Every hour sees the black man elbowed out of employment by some newly arrived immigrant," Frederick Douglass despaired in 1853. A century and a half later, when Congress sanctioned increased immigration in the Immigration Act of 1990, another black leader, Representative Major Owens (D.-N.Y.), warned that "we are taking one more step toward the creation of a permanent black underclass."

A certain sort of common sense suggests that such warnings may be justified. Douglass's certainly was. Free blacks who had found work in antebellum New York City as waiters, bricklayers, and servants found Irish immigrants moving into these fields while their own paths into other occupations were blocked by racism. Today, it is easy to produce anecdotes about native-born men and women who apply for a job, only to see the employer award it to a Mexican or an Asian. There even seems to be some hard data to back up this impression. Economist Donald Huddle of Rice University, a frequent critic of immigration policy, claims that for every four unskilled immigrant workers, one or two U.S.-born Americans are unable to find jobs or are thrown out of work.

But this kind of evidence tends to melt under close scrutiny. Application of Huddle's ratio to actual population figures, for example, leads to the preposterous conclusion that virtually every low-skilled native-born worker in America is jobless. Representative Owens's statement overlooks, among other things, the recent experience of Western Europe, which is now watching in dismay as its own white-skinned underclass forms in the cities. And anecdotes can be

*Thomas Muller, a consultant to local governments, is co-author of *The Fourth Wave: California's Newest Immigrants* (1985) and author of *Immigrants and the American City* (1993). Copyright © 1994 by Thomas Muller.*

found to illustrate any story. Even when they are true, they tend to ride roughshod over complex realities. Immigrants certainly do take some jobs, but they also fill jobs that nobody else will accept and which in many cases would not even exist without immigrant labor. Moreover, immigrants are consumers as well as workers, and their purchases of everything from paper towels to minivans help to create jobs in the U.S. economy.

The unpleasant reality is that persistent poverty among blacks, high rates of joblessness, and stagnant or falling real wages, have complex causes. Foremost among them is technological change, which has raised the basic skill level required for a decent job above what many people possess. The evidence of this can be seen in the blighted neighborhoods of Rotterdam and Liverpool as easily as it can in the South Bronx or on Chicago's South Side. But the immigrant explanation for what has gone wrong is attractive because it is quick, simple, and personal.

The fear that outsiders will take jobs from native-born workers is old and well traveled. Artificers (skilled workers) in Elizabethan London and Canterbury rioted against French immigrants in the 1660s and 1670s. A sympathetic speaker in Parliament explained that the immigrants "took the very bread out of their mouths." Others worried that "poor industrious families" might be ruined by competition from foreign-born workers. Nineteenth-century America, with its vast areas of uninhabited land and long stretches of chronic labor shortages, would seem an unlikely place for anxiety about employment opportunities. Yet in the 1830s accusations that Irish immigrants were vying for low-skilled jobs, such as stevedore and construction laborer, held by native-born workers sparked major riots in several American cities. Irish workers in New York City rioted against free blacks during the Civil War and attacked Chinese laborers on the

West Coast a decade later. During the 1880s, southern blacks protested that Italians—"dirty and ignorant sons of Naples," as one black newspaper put it—were taking farm jobs from them.

By the end of the century, both major political parties were taking aim at immigrant workers in their political platforms. "For the protection of the quality of our American citizenship and the wages of working men against the fatal competition of low priced labor, we demand that the immigration laws be thoroughly enforced," the GOP thundered in 1896. Not to be outdone, the Democrats declared that "the most efficient way of protecting American labor is to prevent the importation of foreign pauper labor to compete with it." The nation's powerful captains of industry, however, did not exert their considerable political power in support of anti-immigrant legislation. No doubt they believed that a continuing influx of overseas labor would make life difficult for the nation's fledgling labor movement, but many also recognized that immigrants expanded the market for mass-produced goods and increased their profits. Andrew Carnegie remarked in 1905 that it was a mistake for organized labor to believe that "a man who comes to this country to work injures other working men by doing so." Labor, he continued, "is an undivided whole, and every laborer, being a consumer, employs other labor."

It was only in the early 1920s, a period of acute isolationism, postwar economic recession, and rising ethnic bigotry that the anti-immigration forces triumphed on Capitol Hill and won restrictive legislation, the Immigration Act of 1924. In the decades that followed, migrants (black and white) from the rural South and immigrants from the Caribbean and Mexico met the labor needs of American industry.

Whether immigration limits helped blacks and other poor Americans is a difficult question which admits no single answer.* Black share-

*For a fuller discussion, see my book, *Immigrants and the American City* (1993).

croppers and field hands who managed to find unskilled factory jobs in Chicago and other northern cities during the 1920s probably did benefit. But the economy as a whole suffered from the exclusion of several million immigrants during the 1920s; the slowdown in construction and consumer spending no doubt contributed to the coming of the Great Depression in 1929. Likewise, the southern migrants who were able to land good factory jobs in the North during the Great Depression and World War II were direct beneficiaries of the Immigration Act of 1924. But if immigration had been allowed to continue, the United States would have had a larger working-age population—roughly 2.5 million stronger—to commit to the military and industrial effort to win the war. The conflict might have ended sooner, with fewer casualties. After the war, the dearth of new immigrants helped speed the decline of the nation's big cities, many of which began losing population during the 1950s.

Today, economists have at their disposal much better data and methods to measure the effects of immigrant labor. What they show, by and large, is that Andrew Carnegie was right. During the economic recovery of the early 1990s, for example, immigrants were a major source of new housing demand, and residential construction was followed by a resurgence in purchases of appliances, furniture, and other capital goods. (If job growth was not as great as in other postwar expansions, it was not the immigrants' fault but the result of large productivity gains brought about chiefly through the use of new technology.) A Harvard University study estimates that immigrants will purchase 1.5 million homes during the next six years. James Johnson, chairman of the Federal National Mortgage Association (Fannie Mae), believes that the recent immigrant surge will eventually create a major housing boom that will reverse urban decay in many American cities.

Immigrants also stimulate demand for public services such as education, although

their impact on public finances is in dispute. Unquestionably, more teachers and other municipal workers are needed as population grows. Immigrants with low earnings cannot be expected to generate enough revenue to cover the cost of the services they receive. This is not an issue in the case of well-educated, highly trained foreign-born professionals, who typically produce a fiscal surplus. It is important to remember that some immigrants arrive with special skills. They include not only Pakistani engineers but Portuguese stonemasons and Korean wig-makers. It is chiefly because of the presence of leather workers trained in Mexico that there is a footwear industry in Los Angeles today.

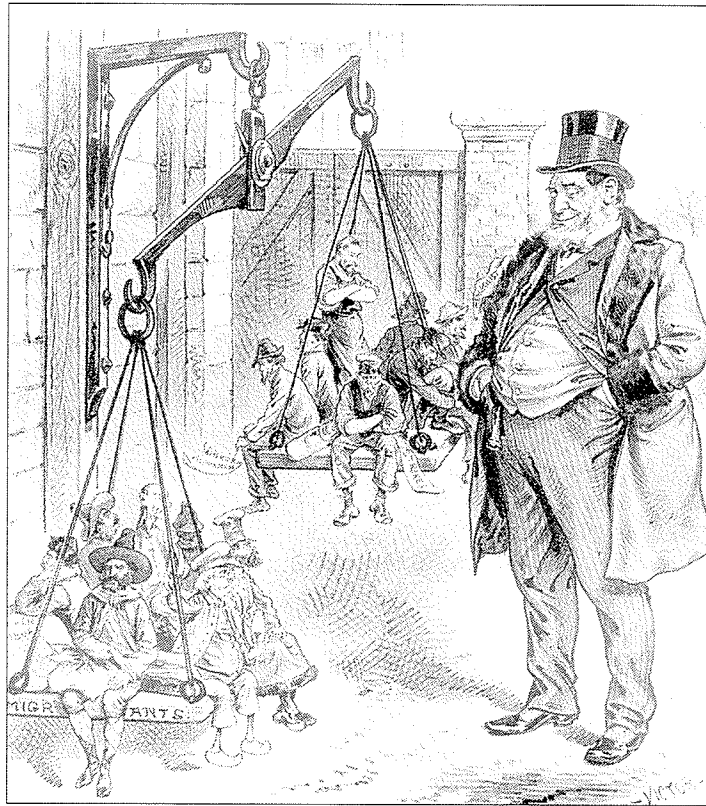
What about the perception that immigrants compete for jobs with particular groups of native-born Americans? Among middle-class families, this concern is generally slight. While there are many foreign-born engineers in the United States, for example, there are not nearly enough native-born members of the profession to keep up with the demand. Foreign-born physicians, willing to work in public institutions and in less-than-desirable locales, have been a valuable addition to the U.S. work force. What provokes middle-class anxiety is not the job market but competition for positions whose number is fixed, notably at universities. The influx of Asian students onto the elite campuses of the University of California system, for example, has become a highly charged issue in the state.

But the American public's chief worry about aliens in the labor market is that they are competing for the same jobs as blacks with limited skills. Because average incomes in the United States have failed to rise since the early 1970s, shortly after the beginning of the current immigration wave, it is tempting to link stagnant income levels with immigrant labor. Should not blacks, who hold a higher proportion of low-paying jobs than most other groups, feel threatened by the massive flow of

Mexicans, Central Americans, and emigrants from the Caribbean nations?

If the total number of low-skilled jobs were fixed, there would indeed be substantial, direct competition between the groups. But it is not. The example of two families with homes on the same suburban street in the Northern Virginia suburbs of Washington, D.C., illustrates how the pool of low-end jobs expands with supply. One of these households employs a maid from Honduras two days a week, and periodically brings in a crew of Nicaraguan nationals to work on the lawn. A neighbor has a nanny from Sri Lanka to care for the children, enabling both parents to work. These are jobs that in all likelihood simply would not exist if there were not immigrants to fill them. There are not long lines of native-born Americans waiting to work for the pay these couples can afford.

In 1983, almost 600,000 blacks in the United States, or six percent of all employed blacks, worked in menial jobs in households or on farms. A decade later, the number of blacks in these occupations had dropped by nearly a third, while Hispanics increased their numbers in these areas by 70 percent. Some would no doubt say that this is a case of immigrants pushing native-born workers out of their jobs. A more rational explanation is that many younger blacks have shunned these "dead-end" jobs, generally advancing to better-paid occupations as they acquire the necessary education or training, but sometimes moving laterally, into the underground economy or into unemployment. Removing immigrants from the equation



By the late 1880s, when this cartoon appeared, anti-immigrant sentiment was on the rise. The employer says: "As long as I am plentifully supplied with Immigrant Labor, I shall be deaf to the demands of the native workingman."

makes the process easier to see: Not many people would call the change from the 1930s, when three out of four blacks in America worked as domestics, on farms, or as unskilled laborers, a defeat rather than a great triumph.

Overall, about 170,000 blacks left (or were displaced from) several categories of low-paying jobs during the 1983–93 period. At the same time, about 800,000 gained management and professional positions (a rise of more than 60 percent), and another 800,000 moved into administrative-support and sales jobs. White-collar occupations accounted for the vast majority of additions to the black labor force.

Yet even as this very positive trend was

gathering strength, a disturbing schism was emerging among black Americans. As University of Chicago sociologist William Julius Wilson observed during the mid-1980s, one segment of the population was rising to prosperity while another—lacking education and marketable skills—was sinking deeper into poverty. In mid-1994, for example, the unemployment rate for black teenagers who were between 16 and 19 and who were not attending school was 44 percent, more than twice the rate for whites or Hispanics. Black joblessness, which has persisted at levels far above the national average since the 1960s, has both economic and social roots. Wilson places much of the blame on the loss of manufacturing jobs in the urban core and the deteriorating social climate within inner cities. Is rising immigration another underlying cause?

Studies comparing cities with differing percentages of immigrant workers find no significant variation in black income, earnings, unemployment rates, or other economic indicators. Indeed, they show that blacks do somewhat *better* in areas with a large immigrant presence. Thus, in the immigrant magnets of Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco, about one out of every four blacks in 1992 was employed as a professional worker or as a manager, almost 50 percent above the national average for blacks. These gains reflect, in part, rising educational attainment among blacks in these cities and nationally. By 1990, 36 percent of all black adults across the nation, but only 28 percent of all Hispanics (and an even smaller share of Hispanic immigrants), had some college education. Immigrants *do* have a modest adverse impact on the wages of one group: native-born Hispanics. That is because the two groups are more likely to compete for similar jobs.

Sophisticated econometric models confirm these findings. Kristen Butcher and David Card at Princeton University found in their 1991 study little indication of an ad-

verse wage effect of immigrants “either cross-sectionally or within cities over time.” A study by Julian Simon and several co-authors released in 1993 concluded that “there is little or no observed increase in aggregate national unemployment due to immigration.” Extensive research by Robert LaLonde and Robert Topel at the University of Chicago found that “immigration has a small effect on wages but virtually all of this burden falls on immigrants themselves.” In other words, the surfeit of immigrants competing for jobs as nannies or in apparel factories keeps wages down in these fields.

While there is scant evidence that immigrants are hurting the chances of blacks and other minorities today, there is reason to worry about the future. One of the main avenues of black upward mobility in America during the past 30 years has been government employment. In Los Angeles, 30 percent of all black jobholders—but only six percent of employed Hispanics—work for the federal, state, or local government. Today, blacks are more than twice as likely as Hispanics to hold jobs in the public sector. And these jobs typically pay better than comparable ones in the private sector. It is not hard to see what is going to happen. As Hispanic (and Asian) political strength grows—and the two groups together recently passed blacks in sheer numbers—so will the demand for a “fair share” of these desirable jobs. This is already occurring. A recent report by the U.S. Postal Service’s Board of Governors concludes that blacks dominate the agency, while Hispanics are under-represented—not particularly surprising since blacks, finding other doors closed to them, began flocking to the Post Office Department during the 1930s. In Los Angeles, the report notes, 63 percent of all Postal Service employees are black, even though blacks constitute only 11 percent of the city’s work force. Unless large numbers of blacks begin moving into the private sec-

tor, bitter political struggles are likely, some of them on Capitol Hill and in courtrooms, but many of them in the furnace of big-city electoral politics.

