

conservatives identify with the poor but don't empathize with them. These specialists moralize, expecting the poor to do what they would do in their circumstances.

Until the landmark 1996 welfare reform, Mead says, the two sides were roughly balanced, each canceling out the most unreasonable features of the other's viewpoint. But Mead thinks the 1996 legislation, which eliminated welfare as a federal entitlement and turned it into a program of fixed block

grants to the states, was unduly harsh. It included new work requirements and a five-year lifetime limit on aid. Tough work programs alone, he contends, "were enough to bring the rolls down." He is hopeful that the states will take a more balanced approach, continuing to help the neediest, as many are, while "also expecting adults to work." Eventually, Mead hopes, welfare may become a manageable problem instead of "a battleground of elite psychic warfare."

Designated Targets

"Batter Up! Moral Hazard and the Effects of the Designated Hitter Rule on Hit Batsmen"
by Brian L. Goff, William F. Shughart II, and Robert D. Tollison, in *Economic Inquiry*
(July 1997), Western Economic Assn., International Executive Office,
7400 Center Ave., Ste. 109, Huntington Beach, Calif. 92647-3039.

A quarter-century ago, the American League introduced its still-controversial designated hitter (DH) rule, letting substitutes stand

Goff, Shughart, and Rollison, of Western Kentucky University, the University of Mississippi, and George Mason University, respectively.



Brady Anderson, centerfielder for the Baltimore Orioles, was hit by pitches 19 times last season—more than any other batter in the American League.

in for pitchers at the plate. Careful research now reveals that this has had an unintended and unwelcome consequence for batters: they get struck by pitched balls more often.

Before 1973, a major league hurler who deliberately threw at a hitter had to worry that he might get the same treatment when he took his own turn at the plate, observe economists

Even so, in the late 1960s and early '70s, some 300 to 400 batters in each league got hit each year. Then the American League—but not the National League—adopted the DH rule.

In a typical season since, the economists find (after controlling for differences in at-bats between the two leagues), 44 to 50 more American League batters have had close encounters with speed-

ing baseballs. In other words, with American League pitchers able to throw at hitters with greater impunity, batters have suffered 10 to 15 percent more direct hits than their National League counterparts. Armed with this scholarly finding, perhaps ballplayers now should negotiate a premium for playing in the American League.

Bunk: The Sequel

"The Future of History" by Richard J. Evans, in *Prospect* (Oct. 1997),
4 Bedford Sq., London WC1B 3RA.

"History is more or less bunk," Henry Ford once declared, and today's postmodern

historians seem to agree. In their eyes, notes Evans, a professor of modern history at

Cambridge University, there is no single attainable truth about the past, “merely the histories which people construct to empower themselves in the present: black history, women’s history, gay history. Each is ‘true’ according to the perspective from which it is written.” The claim of “objectivity,” insist postmodernists such as Hayden White, is just a device to preserve the “dominance” of the history written by bourgeois white liberal males. Bunk, says Evans.

Certainly, most books in history published in Europe and the United States have been written by white males. But not all of these books have defended the interests of white males and the bourgeois universities that support them, and not a few have explored past oppression and exploitation. Moreover, Evans observes, many women “have written excellent history books about men, just as blacks have written about white slave owners.” And if the postmodernists’ radical subjectivism is correct, only white males can understand white males of the past.

Applying postmodernist ideas to the postmodernists themselves makes obvious the “logical tangle” into which their theories

lead, Evans says. “If all interpretations are equally valid, why should we believe a postmodernist interpretation rather than another one?” he asks.

Postmodernists may not realize it, he adds, but the arguments they make in the interests of “the politics of empowerment and liberation” can have perverse results when applied to the politics of oppression and violence. Can only Bosnian Serbs, for example, write a “true” history of the Bosnian Serbs? Is a Nazi perspective on the Holocaust just as valid as a non-Nazi one?

“If the only grounds we have for preferring one vision of the past to another are aesthetic, moral or political, as some postmodernists maintain, if the persuasiveness of a historical interpretation is simply a matter of the power of its advocates,” writes Evans, “then it does not follow at all that history should necessarily be a democratic, a tolerant or a skeptical enterprise, or that it should in any way favor the politically or culturally disadvantaged.”

Facts do matter, Evans insists. Historians are not free to give the evidence of the past just any meaning whatever. “History,” he says, “is nothing if it is not true.”

PRESS & MEDIA

The Megan Quandary

“Double Punishment?” by Judith Sheppard in *American Journalism Review* (Nov. 1997), 8701 Adelphi Rd., Adelphi, Md. 20783-1716.

New laws that require law enforcement agencies to make public the names and addresses of convicted sex offenders are giving the news media an ethics headache. Forty-five states now have such statutes on the books; Congress adopted a federal “Megan’s Law” in 1996. The problem, writes Sheppard, who teaches journalism at Auburn University, is that while publishing the information may alert residents to potential dangers, it may also encourage vigilantism.

Harassment of sex offenders is apparently the exception rather than the rule. A 1996 study by the Washington State University Institute of Public Policy found only 33 cases of harassment in a state with more than 10,000 registered sex offenders. Yet some of the cases are serious. Neighbors torched the house of one man who was about to return

home from prison. Other sex offenders have lost their jobs. The editor of one California newspaper published a list of sex offenders, only to find the name of her twice-convicted religion editor on it. She fired him.

Some journalists argue that shining a spotlight on sex offenders after they have served time is unfair. Others insist that the news media have a responsibility to expose dangerous people who are, after all, guilty of crimes. If a child molester strikes a second time, asks Philip Seib, a journalism professor at Southern Methodist University, “how do you say, ‘We had this information, and we decided not to alert the community to his presence?’”

The dangers posed by convicted offenders are hard to gauge, Sheppard notes. The oft-cited estimate that 80 to 90 percent of sex