
and caused the farm crisis of the mid '80s. Neither farmers nor other debtors were given fair warning of what the government was doing. It

is unconscionable, Greider concludes, that Americans and their elected representatives are kept in the dark about matters of such magnitude.

SOCIETY

Leaving Home And Doing Well

"Black Immigrants in the United States: A Comparison with Native Blacks and Other Immigrants" by Kristin F. Butcher, in *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* (Jan. 1994), Cornell Univ., Ithaca, N.Y. 14853-3901.

Do the "cultural traditions" of American-born blacks impede their economic progress? Prominent economist Thomas Sowell—pointing to the higher earnings of West Indian immigrants in the United States—has argued that they do. Butcher, an economist at Virginia Polytechnic Institute, has a different explanation.

Analyzing 1980 census data, she finds that West Indian immigrant men did indeed have higher average earnings. Jamaicans, for example, earned an average of \$10,115 while native-born black men earned \$9,063. The difference in employment rates was also significant: 87 percent of the Jamaicans had jobs, compared with 79 percent of the native black men. The two groups differed in other, arguably pertinent ways, as well. Sixty-two percent of the Jamaicans were married, compared with only 51 percent of the native-born black men.

However, Butcher says, there is a subset of the native-born that compares quite well with the Jamaicans, and that is native-born black men who have moved away from the state in which they were born. Such migrants (57 percent of whom were married) earned an average of \$10,710 in 1979, nearly \$600 more than the Jamaicans did and much more than the \$7,896 that the "stay-at-home" native black men did. Eighty-two percent of the migrants were employed, compared with 87 percent of the Jamaicans and 77 percent of the "stay-at-home" American black men.

What's true for blacks, Butcher notes, is also

true for whites: Native-born white men earned less (\$14,371) in 1979 than white immigrants did (\$15,421). A widely accepted explanation of that finding, she points out, is "that immigrants are a self-selected group—differing from other members of the population in their motivation, ability, or attitudes toward risk." The same, she suggests, may be true for blacks. The distinction between those who dare to venture into strange territory and those who stay at home may be "more fundamental than any inherent distinction between U.S.- and foreign-born black men."

Big City

"Fate of a World City" by Nathan Glazer, in *City Journal* (Autumn 1993), 52 Vanderbilt Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017.

With its awesome skyscrapers, great bridges, huge railroad terminals, and vast subway system, New York City was long the very symbol of the modern city. Today, the city leaves a different impression. Harvard University sociologist Glazer argues that it is suffering from "a massive change" during the 1960s in the direction of city government.

Spending by the city (in constant dollars) tripled during the 15 years after 1960, while New York's population fell. Checked for a time by the fiscal crisis of 1975, outlays began rising again in 1983. By the end of the decade, city government by itself consumed nearly 20 percent of "local value added" (a measure of the size of the local economy).

New York, writes Glazer, has been pouring money into things a city simply cannot do well: "redistributing income on a large scale and solving the social and personal problems of people who, for whatever reason, are engaged in self-destructive behavior—resisting school, taking to drugs and

crime, indulging in self-gratification at the expense of their children, their families, their neighbors.”

“Redistribution,” Glazer notes, “suggests handouts to the poor, and indeed some redistributive expenditures consist of cash payments to the poor. But far more go for salaries to those who serve the poor. Redistribution meant a huge increase in the number of city employees and in their influence over city decisions.”

Doubling or tripling outlays in these areas seems to yield “no particular improvement,” Glazer says. “On the other hand, a sharp reduction in expenditure does not seem to hurt,” judging by the experience of Massachusetts today—or even New York in 1975.

Meanwhile, the city government has “stopped trying to do well the kinds of things a city can do.” These include “keeping its streets and bridges in repair, building new facilities to accommodate new needs and a shifting population, picking up the garbage, and policing the public environment.” Ultimately, it is individual businesses and people that make a world-class city, and a city that does not tend to such things does not attract them. Other cities have made many of New York’s mistakes, but its competitors for world-class status manage to get the basics done. New York needs to build mass-transit links to its airports, open new highways, and pick up the trash. New York, Glazer insists, is not a helpless victim of forces beyond its control. It holds its future in its own hands.

The Illegitimacy Error

“Does Welfare Bring More Babies?” by Charles Murray, in *The American Enterprise* (Jan.–Feb. 1994), 1150 17th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Does welfare encourage single women to have babies? That has been one of the thorniest questions in the nation’s welfare debate. Researchers who think that it does can point to the rising percentage of black babies born out of wedlock since the 1960s. But they have had to face up to the conflicting fact that the *birth rate* among single black women dropped significantly during the ‘60s. If welfare was such a powerful promoter of illegitimacy, why was the percentage of single black women having babies shrinking?

Even conservative Charles Murray, in writing *Losing Ground*, his controversial 1984 book about the impact of the social welfare policies of the ‘60s, recognized the argument’s force. He did not argue (despite the popular perception of *Losing Ground*) that welfare caused more illegitimate births. The evidence, he thought, could not sustain that thesis. But, he now says, “I was wrong.”

The “error,” says Murray, a Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, was in the choice of a population pool to use as a standard: single black women. The problem is that, thanks to changing social mores and other factors, this group itself underwent a radical change. Between 1965 and 1970, the percentage of black women ages 15–44 who were married plummeted from 64 to 55—“an incredible change in such a basic social behavior during such a short period of time.” During the 1970s and ‘80s, the marriage rate continued to fall, hitting a low of 34 percent in 1989.

The pool of unmarried black women was thus being flooded—and the new additions evidently did not have the same propensity to have babies out of wedlock. Hence, the incidence of illegitimate births per 1,000 single black women fell. But that was a statistical mirage caused by the transformation of the base group. The incidence of illegitimacy among *all* black women—a far more stable base—rose sharply. The number of illegitimate babies born annually in the black population nearly doubled between 1967 and 1990. “It increased most radically,” Murray says, “from 1967 to 1971, tracking (with a two-year time lag) the most rapid rise in welfare benefits.”

That, he notes, does not “prove” that the welfare benefits promoted illegitimacy. However, he says, the message is plain: “At the same time that powerful social and economic forces were pushing down the incidence of black children born to married couples, the incidence of black children born to unmarried women increased, eventually surpassing the rate for married couples. Something was making that particular behavior swim against a very strong tide, and, to say the least, the growth of welfare is a suspect with the means and the opportunity.”

With black illegitimacy now at 68 percent and white illegitimacy—22 percent in 1991—moving