Meanwhile, the flow of immigrants seeking low-skilled jobs is not going to slow any time soon. As long as there are help-wanted signs in the nation's restaurants, hotels, and suburban shopping centers, foreigners seeking a better life will continue to come to the United States. Although there has been a shift toward work that requires greater skill and more education, one study projecting job growth in the coming decade includes occupations such as janitor, food counter worker, and waiter among its top 10. Because both legal and illegal entry are expected to rise above current levels in the years ahead, there will be plenty of applicants for these jobs.

No measure now contemplated, including a national identity card, will stop or substantially slow the immigrant influx. Instant global communications, easy transportation, and the high U.S. standard of living keep the dream alive of coming to America. Only draconian steps that American society is unwilling to consider—such as mandatory confinement of undocumented workers and their employers—could conceivably keep immigrants out. For black youngsters and others looking for jobs near the bottom of the occupational ladder, the message is clear. It is futile to compete directly with immigrants who will keep coming and keep working for low wages and it is vitally important to acquire enough education and training to qualify for jobs that aliens cannot get. There will be many more such jobs in the future and for many of them we will doubtless have the foreign-born workers themselves—and their paychecks—to thank.

THE VIRTUAL JOB

BY LAURA L. NASH

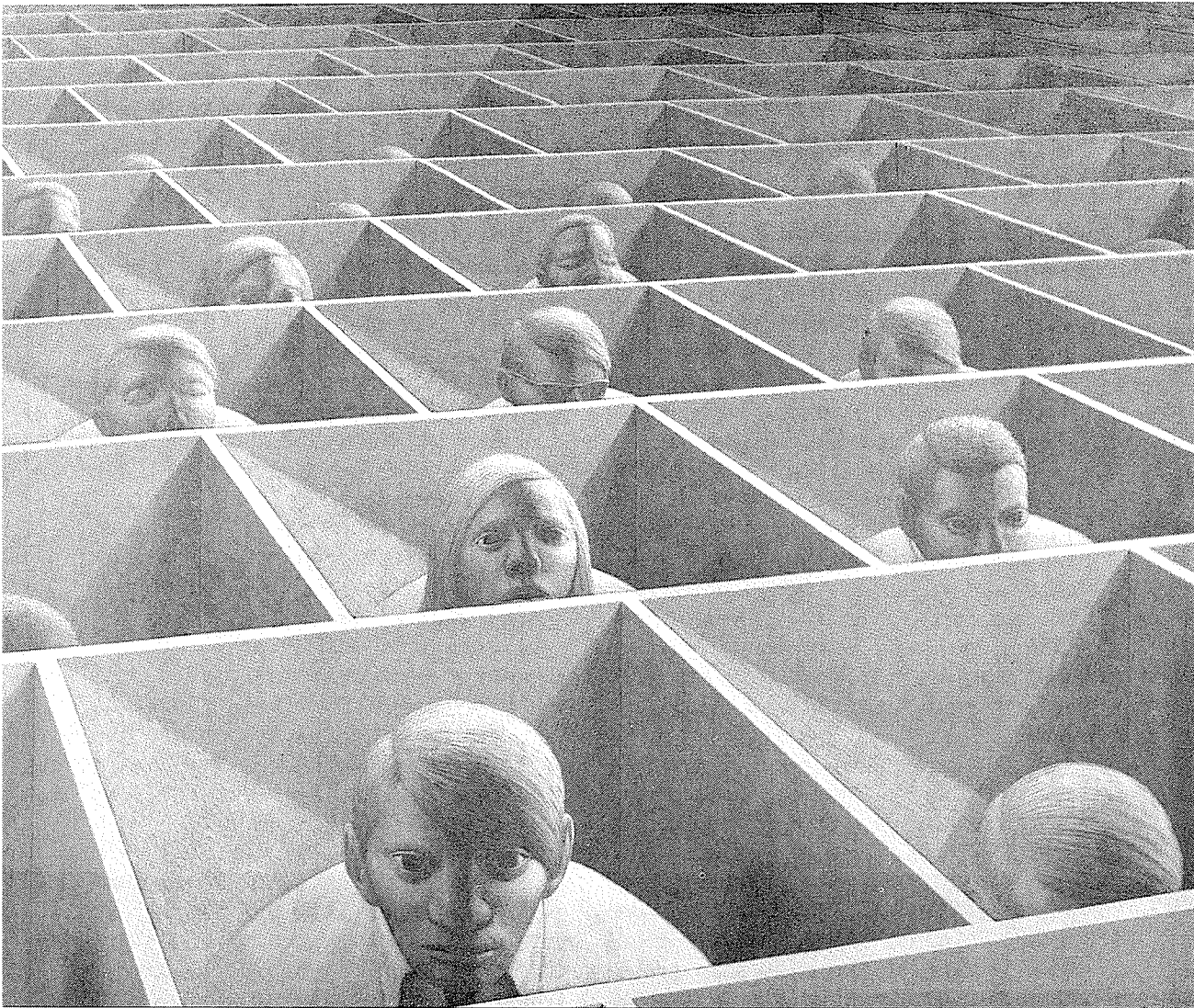
Something very odd is going on in the American corporate workplace. Employees are being told to prepare for a radical new condition of permanent insecurity, a future full of sporadic layoffs, endless efforts to upgrade job skills, and perpetually recombining work teams of insiders and "outsourcers." Continuous corporate "rightsizing" will dictate a "portfolio career" strategy: Since workers will no longer spend their careers with one or two employers, accumulating a portfolio of portable skills will be essential. Yet even as the corporation encourages "hard" qualities such as self-reliance and adaptability, it is also rushing headlong toward a supposedly kinder, gentler ethos. Large firms in particular are providing a growing variety of programs and social supports for those who remain under the corporate umbrella—however long that may be. The new formula might be described as a "love the one you're with" approach.

The turmoil in the workplace is being presented as stimulating and exciting, an opportunity for personal and professional growth. The modern corporation will supply precious training and experience, *Fortune* said recently in describing the "new deal" between employers and employees, and workers in turn will be expected to act like entrepreneurs (or "intrapreneurs,") within the corporation: Find a way to "add value to the organization" and you get a new job. Fail and you look for a job elsewhere. But that is not so bad. "If the old arrangement sounded like binding nuptial vows," says *Fortune*, "the new one suggests a series of casual,

thrilling—if often temporary—encounters."

One might almost be tempted to conclude that a new age of self-actualizing individualism is dawning. Released from the paternalistic and hierarchical strictures of the old corporation, the new employee will be free to blaze his or her own professional trail while the corporation stands by to help tend to personal needs that might impair performance, from child care to treatment for alcoholism. At the same time, it is also possible to see these developments as disturbing signs of an emerging form of corporatism in which areas of life once thought to be strictly private are increasingly regulated by a supposedly beneficent corporation. Those without ties to such a large institution will be spared such intrusions, of course, but may also be forced to go without many of the benefits accompanying it. Despite its simultaneous appeal to humanism and good economic sense, this new corporatism may not be kinder and gentler at all, and it may not even be all that good for business.

Even as it downsizes and rightsizes, the large American corporation is increasingly assuming the role of a nanny. In 1992, benefits accounted for 32 percent of employee pay and were the fastest-growing element of compensation. Benefits include not only the traditional health insurance and pensions but a broad array of other goodies, ranging from those of the sensible-shoes variety (job training and tuition reimbursements at \$35 billion annually) to more exotic offerings. Employer-provided legal services, for example,



Landscape with Figures (1966), by George Tooker

have increased sevenfold in the last decade. The corporate reach increasingly extends into what was once considered private life. Employer-sponsored health maintenance organizations, with their sometimes intrusive in-house “wellness” programs (Stop smoking! Lose weight!) are becoming part of the corporate way of life. Child-care programs of various kinds are proliferating, and among forward-looking people in the business world there is talk of the need to transform child care into “dependent care” programs providing various benefits to employees with elderly parents.

It is not unusual for today’s large corporation to offer fitness programs, marriage counseling, substance-abuse detection and treatment, AIDS counseling, diversity training, creative-thinking seminars, treatment of

depression, diet and nutrition oversight, yoga instruction, interpersonal-relations counseling, and personal financial planning. One well-known company, EDS, even has on-site car care.

Many of these offerings involve things that were formerly considered personal or domestic responsibilities, frequently managed by a wife who held no paying job. Now, as a demonstration of its newfound concern with employees’ sense of well-being—and an undisguised desire to mitigate any condition that might detract from employee performance and the corporate bottom line—the corporation offers to take care of these matters. One might call this new, kinder and gentler approach to the employer-employee contract the “feminization” of the corporation.

Accompanying the trend is a growing emphasis on "softer" management skills as the key to getting ahead in the managerial world. High on the list of qualities thought necessary for executive effectiveness in the 1990s are interpersonal skills, an ability to work with others in teams, and various kinds of "soft" abilities, such as intuitive reasoning, "people skills," and "creative thinking." Physical self-improvement is also in, and mental health is a major area of focus. Company-sponsored meditation programs and wilderness experiences designed to build trust and foster team spirit are becoming the vogue in corporate America. Now there are even humor consultants to help make fun and profit work together.

Despite its soft face and seemingly benign motivations, there is a distinctively hard edge to the new corporate humanism. Employees who are showered with benefits may pay a price in the loss of personal choice. Formerly private decisions about lifestyle and even personality may now be restricted by the company in the name of boosting personal performance and cutting costs. Today's well-bred manager may find, for example, that the powers that be in the personnel department regard his or her high cholesterol count as an indication of selfish disregard for the corporate team or a sign of insufficient self-discipline. The employee who insists on taking time off to care for a sick child despite the first-rate day-care services offered by the company may find his or her dedication to the job questioned a little more closely.

The corporation is not solely responsible for what is happening. Indeed, the corporation itself appears to be in danger of being vic-

timized by the kinder, gentler ethos. Rising expectations keep upping the ante for what is considered a "responsible" commitment by a caring corporation. It is as if the entire corporate society had fallen under the spell of a medical-therapeutic imperative: Whatever alleviates employees' stress or might contribute to their "wellness" is now considered a potential, and sometimes essential, corporate investment.

The rise of the nanny corporation represents a profound shift in corporate beliefs about managerial effectiveness. This change is partly a product of American cultural and economic insecurity in the face of powerful global competition. It is also a response to real problems faced by employees. But in large part it can be traced to the rise of the so-called "new class" of highly educated knowledge workers—from personnel experts to advertising copywriters to attorneys—whose numbers and power have been growing in the information economy. Once the very embodiment of anti-capitalistic, anticorporate attitudes, the new class is now the predominant cultural force within the American corporation, supplying its consultants, academic advisers, and theorists, and even much of its staff. It is from this group that the corporation gets its belief in the power of holistic, self-actualizing, therapeutic, and knowledge-expanding exercises. The emergence of the nanny corporation reflects just how deeply some of the values of the 1960s and early 1970s have been assimilated into the economic logic of the 1990s. We see a new corporate culture developing based on knowledge, therapy, self-actualization, tolerance, individualism, and holistic, preventive approaches to basic

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human problems.

The nanny corporation is an unfortunate but predictable perversion of the remedies business gurus have prescribed for corporate America since the late 1970s. The new management theories were fundamentally sensible enough, but their implications could be—and were—played out in a variety of different ways. From Peter Drucker to Peter Senge, American management theorists have generally agreed that only a radical change in mental approach would prepare managers to cope with the competitive challenges facing business in the late 20th century. Lulled by its decades of supremacy at home and abroad after World War II, the American corporation had ossified, the theorists said. Management had become top-heavy, market-insensitive, and excessively bureaucratic.

Beginning with the prescriptive classic by Tom Peters and Robert Waterman, Jr., *In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America's Best-Run Companies* (1982), there developed a series of management theories that held up a new ideal of self-motivated, entrepreneurial performance by employees at all levels of business. As the understanding of managerial expertise shifted, so did the essentials of employee motivation and development. Peters and Waterman, drawing on the notion of "transforming leadership" popularized by political scientist James MacGregor Burns, stressed the need for business executives to take a holistic approach to management instead of relying on ever more narrowly focused specialized expertise.



The office of the future? Stress management is taken seriously at this Dallas firm, where a professional masseuse visits every month.

The new manager would build business success by recognizing the importance of a hitherto unappreciated set of skills: the ability to transcend daily affairs, to "create meaning" for others in the organization, to make use of nonrational modes of thought, and to build good "relationships" with customers and employee teams.

Rosabeth Moss Kanter of Harvard Business School, another prominent management theorist, emphasizes that the management of change and innovation requires the "empowerment" of employees, the creation

Take This Job . . .

Why do so many Americans throw so much into their work? One surprising reason, writes sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset, a Wilson Center Senior Scholar, in The Public Interest (Winter 1990), is that they like their jobs.

Beliefs about the work ethic vary over time and place. There is, however, a general inclination for older people to believe that things were better—or at least more moral, more decent—when they were young. As Adriano Tilgher, a historian of work, wrote in 1931, “Every country responds to the lament that the workforce does not burn in the younger generation, the post-war generation.”

The affluent generally complain that their subordinates, the less privileged, do not work hard and have lost the work ethic. A survey of members of the American Management Association found that 79 percent agreed that “the nation’s productivity is suffering because the traditional American work ethic has eroded.” But this is an old story. Harold Wilensky notes that in 1495 the English Parliament passed a statute on working hours and justified it in the following preamble: “Diverse artificers and labourers . . . waste much part of the day . . . in late

coming unto their work, early departing therefrom, long sitting at breakfast, at their dinner and noon meal, and long time of sleep in afternoon.”

The idea that people should work hard—because doing so is virtuous, because it advances the common good, or even because it lets them accumulate wealth—is, in historical terms, a relatively recent one. Since work is difficult, the question is not why people goof off, but rather why—in the absence of compulsion—they work hard. . . .

