

No, says Gould. Increases in exports and imports both shift resources to industries that reflect a nation's "comparative advantage" (i.e., the ones it is better at) and away from

industries that do not. That increases national prosperity. "By this criterion," the economist concludes, "NAFTA has been a success for the United States and Mexico."

SOCIETY

The Tumult over Tenure

A Survey of Recent Articles

Long a sacred cow in academia, tenure lately has come under challenge as never before. Some conservatives, appalled by the stifling orthodoxy of "political correctness" they say "tenured radicals" have spread over so many campuses, think that abolishing tenure might help to remove the blight. Some college administrators, eager to make their institutions more "entrepreneurial" and "competitive," dream of being able to get rid of unproductive professors more easily. And many junior scholars, noting the dubious demands of some of their tenured elders and struggling for scarce jobs in an increasingly grim academic job market, question the worth of the tenure system.

The traditional justification for granting lifetime job security to professors (after a probationary period of up to seven years) has been to protect those with unpopular opinions. Tenure protects academic freedom, said the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and the American Association of Colleges in their classic 1940 statement on the subject. "Tenure and the academic freedom it assures—as distinct from general First Amendment liberties—impose a collective standard of responsibility that AAUP has historically championed, making the faculty as a whole 'guardian of academic values,'" writes John D. Lyons, editor of *Academe* (May–June 1997), the AAUP's magazine.

Some critics doubt that academic freedom

is still in danger of assault from outside the academy. "When the socialist movement was developing and the general public tended to be more conservative than the professoriate, university teachers were definitely in danger of being ideologically suspect and losing their jobs," says John Higham, an emeritus professor of history at Johns Hopkins University, in an interview with *Johns Hopkins Magazine* (Sept. 1997). "Tenure arose to cope with that situation, and it did. After the failure of McCarthyism, the threat to college teachers' independence gradually faded. We don't have that kind of ideological warfare today."

Today, the threat to academic freedom comes from *within* the academy, according to

critics of "political correctness" such as Jerry L. Martin and Anne D. Neal, president and vice president, respectively, of the National Alumni Forum. Participants in a symposium in *Academic Questions* (Fall 1997) on the state of academic freedom, they note that more than 384 colleges and universities "have speech codes or sensitivity requirements that threaten academic freedom," and that political harassment of individual professors at odds with the prevailing orthodoxy is common.

To those individual professors, however, the guarantee of tenure often seems very valuable. "The price we pay for the privilege of tenure has always been high, because



"The barbarians are at the gate, friends, and for lack of tenure."

tenure inevitably provides a shelter for political and religious agitators who insist on teaching what is manifestly untrue and unscholarly," Mary R. Lefkowitz, a professor in the humanities at Wellesley College and author of *"Black Athena" Revisited* (1996), comments in the symposium. "But the premium must be paid, because tenure also protects those of us who are prepared to challenge the latest trends of academic orthodoxy, within disciplines and in the university curriculum."

Tenure may protect established scholars, John Silber, chancellor of Boston University, observes in *Academic Questions*, but the nontenured faculty are left exposed. They are at the mercy of "doctrinal orthodoxy as defined by the senior professors of a department," who tend to decide who does and does not get tenure. The infringement by the tenured on the intellectual rights of the nontenured, in Silber's view, "represents by far the most serious and most frequent violation of academic freedom in our colleges and universities."

Jon Wiener, a historian at the University of California at Irvine and a contributing editor of the *Nation*, worries about a different danger. "The greatest threat to the teaching of unpopular ideas today," he maintains in *Dissent* (Winter 1998), comes

from administrators who have embraced "the logic of the market" and "the inexorable trend toward staffing colleges and universities with part-timers, adjuncts, and instructors." These untenured teachers are now "almost half the faculty at four-year colleges." In Wiener's view, collective bargaining is "the best way to defend college teachers—at least at public colleges—against politically motivated firing" by administrators aiming to satisfy the market.

Paul A. Cantor, a professor of English at the University of Virginia, also worries about administrators, though for a different reason. Without tenure, administrators would inevitably have a bigger say in hiring and firing. "[As] wrongheaded as my [academic] colleagues may at times have seemed to me," Cantor writes in *Academic Questions* (Winter 1997–98), "they came across as positively Solomonic in comparison with the university administrators I have known over the years. . . . Some critics of tenure think that abolishing it will provide a means of bringing to bear the less radical views of society as a whole on the academy," he observes. "But the more likely outcome would be to give new power to a subset within the academy, namely the educational establishment—perhaps even the education school establishment—which is generally more radical than the academy as a whole."

Are All Cultures Equal?

"Cultural Relativism as Ideology" by Dennis H. Wrong, in *Critical Review* (Spring 1997), Yale Stn. Box 205416, New Haven, Conn. 06520.

Scratch a modern "multiculturalist," and you get (among other things) what has long been known as a "cultural relativist," that is, one who regards all cultures as morally equal. Yet the anthropological doctrine of cultural relativism originally had a quite different meaning, maintains Wrong, an emeritus professor of sociology at New York University.

"The term *culture*, in something approximating the modern sense," he writes, "was originally an expression of German nationalism and was deployed against the universalism of the French Enlightenment." Denying there was any single story of human progress, Germans insisted "that different peoples developed their own unique ways of life that could only arbitrarily be measured against a

common standard. Therefore, despite the economic and political 'backwardness' of German society, German culture was not necessarily inferior to that of France."

It was only "a short step from acceptance of the irreducible variety of cultures" and the rejection of a common human nature, Wrong says, to the theory of races that later became the basis of Nazi ideology. But in the ivory tower, he observes, culture became the ruling idea among German historians. When the pioneering German-born anthropologist Franz Boas (1858–1942) emigrated to America in 1886, he brought this German tradition with him. The rise of the Nazis later discredited racial theories, and shifted intellectual opinion decisively in favor of the view of Boas and others that cul-