While I have few doubts that the work ethic is less prominent now than it was in the 19th century, the available facts do not justify bad-mouthing it. As the March 1989 issue of *Psychology Today* notes, in the 1950s a number of sociologists predicted that Americans would increasingly choose to emphasize leisure and to abandon work—and were proven entirely wrong. To quote George Harris and Robert Trotter: “Work has become our intoxicant and Americans are working harder than

of networks of supportive peers, and the education of first-level employees. Peter Senge’s *Fifth Discipline* (1990) brilliantly outlines the need for what he calls systems thinking. Corporations, says Senge, must become “learning organizations,” realigning themselves in order to maximize their ability to absorb and act on information. Managers must enlarge their personal capacity to deal with factors that lie outside normal planning processes: complexity, delay, and setbacks. Most recently, a series of books on socially friendly values has captured the managerial imagination. Tom Chappell’s *The Soul of a Business: Managing for Profit and the Common Good* (1993) is one of the most

popular works in this genre. Written by a successful entrepreneur who took a sabbatical from work to get a degree at Harvard Divinity School, *The Soul of a Business* is filled with inspirational anecdotes about Chappell and his wife and managers bucking conventional market wisdom and relying instead on their intuition about the desires of the ecologically concerned consumer to make money at the same time that they made a better world.

All of these best-selling books share a few key themes concerning managerial motivation and skills. They all emphasize a change of mental models, directing the

ever before. In the past 15 years, the typical adult's leisure time has shrunk by 40 percent—down from 26.6 to 16.6 hours a week. And the work week, after decades of getting shorter, is suddenly 15 percent longer." They note that "the average adult now pumps 46.8 hours per week into school, work, and commuting—way above the 40.6 hours logged in 1973." It is true that people worked 53 hours per week in 1900, whereas they now average around 39, but this number has remained fairly constant since 1945.

One reason that more Americans have not substituted leisure for work may be that most of us like our jobs. In a 1973 Roper survey, 85 percent of the respondents said that they were satisfied with their field of work, whereas only 14 percent were dissatisfied. The corresponding figures for 1980 and 1985 show virtually no change. The National Opinion Research Center (NORC) reports almost identical results in response to the question: "How satisfied are you with the work you do?" The same average percentage was up a bit in 1988, when 87 percent gave this answer. NORC has also posed a tougher question: "If you were to get enough money to live as comfortably as you like for the rest of your life, would you continue to work or

would you stop working?" On average, 70 percent of the respondents questioned during the 1972–1982 period claimed that they would continue to work; the figure for 1983–1987 rose to 74 percent, and in 1988 it jumped to 85 percent. Daniel Yankelovich reports similar results.

Almost all surveys indicate that the vast majority of Americans—over 80 percent—are satisfied with their jobs. There has been no significant change in these figures over time. Many people, of course, do object to specific aspects of their jobs, complaining about boredom, pay, opportunity for advancement, the way that work is organized, and so forth.

Yankelovich reports that almost 90 percent of all American workers say that it is important to work hard; 78 percent indicate an inner need to do their very best. His research also suggests that the motives driving people to work have changed; the proportion saying that they work primarily or solely for money has declined, while the younger and better educated emphasize the expressive side of work. To summarize Yankelovich, such workers increasingly believe that work, rather than leisure, can give them what they are looking for: an outlet for self-expression as well as material rewards.

managerial mind toward concepts such as teamwork, empowerment, values, culture, intuitive thinking, and holistic viewpoints. Once seen chiefly as a technical discipline involving the hard-nosed analysis of information and the giving and receiving of orders, management now is presented as something more akin to an art—*Leadership is an Art* declares management guru Max DePree in the title of his 1989 best seller. Entrepreneurial skills are no longer to be found chiefly in the mastery of information but in the deeper recesses of the self, in the psyche and the spirit. Management is a form of self-actualization.

The definitive new element in this trend is the coupling of these culture-friendly, in-

dividualistic values with medical-therapeutic approaches to problem solving. Peter Senge, for example, suggests that organizations need to overcome a "learning disability." While none of these theories specifically calls for the kind of social-welfare therapy occurring in many large companies today, they unwittingly laid the groundwork for a therapeutic model of corporate behavior and for open-ended "human asset development."

Two other elements complete the rationale for the current corporatist approach: stress and the movement toward what is called the virtual corporation. The perception of omnipresent stress—itsself a therapeutic metaphor—is becoming a major force

behind the new human-resource programs. Many of the new corporate nanny programs are justified on the grounds that employee stress caused by tensions on and off the job is rising. New York University Medical Center, for example, reports a 70 percent jump since 1990 in the number of managers and professionals complaining of job-related stress. Many of the corporate social-welfare programs are fill-the-gap responses to stress resulting from a wholesale breakdown of private, domestic support systems. Thus a corporate investment in child-care or mental-health services appears to make economic sense: The stressed-out worker is a less productive worker. One study in a leading journal for human-resource managers estimates that diminished productivity caused by employee stress costs business more than \$60 billion annually.

Less prominently advertised are the causes of stress that are created by the conditions of the marketplace itself. Blue-collar workers, who have since the 1970s faced the omnipresent threat of becoming obsolete and expendable, are now being joined in their state of perpetual insecurity by middle managers and others, whose ranks are steadily being thinned by corporate "re-engineering" and "rightsizing."

Deep organizational changes are exacerbating instability. Business is moving inexorably toward a new model of operation, the "virtual corporation." As management specialists describe it, the virtual corporation will be a legal-financial entity whose physical plant is scattered across the globe and whose people-parts are almost as interchangeable as chips in a computer motherboard. Goods and services will be produced by a movable feast of temporary global teams. Geographically limited only by the reach of a telecommunications satellite, a team of "intrapreneurs" and outsiders will be patched together for a particular project and then disbanded when their work is through. Employees will then recombine

into new teams for the next venture. A new product may be funded in Hong Kong, researched in Chicago and Japan, manufactured in Singapore, and marketed throughout the world. Economic factors being what they are (rotten and uncertain), the smart corporation will reduce its capital investment by farming out to smaller independent firms many of the functions it used to support in house, from manufacturing products to billing customers.

These trends contribute to individual uncertainty and promote a new individualism. In a flexible, unforgiving marketplace, people will need greater adaptive skills and self-confidence. The new training programs of the virtual corporation may offer a softer and more humane visage to its employees, but it will not offer any soft jobs. The successful future employee will be the person with transferable skills, high self-motivation—and no demands on the company pension plan. This is the "new deal."

The rise of nannyism, seemingly the antithesis of all that is implied by this trend toward a sink-or-swim workplace, is often justified as a rational response to the virtual corporation. Loyalty ("some degree of commitment to company purpose and community for as long as the employee works there," as Robert Waterman describes it in a recent article with two co-authors) remains important to the virtual corporation, and indeed may be at a greater premium than before. Well-educated and well-trained employees are vital to its success, and training new employees is costlier than retraining old ones. The virtual corporation cannot offer job security, but it can offer another kind of security that comes from knowing that some of one's needs will be taken care of. This response, however, is more likely to foster *dependency* among employees than self-reliance.

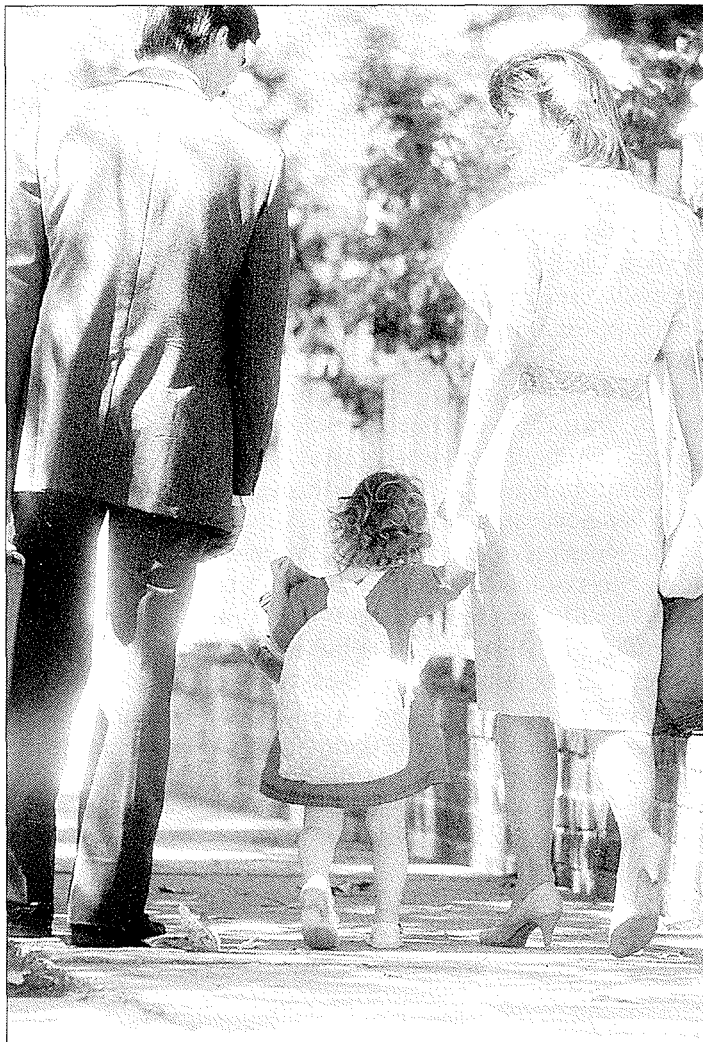
It is far from clear that even the economic rationale for the helping programs offered by the nanny corporation makes sense. Success stories have become a staple of an ever-expanding busi-

ness press eager for sexy copy. More than once, however, journalists have quoted authorities singing the praises of such a program while neglecting to mention that the speaker served as a consultant setting it up. An extensive survey by Richard Beinecke for Boston University's Institute for the Study of Economic Culture reveals that there are far fewer demonstrated economic payoffs from these programs than is often suggested. Claims of increased productivity, for example, are often based on subjective reports by employees themselves or on crude measurements, such as changes in employee absenteeism. Workers who show up because their sick child is at the company infirmary, or who stay loyal to the company because they simply cannot find any other decent and affordable child care in town, are not necessarily the strongest employees.

And what are the costs down the road of subsidizing a seemingly endless expansion of benefits? Forget California, where already some lawyers seeking to drum up business now offer potential clients stress tests that can then be used in legal proceedings against employers. Today, more than half of the *Fortune* 1,000 companies are paying for mental-health "gatekeepers" whose job it is to put a lid on employee insurance claims for mental-health care. As child care is transformed into dependent care and the list of benefits and therapies available lengthens, the sense that there are limits to what the corporation can and should do for its employees seems,

in some quarters, in danger of disappearing altogether. After hearing a luncheon speech on the health benefits of drinking water recently, one well-intentioned manager promptly purchased 2,000 water carafes to be placed on the desks of the corporate clerical staff.

Company-subsidized programs may also carry hidden costs for the rest of society. As corporations put more and more money into child-care programs for their employees, what will



Off to work we go? Corporate day care subsidies are common; on-site care is rare.

happen to the quality of the services available to others? Will the corporate programs sop up the best labor, for example, leaving second-rate child-care workers to tend the children of those outside the charmed corporate circle? Or consider an in-house fitness center, many of whose basic costs (such as space) can be easily and nearly invisibly subsidized through balance sheet complexities. Will the private health club that serves all comers be able to compete?

Most disturbing of all is the distant specter of a society in which many people receive important social benefits from their companies and thus see no need to provide for the have-nots through publicly funded programs or voluntaristic means. Or perhaps people who have reoriented their private lives toward the corporation will find the duties and demands of citizenship in the larger community beside the point. Today's health-care debate suggests that such concerns are not completely far-fetched. Opinion polls consistently show broad but shallow support for change, in large part because those already insured (disproportionately employees of large organizations) are happy with their own arrangements. For better or worse, the expected groundswell of public support needed to push through reform has never materialized.

Discussion of such real and potential downsides of the new corporate nannyism are generally considered taboo. But there are alternatives. All of the new benefits cost money—for example, money that comes directly out of salaries. Why not consider paying employees more, giving them the means (and the freedom) to decide on their own how to deal with their personal problems and challenges?

Every juncture of the new flexible work force and the new caring corporation is a tension point of contradictory expectations. The first is the tension between job insecurity and stress relief. Many features of the new humanism

in employee relations stem from a perception that stress is rising, not only among employees but in the institutions of public and private life. But a good deal of that stress is caused by the corporation itself, particularly in its inchoate vision of the temporary employee contract and its continued celebration of macho (male and female) workaholics who constantly sacrifice their personal and family lives to the demands of the job.

The ministrations of the nanny corporation can inadvertently worsen the very problems they seek to address. The in-house child-care program, rationalized as a means to relieve stress, promote diversity, and retain employees, may provide an excuse to work managers even longer. After all, now there is no need to worry about the children. Meanwhile, with family life reduced to a few hours of private time a week, other forms of social stress begin to emerge. Where else but to the humane corporation would a dependent employee turn for help? Down the road, the parent of older children finds that he or she has made career decisions that require a commitment of time that leaves no room for attending to the many needs of, say, preteens who are too old for child-care but too young to drive themselves to music lessons or soccer practice. What is the corporation going to do now?

The second tension springs from the dismemberment of existing communities inside (and outside) the corporation and the attempt to create a virtual corporation. Interchangeable gypsy job teams and portfolio careers will continue to undercut a sense of community in companies. The future corporation is said to depend on teamwork. The employer-employee contract, however, encourages self-aggrandizing career strategies. Nomadic managers, with no home in a single corporation, will have little motivation to compromise or sacrifice unless there is a negotiated, guaranteed payback in ad-

vance for Number One. Even their duties as citizens will have to be regulated by the corporation. Many communities today, for example, increasingly rely on help from public-private partnerships spearheaded by managers who "volunteer" their time for the public good only after the company guarantees in advance that their service will bring them later career benefits.

The third tension is the nearly utopian promotion of individualism, self-actualization, and empowerment at the same time that teamwork, tolerance, and communication are emphasized. This tension will only be exacerbated if boundaries between private and corporate life continue to blur. As employees' personal identity, family life, and physical habits are increasingly "commodified" into performance issues, and as growing numbers of employees are regarded as permanently impermanent in the organization, calls for a new humaneness and self-actualization will ring more and more hollow. Widespread cynicism and disloyalty are likely results—a particularly volatile combination when mixed with the

hyper-individualism of the virtual corporation.

Ultimately, the issues raised by the emergence of the new corporatism are questions of personal and collective character. The danger is that what seems a rational response to genuine problems in our society may in the end only raise those problems to a new pitch of urgency. New management doctrines that seek to make a virtue out of constant instability and insecurity will put the cynical, self-aggrandizing, hyper-individualistic character type that afflicts us today on a new footing and promote its spread. Meanwhile, the nanny corporation's protective cocoon for the chosen can only reduce our already diminished sense of citizenship and public responsibility. Historically, democratic capitalism has promoted a sense of mutuality, trust, and self-restraint among individuals, and it relies on these qualities for its continued survival. If the corporation now adds to the forces undermining them, these virtues may not hold.

CURRENT BOOKS

Conservatism at Wit's End

DEAD RIGHT. By David Frum. *New Republic/Basic Books*. 256 pp. \$23

The conservatism that came to dominate the Republican Party during the Reagan era was an amalgam of ideas, a brilliant philosophical cut-and-paste job aimed at satisfying the various groups that might come together to produce a national political majority. But like most cut-and-paste jobs, this one could cohere for only so long. David Frum, who has strong conservative credentials (including past service as an editorial page editor of the *Wall Street Journal*), offers a fresh explanation for why conservatism broke down during the Reagan-Bush era. Unlike many contemporary conservative intellectuals and pundits, Frum resists blindly celebrating Ronald Reagan or demonizing George Bush. Nor does he blame only the Democrats for deficits and big government. Instead, Frum forces conservatives to confront their contradictions and failures, both of thought and of deed, and then offers his allies a more rigorous philosophical program for future action.

Until the 1950s, America had no self-consciously conservative intellectual movement. It had long had a conservative disposition, traceable to the writings of Edmund Burke, the Federalists Alexander Hamilton and John Adams, and the southern Bourbons and aristocrats. After World War II, two sets of ideas emerged that came to be known as "conservative." On the one side was "traditionalism," which was rooted in an old-fashioned reverence for family, neighborhood, and the values passed on through generations. This conservatism was pessimistic, or perhaps realistic, about human nature. It was, in any event, without illusions about the destruction human beings could unleash absent the guidance of religion and the constraints imposed by families and communities. Two of the more impor-

tant traditionalist prophets were Russell Kirk, whose book *The Conservative Mind* (1953) played a major role in the postwar conservative revival, and sociologist Robert Nisbet, author of *The Quest for Community* (1952), which is now popular among those attempting to stage a new revival on the right. Traditionalists were critical of modern liberalism's veneration of the national state over localism and of its willingness to let social experimentation run roughshod over settled values and customs. As Frum explains, traditionalists often supported the free-market economy as a superior alternative to centralized state power, but they did not revere the market and were sometimes critical of its workings. Markets alone did not create values, virtue, or social order. To traditionalists, conservatives who said that adults should be free to trade pornography in the open marketplace were not true conservatives: They did not value the truly important things.

The other school of conservatism that arose after the war proceeded from different assumptions. Libertarian conservatives were animated less by worries over the destruction of old values than by a fear of the overweening modern state. In many ways libertarians were simply classical liberals who used John Locke, Thomas Jefferson, and John Stuart Mill to justify their faith in a minimal state. To libertarians, the market was everything, or almost everything. Friedrich von Hayek, the great architect of modern libertarianism, argued that any level of central economic planning could lead to totalitarianism, since planning inevitably centralized power in the hands of a small group claiming special authority based on alleged expertise. Some libertarians extended their critique of the state to the military; others came to justify an assertive American foreign policy in the name of containing communism. But to all of them, the rights of

the individual, not reverence for tradition, occupied the hallowed place in politics.

After World War II, the simultaneous rise of these two varieties of conservatism posed a direct challenge to what was called the American liberal consensus. The contradictory strains of conservatism were able to come together because they shared a common enemy: President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal. The job of conservative journalists and philosophers was to paper over the intellectual differences between the two sides. This was done brilliantly by the writers whom William F. Buckley, Jr., had drawn to the *National Review*, particularly Frank Meyer, a former Communist who wrote a regular column on conservative doctrine. It was Meyer who coined the term "fusionism" to describe the linking of the two philosophies. Meyer's insight was that the United States was, at heart, a traditionalist society. Therefore, American conservatives could use libertarian means to traditionalist ends. To dismantle big government was to empower family, church, and neighborhood.

For all its problems, fusionism carried conservatives right through the Reagan Revolution and provided Ronald Reagan with his basic principles. It is notable that Reagan's own practice of conservative politics was remarkably free of the resentments and angers that characterized significant segments of the right wing, most especially Joe McCarthy, George Wallace, and (depending on what face he was putting on his politics) Richard Nixon. Reagan almost never indulged in the "paranoid style" that is ascribed to what came to be called the New Right, although it, too, was part of his winning coalition. Fusionism worked for the conservative movement as long as there was a visible liberal enemy to



route—a national government seen as both a meddler and a purveyor of bad values. It continued to work for a while under Reagan as long as the economy grew and produced "Morning in America."

But sometime during Reagan's second term fusionism's happy synthesis began to break down, and the hard questions had to be confronted. Did liberty matter more than virtue, freedom more than tradition? Or was it the other way around? What about abortion? Was this an issue about personal liberty, as most libertarians would have it, or about morality, as traditionalists insisted? And what were conservatism's priorities? During the Reagan years, tax cuts took priority over school prayer and a host of other traditionalist issues. Yet the defense build-up was more important than smaller, more frugal government, and winning elections took priority over seriously trimming the welfare state. And what if the American people weren't as traditional as Meyer thought them to be? What if the rate of out-of-wedlock births kept rising under conservative rule, which is what happened in the Reagan years? What if violent crime went up, as it also did? And how could an increasingly fractured alliance hold together if economic times went bad, as they

eventually did after George Bush took over?

The fact that Reaganism blew up not during Reagan's presidency but during George Bush's led conservatives to the obvious strategy: Blame Bush First. Frum, to his credit, will have none of this. His central thesis is that conservatism failed right off under Reagan because conservatives lost their nerve—or never really found it. They lost their nerve because they understood, even without always admitting it, that the voters rather liked government:

However heady the 1980s may have looked to everyone else, they were for conservatives a testing and disillusioning time. Conservatives owned the executive branch for eight years and had great influence over it for four more; they dominated the Senate for six years; and by the end of the decade they exercised near complete control over the federal judiciary. And yet, every time they reached to undo the work of Franklin Roosevelt, Lyndon Johnson, and Richard Nixon—the work they had damned for nearly half a century—they felt the public's eyes upon them. They didn't dare, and they realized that they didn't dare. Their moment came and flickered.

Particularly disconcerting, Frum notes, was the fact that programs with conservative constituencies—farmers, veterinarians, the elderly, for example—increased greatly during the Reagan presidency. Frum concludes that “the conservatives who had lived through that attack of faintheartedness shamefacedly felt they had better hurry up and find something else to talk about.”

Frum sees three major strains of conservatism competing to replace (or revive) Reaganism. The closest to pure Reaganism are the “optimists” gathered around Jack Kemp, whom Frum describes as “wrong but wromantic.” Frum praises Kemp for his openness, but questions how his firm commitment to lower tax rates squares with his equally staunch support for programs to improve the inner city. The “moralists,” well represented

by William Bennett, want to instill virtue in the citizenry, but they don't always see the contradictions involved in condemning big government and hoping nonetheless that the state can promote virtue. The “nationalists,” foremost among them Pat Buchanan, share many of Bennett's attitudes on moral issues but would take conservatism in a very different direction—protectionist on trade, isolationist on foreign policy, and aggressive in defense of the interests and values of the white middle class. In pursuit of their own version of “left-wing identity politics,” Frum notes, the Buchanans are “truly multiculturalism's children.”

Frum proposes a profoundly different, largely libertarian, path and seems to be willing to lose elections if that is what it takes to be consistent. He wants conservatives to make the case for lean government—in both the economic and the social realms—knowing that this case will not always be popular. He does not, like Meyer, believe that Americans are inherently traditional. But he argues that smaller government can promote virtue, or at least certain virtues—among them frugality, hard work, and self-control—by forcing individuals to rely on their own resources. In Frum's view, the welfare state has become the largest enemy of virtue.

Frum's suggestion is certainly more intellectually rigorous than much of what passes from the lips of most conservative politicians. But while he admits that government remains a popular force, what he can't fully acknowledge is that government is popular for sound reasons. The democratic alternatives to conservatism—New Dealism and social democracy—have endured despite numerous practical difficulties and intellectual inconsistencies because majorities in most free electorates simply do not accept that market outcomes are automatically blessed. Free markets are useful and practical but not sanctified. If the market does not make health care affordable or available to all, voters will eventually come around to demanding it from government. That is why Medicare was passed. It's also why polls

show that despite President Clinton's problems on health care, most Americans favor government action to guarantee coverage for everyone. Voters may criticize government in the abstract, but they will turn to it to keep the air and water clean, the streets safe, and poor children fed.

Similarly, people value the communities that traditionalist conservatives so extol, but they also recognize that such communities can be disrupted or destroyed by economic change. So, in the name of conservative values, those who treasure these communities often turn to the state for protection or relief. What the moderate Left has always understood—and what conservatives usually try to deny—is that capitalism, in effect, socializes its problems. The state steps in to resolve difficulties

that capitalism can't. Where there is no money to be made, capitalism moves on. Government necessarily cleans up after it.

Political debate in the United States would certainly be more bracing if conservatives followed Frum's formula, for he proposes a clear contest between those who believe in government and those who do not. But I doubt very much that a majority will rally to his cause. Even among conservatives, as Frum well knows, the minimal state is destined to be a very hard sell.

—E. J. Dionne, Jr., a Wilson Center Fellow, is a columnist for the Washington Post, and is the author of *Why Americans Hate Politics* (1991).

The Revenge of Nationalism

BLOOD AND BELONGING: Journeys into the New Nationalism. By Michael Ignatieff. Farrar, Strauss. 263 pp. \$21

THE FUTURE OF GERMAN DEMOCRACY. Ed. by Robert Gerald Livingston and Volkmar Sander. Continuum. 168 pp. \$19.95

CIVIL WARS: From L.A. to Bosnia. By Hans Magnus Enzensberger. New Press. 144 pp. \$18

Until recently, it was fashionable in many academic and some political circles to assert that nationalism was finished. Indeed, for nearly two decades, a number of influential historians and social scientists on both sides of the Atlantic argued that nations had precious little to do with ethnicity or territory, that the symbols of nationhood—stamps, flags, national anthems—were old stage props dusted off for use in the

"invention of tradition." A nation was really little more than a social "construct" of fairly recent manufacture, an "imagined community" that was now destined for the rubbish heap of history. What the future held in store was a global community in which civilized, multiethnic societies would peacefully coexist.

The post-Cold War era has therefore come as something of a shock. To be sure, the most distinguishing characteristic of the new world disorder has been the disintegration of nation-states. But the process has in no way resembled what the imagined-communities scholars imagined. From Bosnia to Somalia, territorial demands have led to ethnic cleansing and mass refugee flights—hardly a basis for global harmony and peace. Even the dream of a single, federalist Europe run by bureaucrats sitting in Brussels has been shattered by

an upsurge in nationalist sentiment and the persistence of distinct cultural identities. In the old Soviet Union, the Communists had attempted to create a supranational state based on ideology, a vast bureaucracy, flags, war films, and parades. But beneath the veneer of Soviet brotherhood, the old nationalist passions continued to smolder. Their decisive eruption in 1989 perhaps best demonstrated the flimsiness of the social-construction theories: Nations do seem to have old and enduring connections with an ethnic (or tribal) identity, and the thirst for national self-determination cannot easily be quenched.

The return of nationalism has triggered a fresh series of studies whose authors seek to understand the phenomenon rather than to deny its existence. One of the most probing and sprightly works to date is Michael Ignatieff's *Blood and Belonging*. Ignatieff, the author of *The Russian Album* (1987), among other books, is a keen observer and graceful writer. The work at hand, which is based on a series on nationalism produced for the BBC, combines historical analysis with an account of his travels to Croatia, Germany, Ukraine, Quebec, Kurdistan, and Northern Ireland. A self-described cosmopolitan who grew up in Canada, studied in the United States, and taught in Britain, Ignatieff aims neither to decry nor to praise nationalism. Instead, he seeks to dissect it. Unfortunately, as his book progresses, Ignatieff becomes mired in his own artificial distinctions and contradictory definitions.

The birth of the nation-state is often traced to the signing of the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, which ended the Thirty Years' War. The treaty recognized the right of rulers to determine the religion of their subjects and marked the rise of a new European state system dominated by France, England, Austria, and Russia. Religious wars were replaced by wars over the balance of power among nations.

In the 19th century, irredentist movements sprang up all over Europe, most powerfully among the various German-speaking statelets and principalities. After Napoleon's invasion and occupation of these lands in 1806,

philosopher Johann Fichte and other German writers began to espouse the notion of a cultural and ethnic nation—the nation as representing the *Volk*. As Ignatieff notes, "All the peoples of 19th-century Europe under imperial subjection—the Poles and Baltic peoples under the Russian yoke, the Serbs under Turkish rule, the Croats under the Hapsburgs—looked to the German ideal of ethnic nationalism when articulating their right to self-determination." When Germany, under Prussian guidance, achieved unification in 1871 and rose to world power status, "it was a demonstration of the success of ethnic nationalism to the rest of Europe."

Though Ignatieff does not mention it, Germany's peaceful reunification in 1989 again served as a model for some of the Balkan peoples. The Slovenians and Croats, whose independence Germany recognized in 1991, were partly emulating Germany's own claim to self-determination. Moreover, as Ignatieff does make clear, the viciousness of the Serb war against the Slovenians, Croats, and Bosnians is not the product of a warped conscience peculiar to the Balkans but "stems in part from a pathetic longing to be good Europeans—that is, to import the West's murderous ideological fashions."

But Germany's quest for self-determination remains troubled. While the fall of the Berlin Wall resolved the country's territorial status, it reopened the question of a German identity. In the essays collected in *The Future of German Democracy*, authors ranging from the former chancellor Helmut Schmidt to the novelist Günter Grass attempt to tackle this question. Many of the essays stress that the unexpected collapse of the East German regime helps to account for the political turbulence Germany is now experiencing. West Germans—not East Germans—had become habituated to partition. "Americans hardly noticed at the time that among many [West] Germans . . . enthusiasm for unity was very faint," observes Robert Gerald Livingston, director of the American Institute for Contemporary German Studies.

As a consequence, some former East Ger-

mans feel the need to assert their Germanness. As historian Heinrich-August Winkler describes it, "Aggressive behavior towards foreigners and especially the socially weakest among them" is a way of proving that one is a real German. But the problem is even more complex. All Germans will have to come to terms with the idea of living in a multicultural society. The leading Christian Democratic politician, Heiner Geissler, is on the mark when he declares that "the people in Germany will have to be told in the future they will be living with more, not fewer, foreigners." The challenge for the Germans, as for other European peoples, is to reconcile traditional notions of nationhood with the influx of refugees and immigrants from Africa and Asia.

The far greater challenge, though, lies in grappling with ethnic upsurges in places such as Bosnia and Rwanda. For Ignatieff, the key is to distinguish between ethnic and civic nationalism. Like Harvard University sociologist Liah Greenfeld, who introduced this distinction in her monumental book *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (1992), Ignatieff cites Britain as the first country to develop a healthy and sound civic nationalism. Ignatieff concedes that Britain was dominated by the English but stresses that it successfully combined other traditions—Welsh, Scottish, if not Irish—with the development of democratic institutions. Most important, Britain, unlike Germany, never made blood and ethnicity the criterion for legal citizenship. Under civic nationalism, says Ignatieff, citizenship is based on sworn loyalty to a constitution, and differences between individuals are respected. Ethnic nationalism, by contrast, insists on the link between ethnicity and nation, and on the exclusion of outsiders. Ironically, ethnic nationalism often takes its most virulent form when the differences between two peoples are most minute.

Yet this division between ethnic and civic nationalism is a bit too tidy. In reality, the two often shade into each other. Britain and other civic nations are scarcely immune to the ethnic tensions that trouble other societies. Canada, for example, represents Ignatieff's perfect civic nation: It allows its minorities a wide assortment of rights through a democratic structure. In Quebec,

French is spoken everywhere; not even signs can display in English. Moreover, alone among Canadian provinces, Quebec has the right to recruit only French-speaking immigrants. Yet the Quebecois still insist on sovereignty. "A state is the only way to protect the identity of a people, you know," says Claude Beland, the leading Quebec banker. "Identity I define as the harmony between your values and your actions." Quebec highlights the insatiable character of nationalism: It perceives threats where none exist.

In truth, Ignatieff's notion of civic nationalism is something of an oxymoron. No real nationalist can be bought off with an amorphous promise of democratic rights. Oppressed people such as the Kurds scarcely know what the term means. And why should they? Even the United States is not a perfect civic nation. Despite its universalist claims, the United States was led from its origins until the 1960s by a largely Anglo-Saxon elite. The ideal of the melting pot was not to create a multicultural society, but rather to integrate immigrants into the existing Anglo-Saxon American culture. As the wars over multiculturalism and affirmative action indicate, the breakdown of Anglo-American dominance triggered a new struggle over the ethnic definition of the United States that remains unresolved.

In fact, as Hans Magnus Enzensberger observes in *Civil Wars*, the same bloody impulses that have manifested themselves in Bosnia are turning up in Los Angeles. Enzensberger, Germany's leading literary and political critic, observes at the outset of his book that most varieties of modern nationalism have to be distinguished from their 19th-century predecessor. Most nationalists of our time more closely resemble armed mobs than heroic guerrillas. Their goal is not to create a nation but to revel in sheer destruction. In a horrifying vignette, Enzensberger tells of an armed band destroying a hospital in Mogadishu. Far from being a military operation, it was wanton violence. The perpetrators slit open beds and smashed x-ray machines and oxygen generators, even though they knew that they might need the facilities them-

selves within hours. No matter. "In the collective running amok," notes Enzensberger, "the concept of 'future' disappears."

Unfortunately, the future seems to hold a good deal more such "nationalism" in store. The most recent manifestation came in Rwanda, where the Hutus slaughtered the Tutsis while the Western nations wrung their hands. Indeed, these ethnic upsurges pose a particular challenge to the West. The confusion was perhaps best illustrated when, toward the end of the Cold War, the United States actively sought to perpetuate the existence of the Soviet empire for fear of East European nationalist desires. President George Bush went to rather extensive lengths to prop up Mikhail Gorbachev's ailing regime, and his recognition of the new Baltic countries was notably reluctant. The Baltic states, however, did not represent ethnic groups bent on exterminating one another; they were countries seeking to recover, not establish, their right to self-determination.

The question of national self-determination will continue to present an all-but-intractable problem for the West, both in domestic politics and in international dealings. Even something that looks as innocent as multiculturalism has its own explosive potential for separating communities rather than creating broad ethnic harmonies. The problems are no less complex in non-Western countries. Per-

haps instead of drawing artificial distinctions between civic and ethnic nationalism, scholars might usefully draw contrasts among three varieties of ethnic nationalism: the one that represents legitimate aspirations for independence in response to oppression by an imperial power (as in the case of the Baltic states), the one that represents illegitimate claims based on spurious grievances (see Quebec), and the one that represents nothing more than warlords bent on ethnic cleansing (as in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia). The first should be encouraged, the second should be shunned, and the last should not even be dignified with the label "nationalist."

Given the horrors of Rwanda and Bosnia, it is understandable that the authors of these three books view the concept of nationalism with apprehension. But in finally taking nationalism seriously, these writers risk making the same mistake as the imagined-community scholars. Both sides ignore the positive aspect of nationalism. The Baltic states, the Czech Republic, Hungary—these represent the successes of nationalism. They provide room for a cautious optimism.

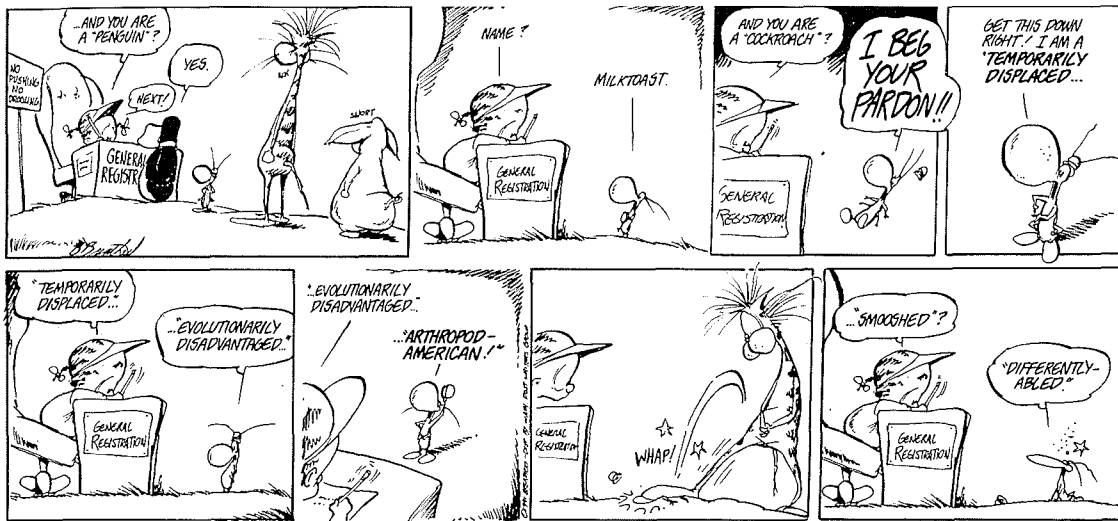
—Jacob Heilbrunn is University Fellow at the Center for German and European Studies at Georgetown University.

Beyond Multiculturalism

DICTATORSHIP OF VIRTUE: Multiculturalism and the Battle for America's Future. By Richard Bernstein. Knopf. 367 pp. \$25

New York Times correspondent Richard Bernstein, who at one time reported from France, believes that America's current battles over multicul-

turalism are "the *dérapiage* [rough translation: the "slippery slope"] of the civil rights movement." Just as Robespierre's insistence on virtue led to terror, Bernstein cautions, so the campaign to root out racism and sexism in school is the first step on the road to Maoist-style thought control. (Bernstein also worked in China.)



Bernstein certainly finds enough examples to justify his alarm. At the University of New Hampshire, a writing instructor's illustration of a simile—"belly-dancing is like jello on a plate with a vibrator under the plate"—was defined as sexual harassment by university bureaucrats, in part because of methods of investigation that "bear a chilling resemblance to those of true dictatorships." The University of Pennsylvania tells students that if "you are perceived to be racist, sexist, heterosexist, ethnocentric, biased against those with religions different from yours, or intolerant of disabilities, you must be willing to examine and change that behavior." The Modern Language Association asserts that describing feminist scholarship as "partisan," "narrow," or "lacking in rigor" can be defined as "anti-feminist harassment." Figures compiled by the National Institute Against Prejudice and Violence include, as examples of "ethnoviolence" a letter from a white student claiming that Louis Farrakhan is a bigot and a campus newspaper article that claimed that "many black students gained entrance into universities they were neither qualified nor prepared to attend."

In Bernstein's view, the multicultural police—academic reformers charged with implementing affirmative action policies and complying with feminist concerns—are ambitious,

power-seeking, and ruthless. Most disturbing, they have come to dominate academia as a kind of "bureaucracy of the good." Convinced of their virtue, they are intolerant of those who disagree with them and oblivious to anyone else's rights. "The whole point of the liberal revolution that gave rise to the 1960s was to free us from somebody else's dogma," Bernstein writes, "but now the very same people who fought for personal liberation a generation ago are striving to impose on others a secularized religion involving a set of values and codes that they believe in, disguising it behind innocuous labels like 'diversity training' and 'respect for difference.' "

Not only are the multiculturalists authoritarian, says Bernstein, but they are also hypocritical. They actually detest traditional cultures. They want everyone to speak in one tongue—the language of the Left (which, ironically, is Western and hegemonic). And they hate the one country, the United States, that has done more than any other to make diversity real.

Bernstein's indictment has been heard before. (How many times do we have to hear that the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women distorted statistics on the failure of young girls in school?) But his account of academia run amok differs from others by

offering an explanation of how this peculiar situation has come to pass. The story of multiculturalism, in his words, is really a story about generations.

Bernstein relates the life of Gizella Braun, who, like my grandparents, arrived in the United States from Hungary in 1920. Awful things happened to Braun: near deportation, her husband's death when the children were young, a loveless second marriage, the Great Depression. Good things did too: assimilation, prosperity, successful children. How is this story of the struggles of a typical immigrant different from what is happening now? It isn't. "What has changed is our attitude toward ourselves, our unwillingness to see the American identity as worthy enough to expect newcomers to adopt it as their own."

Generations on either side of Gizella Braun have little sense of what genuine diversity means. Before America began to experience mass immigration in the late 19th century, elites were content to imagine America as a culturally uniform Protestant republic. Today's multicultural police also strive for uniformity. They want everyone to conform to their own deeply ingrained views of what true racial and sexual equality resembles: living in one well-sensitized "harmonious garden," as Bernstein puts it. Indeed, although they deify diversity and globalization, they really don't seem to understand it. They are American innocents bewildered by real-world difference.

Today, near the Queens neighborhood that Gizella Braun made home, live hundreds of thousands of immigrants from all parts of the world. It was, ironically, members of these "minority groups" who opposed the efforts of the New York City Board of Education to teach respect for gay lifestyles throughout the public school curriculum. "We came [to the school board meeting] saying that God created Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve," one black minister told Bernstein. Queens is a place where the desire to "make it" often comes into conflict with a suspicion of change—but neither of these at-

titudes is acceptable to the multiculturalists. Many recent arrivers, for instance, desperately want to hold on to their religious beliefs but know full well that coming to America means that their children may abandon the faith. By dismissing the more traditional views of many immigrants and treating them collectively as "people of color," the multiculturalists pave over real diversity in favor of a uniformity that exists only in their political fantasies.

Moreover, as Bernstein shows, these immigrants see themselves as victims neither of American imperialism nor of middle-class values. They take rather quickly to American culture. Bilingual education drives them up the wall. Their great fear is not discrimination but crime. Yet the multiculturalists, in their contempt for "bourgeois" aspirations and values, come dangerously close to depriving recent arrivals of the very advantages that enabled the multiculturalists themselves to rise to power in universities and foundations.

Dictatorship of Virtue tells a powerful story, even if Bernstein's reporting is often sloppy. (Glenn Loury is an economist at Boston University, not a sociologist at Boston College.) Moreover, for reasons that make little sense, Bernstein concludes that the multiculturalists have won the war. Their rhetoric, he writes, "has the rest of us on the run, unable to respond for fear of being branded uncultural, or racist." The rebellious disenchantment of the 1960s may not have had that much of an impact on the national mood. After all, Ronald Reagan was elected in 1980. But, according to Bernstein, it did have a remarkable impact on elite institutions such as universities, the media, and foundations—all places where multiculturalism thrives. This triumph constitutes a "secret victory" for those who would install a dictatorship of virtue in the United States. They protest their powerlessness, but it is they "who have come to determine much of the moral tone, the orthodoxies, and the taboos of life in the 1990s."

To be sure, there is a problem here, and not just at universities. An obsession with victimization, a fear of elitism, and a penchant for

equality of outcomes are distinctive features of recent American experience. Perhaps the crowning achievement of this perspective is the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990—which forces many businesses to accommodate a wide variety of mental and physical conditions—for it puts the stamp of approval of a Republican president (George Bush) on the idea of using government to enforce a multiculturalist ideal. But the war is hardly over. After all, who won the crucial battles Bernstein himself describes?

His fascinating account of a writing requirement at the University of Texas that would substitute rank political indoctrination for English composition is the story of how that proposal *lost*. What made efforts to dumb down the public school curriculum in Brookline, Massachusetts (in order to de-emphasize European history) so noteworthy, as Bernstein notes, is the fact that so many parents fought back and *won*. New York City had to drop the idea of teaching first graders about sex, and the superintendent was

forced to resign. If Bernstein really believed the war was over, his book would not be as highly spirited as it is—nor would there be so many other similar books.

Dictatorship of Virtue is certainly the best of the anti-p.c. critiques. However, it may be precisely this type of overheated counterattack that is getting in the way right now. Bernstein says he doesn't want to be "melodramatic," but he is. He knows that "we are not in danger of the guillotine," yet he can't resist the analogy. Concluding, he writes: "The time has come for liberals to recapture the high ground from the demagogues of diversity, to declare their diversity fake, fraudulent, superstitious, cranky, sanctimonious, monotonous." Actually, that time has passed. The time now is for a sober discussion. If education remains the best path to a life of reason, intelligence, and faith in merit—the story of Gizella Braun—then a less hyperbolic, more nuanced debate ought to be the next step.

—Alan Wolfe is University Professor and professor of sociology at Boston University.

OTHER TITLES

Contemporary Affairs

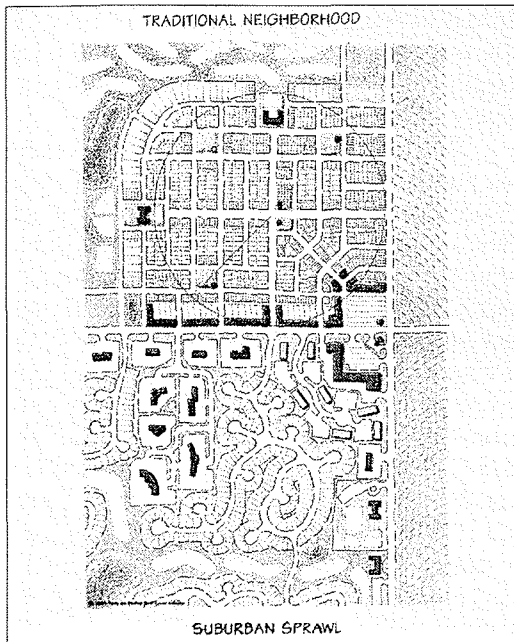
A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE: Reshaping the American Suburb. By Philip Langdon. Univ. of Mass. 288 pp. \$29.95

THE NEW URBANISM: Toward an Architecture of Community. By Peter Katz. McGraw-Hill. 245 pp. \$49.95

What may be most astonishing about the vast suburban landscape created in America during the past 50 years is not its scandalous ugliness or its protean vigor, but the fact that it was built virtually without benefit of town planning. America's town-planning tradition, older than the nation itself, perished when its

practitioners retired or died during the long post-1929 construction standstill of depression and war. The postwar generation of designers and architects, steeped in European modernism, regarded the old town planning as quaint and viewed the American desire to live in a single-family house surrounded by a green lawn with disdainful incredulity. So by and large they decided—with the happy concurrence of developers and many public authorities—to have nothing to do with suburbia. Instead, they chose to mastermind urban renewal and other disastrous schemes in the cities.

Today, the New Urbanist planners and architects, led by the Miami-based husband-wife team of Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-



Zyberk, are struggling to revive the American town-planning tradition. The essence of the New Urbanist idea is conveyed by Katz's subtitle: *Toward an Architecture of Community*. The New Urbanists argue that most of the postwar suburb's key features, from its broad roads to its generous setback requirements, work against the constant chance contacts between strangers needed to create a public realm. The remedy, say the New Urbanists, is in the plan: Build houses close to the street and closer together. Lay the streets out in a grid so that people can walk from one place to another. Narrow roads to slow down the cars. Mix housing types so that the mechanic can rent an apartment over the doctor's detached garage and the empty nesters can leave their five-bedroom house for a smaller place without departing for a distant retirement community. Most of these ideas are presented with textbook clarity by Langdon, a journalist who writes frequently about architecture.

So far, the signal New Urbanist accomplishment has been Duany and Plater-Zyberk's acclaimed community of Seaside, Florida, where construction began in 1981. Peter Calthorpe's Laguna West is being built on 1,000 acres outside Sacramento, California, and on the draw-

ing boards is Playa Vista, a planned community in Los Angeles designed by Elizabeth Moule and Stefanos Polyzoides. These and nearly two dozen other stunning New Urbanist communities—many still only in the planning stages—can be seen in Katz's lavishly illustrated book, which also includes brief essays by several New Urbanist leaders.

Yale University's Vincent Scully, the movement's *eminence grise*, concedes in the Katz volume that "New Suburbanism" might be a more accurate name for the movement. It is not that the group neglects cities but that "the *new* theme that links these projects is the redesign of that vast area in which most Americans now live." The critics who complain that the New Urbanists do not offer solutions to the problems of the inner cities are themselves heirs to a modernist tradition that, as Scully notes, helped destroy the city and that now has practically nothing to offer either cities or suburbs. (Both the New Urbanists and their critics, one might add, seem to be naive about the capacity of good design to overcome deeply rooted social problems.) There are other challenges to the New Urbanists' ideas: Do Americans really *want* to live together in towns? How do the planners propose to repair the thousands of square miles of suburban sprawl already in existence? Perhaps, however, it is too much to ask them to make up overnight for 50 years of lost time. Americans are continuing to surge into suburbia, and the New Urbanists have the only fresh ideas about how to shape the world they will make there.

RACE AND CULTURE: A World View. By Thomas Sowell. Basic. 331 pp. \$25

When European and Lebanese businessmen competed with each other in the cities and towns of 18th-century colonial West Africa, the Lebanese won hands down. In Malaysia during the 19th century, Chinese workers sapped trees on rubber plantations at twice the rate of the natives. Soldiers of German ancestry have commanded armies under Russian czars and American presidents. Most of today's mainstream social scientists can explain none of this, says Sowell, an

economist and senior fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution. They spend too much time, he charges, analyzing "initial conditions" that don't affect results and "advantages" that don't really exist. "Whenever group A outperforms group B in any given set of circumstances," notes Sowell, "those circumstances are said to 'favor' group A."

But this kind of thinking obscures genuine differences in "cultural capital": "the specific skills, general work habits, saving propensities, and attitudes toward education and entrepreneurship" possessed by different cultural groups, Sowell says. The Lebanese, for instance, entered West African markets with far less financial capital than did the Europeans. But they chose to live meagerly, save money, and employ their entire families. They became more familiar with their customers and were better able to bargain and extend lines of credit. In short, culturally shaped behavior was the key: "The Europeans simply did not choose to subject themselves to many of the conditions which the Lebanese endured."

Sowell calls on researchers to start "regarding groups as having their own internal cultural patterns, antedating the environment in which they currently find themselves and transcending the beliefs, biases, and decisions of others." The reason scholars tend not to, says Sowell, is twofold. First, most social scientists fail to apply an international perspective to their work. A one-country analysis might examine Chinese retailers in Jamaica and suggest that they prospered for reasons peculiar to Jamaica. But that fails to account for similar kinds of Chinese success in Indonesia, Malaysia, Peru, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, and elsewhere.

More important, Sowell believes, scholars have an "understandable revulsion" toward admitting that "some ways of doing things—some cultures—are better in some respects than others." Relativism continues to reign in the academy. Yet Sowell argues that some cultures are clearly more suited to certain economic roles than are others.

Through copious examples gathered from around the world, *Race and Culture* makes a strong case for "the reality, persistence, and consequences of cultural differences." So the book

succeeds at complicating a debate in which all differences in group performance are now automatically written off as consequences of politics or prejudice. Unfortunately, Sowell can be just as tendentious in his argumentation as the social scientists he criticizes. Perhaps most prominently, he essentially dismisses the impact of racial discrimination on a group's economic success. Where discrimination exists, he argues, it must reflect real differences in group productivity—an argument that ignores mounds of evidence to the contrary. Coupled with his familiar diatribes against affirmative action and multiculturalism, this sort of selective fact finding makes the book at times read more like a polemic than a serious scholarly study.

Philosophy & Religion

THE THERAPY OF DESIRE: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics. *By Martha C. Nussbaum. Princeton. 558 pp. \$29.95*

A health-care plan drawn up by Martha Nussbaum would surely cover visits to philosophers. They are the mind's doctors—or at least they once were. That they are no longer so, and that systems of philosophy hold little interest today for anyone outside the academy, is one measure of our distance from the Hellenistic period (from the death of Alexander the Great in 323 B.C. to the suicide of Cleopatra VII in 31 B.C.), when the question "How should one live?" drove the philosophical enterprise and the answer mattered equally to aristocrat and slave.

Nussbaum, a professor of philosophy, classics, and comparative literature at Brown University, begins her ambitious and impressive book with Aristotle, who accepted the idea that ethical philosophy should resemble medicine in its dedication to the practical goal of ameliorating human life. She goes on to explore how a medical and therapeutic conception of philosophy played itself out in the three principal Hellenistic schools of thought—the Epicurean, the Skeptic, and the Stoic.

All three schools worked to create a healing community that strove to counter the negative

effects of competition. In the new community, the patient was led to recognize that his desires were unhealthy, infected by the pursuit of harmful goals. He was guided toward a state of release from every kind of attachment and from domination by the common emotions—anger, worry, love, and the fear of death. The passions, the emotions, had to go—or at least be strongly tempered. With imperturbability would come *eudaimonia*, or “human flourishing.”

For all her admiration of this argument, Nussbaum cannot help wondering about the price one pays for denying emotion. Does extirpation of the passions surrender some essential component of one’s humanity as well? Does freedom from pain and disturbance keep people from commitment to anything outside their own virtue? What is left to link a person to fellow human beings? In the end, Nussbaum cannot accept the arguments for radical emotional surgery or envisage a community that is both self-respecting and entirely free from anger. Emotion and morality are as inseparable from each other as emotion and rationality.

The men who founded the three great schools were prolific writers, but very little of their work survives. We are greatly dependent for our knowledge of their doctrines on later sources, particularly the Roman writers Cicero, Lucretius, and Seneca. The incompleteness of the evidence can make argument tricky, particularly when poetry—Senecan drama or Lucretian epic—must provide the philosophical argument. Though Nussbaum is an ingenious reader, her conclusions sometimes seem willed as much as argued. Moreover, she may be too determined to put a contemporary face on the Hellenistic philosophies and to weight them too heavily with meaning for the late 20th century.

Yet in the cause of an enlightened dispassion, Nussbaum writes with an abiding passion, which her ancestor philosophers would have forgiven in spite of themselves. More important, she restores philosophy to its ministering function (long since assumed by religion). In these fervent pages, it is once again the mind’s balm, the heart’s release.

Arts & Letters

THE ART OF THE PERSONAL ESSAY. Ed. by Phillip Lopate. Anchor. 777 pp. \$30

There is no subject too quotidian or too delicate for the personal essayist. It may be a moth dying on Virginia Woolf’s window sill, or Seneca’s asthma, or Walter Benjamin’s experience of smoking hashish. “At the core of the personal essay,” explains Lopate in a spirited introduction to his anthology, “is the supposition that there is a certain unity to human experience.”

The personal essay’s fundamental departure from the more traditional formal essay is its familiarity. The author aims to connect intimately with the reader. When Montaigne (1533–92) ruminates about a severely deformed child, he is imploring the reader to join him in his personal confrontation with revulsion and prejudice. Beyond this unique qualification, the form of the personal essay is as fluid as its subject matter. Lu Hsun, one of the most famous modern Chinese writers (1881–1936), often slips into stream of consciousness reveries in a discussion of recovery from illness that ranges from elephants to blossoms and fruit. Samuel Johnson (1709–84) describes the boarders who have occupied his room chronologically and methodically: “The first tenant was a tailor. . . . The next was a young woman. . . . An elderly man of grave aspect, read the bill, and bargained for the room. . . . A short meagre man in a tarnish’d waistcoat, desired to see the garret. . . . At last [the landlady] took in two sisters. . . . Such, Mr. Rambler, are the changes which have happened in the narrow space where my present fortune has fixed my residence.”

Yet no matter the form, the goal is always to peel away artifice and reveal human complexity. Says Lopate, “The plot of a personal essay . . . consists in watching how far the essayist can drop past his or her psychic defenses toward deeper levels of honesty.” The essayist reflects a moment, showing us “how the world comes at another person, the irritations, jubiliations, aches and pains, humorous flashes.” In the end, the essayist dissolves, leaving readers alone to reconcile the reflection with their own reality. “The trick [for the personal essayist] is to realize

that one is not important, except insofar as one's example can serve to elucidate a more widespread human trait and make readers feel a little less lonely and freakish."

CAMP GROUNDS: Style and Homosexuality. Ed. by David Bergman. Univ. of Mass. 312 pp. \$45

"To talk about camp is to betray it," wrote Susan Sontag in 1964. Sontag then proceeded to betray it at length, defining camp as "a certain sort of aestheticism" that elevates objects "not in terms of Beauty, but in terms of degree of artifice, of stylization." Camp offers a chance to be serious about the frivolous (e.g., Tiffany lamps) and frivolous about the serious ("Swan Lake"). Even though "homosexuals . . . constitute the vanguard—and the most articulate audience—of Camp," Sontag wrote, "Camp taste is much more than homosexual taste." As a purely aesthetic phenomenon, camp remains "disengaged, depoliticized, or at least, apolitical."

For nearly 30 years, academics considered Sontag's "Notes on Camp" the last word on the subject. But in today's world of cultural studies, gay studies, and women's studies, new interpretations of camp are emerging. Bergman, a professor of English at Towson State University, and most of the essayists he includes in *Camp Grounds*, believe Sontag failed to fully grasp the essential connection between camp and "homosexual culture." Far more than simply a type of aestheticism, camp has a subversive, or even emancipatory, potential: It represents a form of protest against conventional gender roles. Camp works by "drawing attention to the artifice of the gender system through exaggeration, parody, and juxtaposition," writes Bergman.

While the most obvious example of the politically subversive potential of camp remains the drag queen and his/her exaggerated feminine mannerisms, the essays here bring up far more ambiguous instances. Jack Babuscio invokes camp to explain why many gay moviegoers identify not with char-

acters *in* a movie but with the personal lives of the stars themselves: Gays and those who "camp" understand how nebulous are the apparently sharp boundaries between play-acting and "acting normal." Pamela Robertson, writing about Mae West, argues that "camp enabled [her fans] to view women's everyday roles as female impersonation."

Camp Grounds is a valuable corrective to the blinkered aestheticism that Sontag's essay encouraged. Not only has camp been a useful political tool for homosexuals, but, as Bergman notes, our culture's "natural" and normative heterosexuality has always been one of camp's central targets. Unfortunately, Bergman and many of his contributing essayists often press their claims too far, ascribing to camp a political simplemindedness that looks suspiciously like the moral (or moralistic) platform of a trendy academic of the '90s. Camp can make a political statement, but it is not merely a political statement. If camp serves as a reminder to the complacent that all chosen roles are, to some degree, theatrical, the lesson should apply as much to the role of serious academic as to any other.

THE OLD MODERNS: Essays on Literature and Theory. By Denis Donoghue. Knopf. 303 pp. \$27.50

To many contemporary literary critics, the modernist tradition, with its emphasis on subjectivity and the internalization of images and events, is not only elitist and reactionary but dead, replaced by the more open, accessible, and democratic playfulness of postmodernism. Donoghue, who teaches English and American literature at New York University, begs to differ. The "interiority" of modernist writers, he argues, is an authentic and enduring realm of imaginative freedom: "Thinking, feeling, reverie: the pleasures of these are self-evident, they don't have to be judged upon their results or upon their consequence as action in the world."

In *The Old Moderns*, which contains 17 elegant essays, some previously published, Donoghue defends literary subjectivity on another front as well. Today's critics impose upon literature their own political or philosophical beliefs, often purposefully stifling the voice of the author. In fact, literary theory has hardened into such dogma that there's not much one can do with it except force



"it upon your poems as if they could have no other desire than to receive such overbearing attention." Donoghue argues that literature should be read as literature—that is, with disinterested aesthetic appreciation, "as practices of experience to be imagined." These practices are related to such areas as religion, politics, and economics, but they should not be confused with them.

Donoghue's own critical restraint begins with his definition of modernism. For the sake of argument he settles upon one particular meaning, but acknowledges that "a different account of it would be just as feasible." Donoghue links the rise of literary modernism to the growth of cities in the 19th century, specifically to the situation of individuals who found their individuality threatened by mass society and the crowd. In response, the modernist mind turned inward, to ponder the validity of its feelings. Modernism was thus the result of writers perceiving "their development as an inner drama, rather than as a willing engagement with the contents of the objective culture."

Donoghue continues to demonstrate his notion of restraint in his close but never overbearing reading of works by such modernist heroes as Henry James, Wallace Stevens, W. B. Yeats, James Joyce, and T. S. Eliot. In essays refreshingly free of literary jargon, Donoghue succeeds at making the literature more important than the criticism.

Ironically, Donoghue notes, theorists who judge literature by its political relevance undermine the power of art to affect the world: "The supreme merit of art is that it contradicts the version of reality that obtains in social and economic life." Moreover, "introspection is not the puny, self-regarding act it is commonly said to be but an act of ethical and moral bearing by which the mind, in privacy, imagines lives other than its own. The chief justification for reading literature is that it trains the reader in the exercise of that imagination."

THE KING OF INVENTORS: A Life of Wilkie Collins. By Catherine Peters. Princeton Univ. Press. 502 pp. \$29.95

No one unnerves quite like Wilkie Collins. This writer of thrillers and mysteries was to the Victorian age what Stephen King and Ellery Queen are to ours. Even today his novels remind one of the

power of words to immobilize and terrify. Collins (1824–89) invented the "novel of sensation," and his acknowledged masterwork, the hugely popular *Woman in White* (1860), has yet to be bettered. The "'creepy' effect, as of pounded ice dropped down the neck," as his contemporary Edmund Yates put it, comes not only from an ability to spring unearthly images on the reader ("the figure of a solitary Woman, dressed from head to foot in white garments"), but from the way these phantasms crop up in the most everyday of locations. Collins is also known for his precise catalogue of the byzantine moral and sexual codes of his era. As Peters's detailed biography suggests, Collins acquired at least some of his expertise from his own spectacularly polygamous life. He spent most of his adult years with two women, Martha Rudd and Caroline Graves, marrying neither and having children by both.

"Keeping" mistresses was hardly novel, of course, and having a double life never got the average Victorian gentleman barred from any club. But Collins's doubling was different. He never undertook to conceal the staid bohemianism of his common-law marriages. And while Rudd and Graves made little headway in the public world, and the taint of bastardy certainly handicapped his children's rise to respectability in later life, Collins was able to circulate freely among the cream as well as the dregs of London's society.

Unfortunately, Peters is reluctant to make any explicit connections between Collins's life and work. She never asks how an author whose best work depended on titillation, terror, and transgression managed to create for himself a space of unparalleled domestic tranquillity (in fact, two such spaces) outside social boundaries. But Peters does explain why Collins's writing took a nose dive after 1868. A mere 45, he was apparently at the peak of his powers, having produced since 1860 not just his two most famous novels (*The Woman in White* and *The Moonstone*) but also such gems as *No Name* and *Armadale*. Most likely, his best work was done during the decade he spent being tutored by and collaborating with Charles Dickens. After his mentor's death in 1870, Collins yielded completely to his penchant for pedantic explanation. Worse, he seems to have forgotten how to combine social analysis with spine-tingling *frisson*.

Collins concluded an 1888 magazine article with

a sort of guilty pride that he would be remembered principally as the author of "the stuff that raised the famous Blush . . . on the soft round object, sacred to British claptrap—the cheek of a young person." The self-tribute is fitting. In blushes—and in shivers—the body registers the mind's shame, disturbance, or arousal. Perhaps Collins's greatest genius was to determine how to produce such reactions in his readers while avoiding them in his own life.

History

THE AMERICAN PRESIDENCY: An Intellectual History. By Forrest McDonald. *Univ. of Kansas.* 516 pp. \$29.95

Having experienced the tyranny of the British king, the Founding Fathers—like most Americans—were ambivalent toward, even fearful of, executive power. But after enduring the absence of a strong executive during the Articles of Confederation, they recognized the need for it. That left them with a problem McDonald calls the "central dilemma of constitutional government." The safety and well-being of the nation, writes McDonald, require a quasi-monarchical figure who can "operate outside or above the law." In his 15th book, McDonald, a professor of intellectual history at the University of Alabama and a leading authority on the Constitution, describes how the Framers avoided their worst fears and still managed to build an office that "has been responsible for less harm and more good, in the nation and in the world, than perhaps any other secular institution in history."

McDonald explains that he undertook this study partially because of the "striking reversal of ideological positions concerning the presidency that has taken place in recent decades." Until the 1960s, liberals generally supported increasing the authority of the executive at the expense of Congress and the Supreme Court, while conservatives stood for congressional sovereignty and local government. During the Vietnam War, the pattern began to reverse itself, with conservatives coming to champion greater power for the executive branch. The result has been a presidency with authority far exceeding the conception set forth by the authors of the Constitution. McDonald sets out to explore "whether the enormous growth of the responsibili-

ties vested in the American Presidency has been necessary, practical or desirable."

McDonald begins his study with a lengthy look at the presidency's theoretical underpinnings in English constitutional law, the writings of various philosophers popular in the 18th century, and the colonial experience itself. He then moves into a discussion of the Constitutional Convention, at which the Founders had trouble coming up with a name for the office. For a time, delegates referred merely to "the Executive." They flirted with John Adams's suggestion of "governor of the united People and States of America," but abandoned it because it smacked of colonial proprietorship. "President," however, was different. The word had been used by informal associations throughout the 13 colonies, and its Latin root gave it the reassuring connotation of "passivity."

No matter what the name, every American knew that George Washington would fill the office. "It is no exaggeration to say that Americans were willing to venture the experiment with a single, national republican chief executive only because of their unreserved trust" in him, says McDonald. Washington at first shied away from the role—he had promised never again to hold public office after resigning command of the Continental Army—but an aggressive letter-writing campaign led by Alexander Hamilton eventually swayed him. The authority of the office rapidly expanded with the election of successive presidents, most notably (and ironically) that of Thomas Jefferson in 1800. But not until the election of Andrew Jackson in 1828 did presidential contenders campaign actively and solicit votes openly—marking the beginning of the modern presidency.

McDonald concludes by examining the president's relationship to such areas as legislation, foreign affairs, and image making. Here he becomes less the scholar and more the polemicist. We learn that he dislikes Franklin Roosevelt, believes Richard Nixon will come to be reckoned among the "great" or "near-great" presidents, and admires Ronald Reagan without reservation, crediting him for having won the Cold War almost single-handedly.

All in all, though, this remains a balanced inspection of America's most closely scrutinized political institution. "Though the powers of the office have sometimes been grossly abused,"

McDonald observes, "though the presidency has become almost impossible to manage, and though the caliber of the people who serve as chief executive has declined erratically but persistently from the day George Washington left office," the presidency continues "unparalleled in its stability" as a "model of order and sanity." Americans have elevated 41 different people to the White House, and in the process let control of the executive office go from one party to another 21 times, but only once, in 1861, has the nation come apart. Peaceful transfers are the norm, and the office remains, remarkably, "fundamentally true to the original design."

THE SOVIET TRAGEDY: A History of Socialism in Russia, 1917–1991. By Martin Malia. Free Press. 575 pp. \$24.95

IMPERIUM. By Ryszard Kapuscinski. Knopf. 331 pp. \$24

The collapse of the Soviet Union has drawn Sovietologists into one of history's great whodunits: Did the Soviet Union kill communism, or did communism kill the Soviet Union? To Malia, a former professor of history at the University of California, Berkeley, communism is clearly the culprit. His argument here expands and updates his widely discussed 1990 article, "To the Stalin Mausoleum," published in *Daedalus* under the pseudonym "Z." He charges that those who believe that Stalin's crimes were an aberration of Leninist thought, or that Soviet communism could be successfully reformed, get things exactly wrong.

In Malia's view, Western Sovietologists failed to foresee communism's inevitable demise because they ignored the study of ideology for the more neutral and "scientific" study of social and economic forces. They refused to recognize that the Bolsheviks imposed Marxism on Russia in a utopian "revolution from above" that necessitated thorough and relentless destruction of the existing social and economic order. Every time Lenin, Khrushchev, and, finally, Gorbachev were forced by economic exigencies to adopt market-based "reforms," they amplified the contradictions between communist theory and reality. "If in the end communism collapsed like a house of cards," writes Malia, "it was because it had always been a house of cards."

Malia's complaint about the myopia of most Sovietologists is shared by Kapuscinski, the peripatetic Polish journalist whose previous books include quirky reports on politics in Ethiopia during the last years of Emperor Haile Selassie and in Iran under Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi. Kapuscinski would also agree with Malia that communism killed the Soviet Union. But Kapuscinski sees a far greater connection between the fear and fatalism of "Homo Sovieticus" and that of his Russian forebears. Comparing the eras of Stalin, Khrushchev, and Brezhnev with those of Peter I, Catherine II, and Alexander III, Kapuscinski asks: "In what other country does the person of the ruler, his character traits, his manias and phobias, leave such a profound stamp on the national history, its course, its ascents and downfalls?"

Kapuscinski, however, is more intent on offering an impressionistic tour of the Soviet "imperium" than on arguing about its theoretical origins. This he does through vividly evoked encounters with intellectuals in Moscow, coal miners above the Arctic Circle, and ex-fishermen near the shrinking Aral Sea. Some readers may find his meditations on the making of cognac in Tbilisi irrelevant. But more often than not his offbeat observations cast new light on the curious dystopia that was the Soviet Union. Commenting on the miles of barbed wire he saw in his travels, Kapuscinski notes: "If one were to multiply all this by the number of years the Soviet government had been in existence, it would be easy to see why, in the shops of Smolensk or Omsk, one can buy neither a hoe nor a hammer, to say nothing of a knife or a spoon."

At journey's end, Kapuscinski describes the impact of new freedoms on the former Soviet Union but concludes that "the so-called Soviet man is first and foremost an utterly exhausted man. . . . We shouldn't be surprised if he doesn't have the strength to rejoice in his newly won freedom." Malia agrees. After "70 years on the road to nowhere," he writes, a Russia rendered prostrate by the total collapse of its "total system" must simultaneously create a liberal economic order, a democratic polity, and a viable nation-state.

One may take issue with Malia's tidy intellectualism, which gives short shrift to the role of individual error, pettiness, vainglory, and other human traits in the rise and fall of communism. But by demonstrating the animating power of

“maximalist” socialist ideology and its ultimately fatal consequences, Malia has not only recast the historiography of the Soviet Union, but posed a powerful intellectual challenge to any attempts to revive socialism as the solution to inequity.

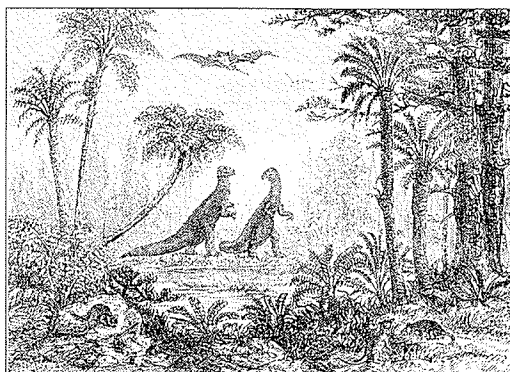
Science & Technology

THE MASS-EXTINCTION DEBATES: How Science Works in a Crisis. *Ed. by William Glen.* Stanford Univ. Press. 370 pp. \$49.50

Why did dinosaurs and many other large lifeforms suddenly vanish from the earth 65 million years ago? For decades, the mystery bedeviled paleontologists studying the fossil record. In 1980, however, geologist Walter Alvarez, his father Luiz (a Nobelist in physics), and a team of University of California scientists published a radical hypothesis to explain unusual concentrations of rare iridium they found in clay beds dating from the period of the dinosaur extinctions. Their proposal: A meteor, 10 kilometers across and rich in iridium, had struck the earth, filling the skies with dust that chilled the planet and doomed the dinosaurs.

As the first testable hypothesis on the subject, the impact theory should have been allowed a respectable day in the scientific marketplace. Instead, says Glen, a visiting scientist and historian at the United States Geological Survey, too many scientists rejected it out of hand. Volcanists dismissed it because it competed with their own theory—that an unprecedented level of volcanic activity was responsible for the iridium dust, having spewed it up from the earth’s core. Other scientists rejected it simply because non-paleontologists had proposed it. And doubters threw up a host of obstacles, demanding that the impact camp provide impossible kinds of proof—measurements beyond the capabilities of existing scientific instruments, for instance—and challenging them to locate the impact site.

Eventually, after a publishing boomlet produced more than 2,500 papers and books on the impact theory, scientists ended up accepting or rejecting it based on their respective loyalties. Indeed, the pace of the new discoveries, theories, and countertheories was such that, as Glen remarks,



“only few [scientists] could keep abreast.” Many ended up relying on what they read in popular magazines and scientific journals, which, according to Glen, often printed “poorly informed and biased commentary.”

Another contributor to this volume, paleontologist Digby McLaren, points out that the reception of the impact theory followed the same pattern as that given other initially controversial theories—Charles Darwin’s 1859 theory of evolution, for instance, and Alfred Wegener’s 1912 theory of continental drift. Most scientists rejected those theories outright, and it was only after considerable experimentation and study that they were reluctantly accepted. Similarly, the impact theory is now finally receiving more open-minded consideration. Indeed, most scientists today agree that one large object—and possibly more—striking the earth either triggered the dinosaur extinctions or contributed greatly to them.

Of course, scientists should be skeptical of new theories, and should insist that they be bolstered by accurate evidence, particularly when they represent radical breaks with tradition. But challenging ideas deserve to be tested in the laboratory or the field—not in conferences and the media under a cloud of hostility and doubt. As Glen concludes during a conversation with paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould, the scientific community ought to be “a guarantor of objectivity,” and yet time and again scientists greet new theories by imposing “subjectivities, and their power to do so seems to fly in the face of their philosophic purpose and stated goals.”

POETRY

E V G E N Y R E I N

Selected and Introduced by Joseph Brodsky

A quarter century ago, during a chance kitchen-table conversation in what used to be called Leningrad, someone—perhaps it was even me—christened Evgeny Rein an “elegiac urbanist.” This characterization now strikes me as rather inadequate, perhaps because it was more a quick sketch of the poet’s personality than a definition that actually corresponded to the metaphorical radius or the metaphysical vector of his work.

Nevertheless, by genre and by the dominant tone of most of his verse, Rein is unquestionably an elegiac poet. His main theme is the end of things, the end, to put it more broadly, of a world order that is dear—or at least acceptable—to him. The incarnation of this order in his poetry is the city in which he grew up, the city of Leningrad. It is the heroine of the love lyrics he wrote in the 1960s and ’70s. It is the circle of friends from the same period, which formed, in the expression of the renowned Russian poetess Anna Akhmatova, a “magical chorus” and which lost its cupola when she died in 1966.

But in contrast to the dramatic effect accompanying the collapse of a world or a myth usually found in elegiac poets, in contrast to Eliot’s “This is the way the world ends” (“This is the way the world ends/ Not with a bang but a whimper”), the death of the world order in Rein is accompanied by a vulgar ditty from the ’30s or ’40s. Indeed, for Rein’s work—and in my view he is metrically the most gifted Russian poet of the second half of the 20th century—the cadences of Soviet popular music from that era probably had a greater influence than the technical achievements of the best among the Russian futurists and constructivists.

Moreover, the death of the world order for Rein is not a singular event but a gradual process. Rein is a poet of erosion, of disintegration—of human relationships, moral categories, historical connections, and dependencies of any nature binomial or multipolar. And his verse, like a spinning black record, is the only form of mutation accessible to him, a fact testified to above all by his assonant rhymes. To top it all, this poet is extraordinarily concrete, substantive. Eighty percent of a Rein poem commonly consists of nouns and proper names. The remaining 20 percent is verbs, adverbs, and, least, adjectives. As a result, the reader often has the impression that the subject of the elegy is language itself, parts of speech illuminated by the sunset of the past tense, which casts its long shadow into the present and even touches the future.

But what might seem to the reader a conscious artifice, or at the very least a product of retrospection, is not. For the surplus materiality, the oversaturation with nouns, was present in Rein’s poetry from the beginning. In his earliest poems, at the end of the 1950s—in particular in his first poem, “Arthur Rimbaud”—one notes a kind of “Adamism,” a tendency to name things, to

enumerate the objects of this world, an almost infantlike thirst for words. For this poet, the discovery of the world accompanied the development of diction. Ahead of him there was, if not life, then at least a huge dictionary.

Rein not only radically extended the poetic vocabulary and sound palette of Russian poetry; he also broadened and shook up the psychological sweep of Russian lyrics. He is an elegist, but of a tragic stripe. Few among his compatriots would dispute the depth of the despair and exhaustion that darkens these poems. Throughout a quarter of a century Rein's lyrical hero, that "restless inhabitant of two capitals" who is "his own commander," has accomplished a rather horrifying evolution, resulting in his appeal to the Creator: "Either return my soul,/ or appoint it to no one." And then—since we're talking about evolution—the hero dwindles further to "I am a gray, boulevard bird." The singing of this boulevard bird is truly heartbreaking, not so much for its timbre as for the fact that in it one hears not complaint but utter indifference to its own twitter.

At present Rein has published three collections of poems; the first of them appeared when he was 50 years old, in 1988. The publication of the two following books, at intervals of about two years, should apparently be seen as the triumph of justice. The problem with triumphs of justice is that by definition they always come late: in this case 25 years late. And even these three collections do not adequately convey the scope and significance of this poet for Russian literature.

Every important poet has his or her own beloved, idiosyncratic landscape. Rein has two. One is a city view disappearing into aniline, most likely Kamenostrovsky Prospect in Leningrad, with its fin de siècle vinaigrette of art nouveau flavored with Muscovite constructivism, with the obligatory bridge and wrinkled sheet of leaden water. The other is a blend of the Baltics and the Black Sea, "a gulf with the Kronstadt at its side,/ with the maneuvers of silent navies," with palms, balustrades, a passenger boat entering the bay, new battleships broadcasting the foxtrot as they sail in formation, people strolling on the promenade. If the first represents a lost, or at least strongly compromised, paradise, the second is a possible, acquired paradise.

I would like, above all, to sit Evgeny Rein down at a table on some veranda of this paradise, place a pen and piece of paper before him, and leave him for a time—the longer the better—in peace. For inspiration, I would give him Virgil—better the *Bucolics* or *Georgics* than the *Aeneid*, and even better, a volume of Propertius. Something, in other words, devoid of ambitions and created without apparent haste. After a month or so I'd drop in to see what had happened. Russian poetry has never had enough time (or space, for that matter). This explains its intensity and wrenching quality—not to say hysteria. What has been created in the existent parameters over the last hundred years—under Damocles' sword—is extraordinary, but too often colored by a sense of "now or never!"

The deformation of poetic fate is as much the norm for us as its truncation, and the poet—even a beginning poet—sees himself and is received by his audience in a dramatic key. What is expected of him is not restraint but falsetto, not wisdom but irony or, in the best case, sincerity. This is not much, and one

wants to hope that this state of affairs will change—and that the change will begin immediately, with Rein. That's why one wants to give him Virgil or Propertius. He has already been Ovid, and Catullus as well. After all, a man living in an empire, especially a collapsing one, loses little when he identifies himself with those who in similar circumstances, 2,000 years ago, did not allow themselves to fall into dependence on surrounding events, and whose speech remained firm. It must be said that during the era of imperial petrification Rein has done as much.

Vologda

In an unfamiliar, provincial town,
while sitting for a smoke above the river,
prick up your ears and take a look around
—you'll be repaid for all your grief twice over.

There you'll catch voices, automobile
horns, barking dogs, and scraps of dance-band music.
Don't die: the heavens are attainable
without that happening. And you're lucid.

Onto the Road

As though a weather vane, your angel gyred
a wing full-face, askance—you did not linger
within that room; as though a coal that's fired,
your own concerns now scintillate and clinker.
You pour the tea, a sweet and muddled brew
with caramel and a wine that you concocted.
A month of Sundays since we met—adieu,
this aging hangover cannot be doctored;
half-practicable dreams, attempts that missed—
the only chance whose countenance was special.
Whatever your occasion for our tryst—
we split, as divorcés upon the threshold.
Inside the shared apartment, there's no sound,
a drafty postern at the manor kitchen.
Existence has already been unwound,
spoiled rotten by the cryptographic pidgin
of millions from Asia, tops that spun
by clockwork as the earth itself would pivot.
To flee their onslaught, where would you have run,
in which translation is their truth delivered?
A ringing comes from deep within time's pail,

the tropic zones have long since matched the tundras.
To die before Attila's Sten gun hail
in flight with Alexander would be wondrous.
The time has come, we brim with lack of sound
that's leveled by the eye of some colossus.
And these transitions? Purely outward-bound,
the track a footfall nevermore recrosses.

On Fontanka

On Fontanka there's ruin and ravage,
And the building on Troitsky Street's razed,
Crawling out of a hatch comes some savage—
He's unshaven and bare to the waist.
On his chest azure lines interblended—
Hammer, sickle, an eagle's two heads,
Years of hooch left his eyebags distended,
'Round his brow a gold halo was spread.
The cathedral's his goal this close evening.
And he spits on the worn-away bronze
Then he sings hateful songs on perceiving
He is close to the place he belongs.
There is major renewal and ravage,
All the prewar years' nonsense and trash,
G.P.U.*, agitprop, people scavenged—
All placed under the bricks that lay smashed.
Then my people took up their existence
On the ruins, as dust they'd alight—
So a squadron flies into the distance
Before dawn in the blood of the fight.
So then come crashing down, multistoried
House of arrogance, theft, all that's false,
Because fearless and dank on your flooring,
The Neva's gray of eventide crawls.
Go back home, bird of passage and urchin,
To where cisterns decay, beneath gates.
On this night you're well known to what's urgent—
To stoutheartedness and to the fates.
Where the building on Troitsky is ruined,
Pitch-dark standards both flutter and swell,
At the bottom of gates, winds are strewing
Paper sheets, your next book of black spells.

*G.P.U.—State Political Directorate. Secret police force that replaced the Cheka in 1922.

The Music of Life

*Resplendency and gloom—a cleft domain
and equally we strive to read the twain.
When from a tree an apple has descended,
a man has seized the firmament's design!
The prophet's savage import is extended
uncommonly to us in such a sign.*
—E. A. Baratynsky (1800–1844)

Music of life—petroleum waters,
rollers at Yalta, stacked high on the shoreline.
Music of life—another man's quarters. . .
Give me your promise then, tell me for sure I'm

not to be left here, alone at my mooring,
lips weighted down with a word that's conclusive.
Over my shoulders may cables keep calling—
imports are taken, you'll not be exclusive.

Trumpets and flutes sound above the dark reason
of the Black Sea and the fall of the curtain—
clearly, the time to begin has arisen
for these last twenty-four hours, fraught with hurting.

White beams from searchlights illumine expressions;
those who will die today under the water,
music of life, every bird knows your essence,
you're unsubdued in the midnight of Yalta.

Ladders are falling and snifters in shatters,
from "Oreanda" come timbres of tangos,
music of life, give me air apparatus,
oxygen tanks, hold me firm in your tangles.

What's the "Titanic" to us or "Nakhimov"?
Once we have jettisoned both life preservers,
heading for shallows, together we'll swim off,
someone's en route, and we'll come to his service.

Filling his mouth with a stream of pure liquor,
flooding his soul with "The Slav Maiden's Parting,"
music of life—the offended, the victor,
make me forget at the funeral party.

Beethoven's heard as he rolls me a hogshead,
Scriabin is uptown and pounding the keyboard,

out floats a life raft, constructed of logs and
old-fashioned organs, destroyed on the seaboard.

Time and again you'll be mourning your liners,
under full orchestras, mainsails come crashing,
now, as then, send me your song through malignest
seawaters, just as before, come with passion.

* * *

The nighttime abettor of ruin
Spears falsehood and truth in the black,
Akin to a hunting knife, hewing
A path through a stationary pack.

Exhausted by secretive essays,
With wing tips obliquely upraised,
You fall towards towns of excesses
By way of their ordurous blaze.

Correctives exist for your purges,
Regardless of flight having passed.
You're fifty percent female virtues—
And this is your soul's saving cast.

Reclining across the chance bedstead,
There's movement within your eye's green,
And now, who is truly suggested,
A mermaid or infant? Machine?

I would have become your own peon,
Beforehand, whenever I'd known
I'll die in your red empyrean,
Resembling the first to have flown.

You'll always escape being pinioned,
You have to be cherished at least
Till vanishing in your dominion
Of night-clouds, an impious beast.

"Vologda" was translated by Paul Graves. All other
poems were translated by David MacFadyen.