

says that “tinkering with revenue structure” is unlikely to reduce the size of the public sector, so long as governmental commitments remain unchanged.

• Whatever happened to monetarism? asks J. Bradford De Long, an economist at the University of California, Berkeley. During the 1960s and ’70s, monetarist theorist Milton Friedman assailed the Keynesian notions that dominated economics. But the “simplified” version of monetarism that triumphed and guided Federal Reserve policy during the 1980s “crashed and burned,” De Long says. Controlling total spending by adjusting growth in the money supply “turned out to be very difficult indeed.” Yet other key monetarist ideas—e.g., the principle that in normal circumstances, monetary policy is a better stabilizing tool than fiscal policy, and the notion that the chief cause of economic ups and downs is the failure of prices to adjust rapidly to “nominal shocks”—quietly achieved “intellectual hegemony.” But they did so, ironically, under a strange banner: neo-Keynesianism. “The influence of monetarism on how we all think about macroeconomics today has been deep, pervasive, and subtle,” says De Long.

• Economic theory may be in for much more radical change, if economist Richard

H. Thaler, of the University of Chicago, is correct. He predicts that “*Homo economicus*” (Economic Man), that avatar of rationality so beloved by generations of dismal scientists, will finally evolve into “quasi-rational, emotional” *Homo sapiens*, as economists incorporate the findings of psychology and other disciplines. The new breed will be markedly dumber, slower to learn, and narrower in its perceptions than its forebears.

• Even economists’ basic theoretical approach to policy analysis may change, according to David Colander, of Middlebury College in Vermont. In an imaginary look back from the *next* half-century, he tells how, thanks to growing computer power, the discipline came to be regarded as a branch of complexity science. Instead of devising models they hope are in accord with basic economic principles and then testing them empirically, computer-aided “New Millennium” economists learned to search data for patterns, find temporary models that fit those patterns, and then study how the patterns change. “Rather than bounding after the unknowable, and trying to deduce analytically models that hold for all times,” Colander reports from 2050, “economics has reduced its search to what it believes is knowable.”

## *The New ‘Jungle’*

“*The Jungle Revisited*” by Keith Nunes, in *Meat&Poultry* (Dec. 1999),  
4800 Main St., Ste. 100, Kansas City, Mo. 64112.

In his muckraking 1906 novel *The Jungle*, Upton Sinclair exposed the terrible working conditions in the Chicago Stockyards and accidentally stirred public alarm about contaminated meat, prompting Congress to quickly enact the Pure Food and Drug Act.

Today, the Chicago Stockyards are gone, the meatpacking plants in what is an \$8.5-billion-a-year industry are mainly in smaller cities and towns in the western Corn Belt, and the modern operation is in many ways a far cry from what it used to be. But the industry still depends heavily on “the individuals who stand next to the conveyer belts and rend meat from bone with honed steel” —

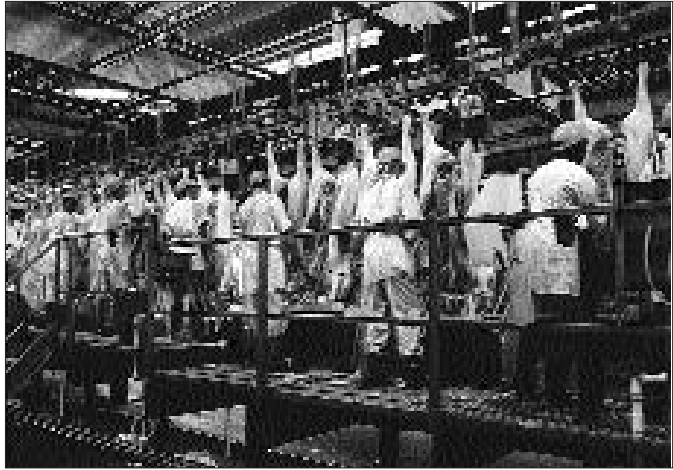
and for them, reports Nunes, associate publisher and senior editor of the trade journal *Meat&Poultry*, working conditions are still far from ideal.

“Sinclair paints a grim picture of how line workers were hired, injured, and essentially discarded. . . . Today,” Nunes writes, “despite the progress that has been made by industry members, meatpacking still ranks as one of the most dangerous jobs in the nation.” For every 100 full-time workers in meatpacking plants in 1997, there were 32.1 incidents of injury (or illness). Nor, despite advances in sanitation and food safety, Nunes points out, has the public threat of contaminated meat entirely

vanished: E. coli and other microbial dangers have replaced tuberculosis.

“In some ways, working conditions are better today than they were in *The Jungle*,” notes Deborah Fink, the author of *Cutting into the Meatpacking Line* (1998), who spent four months in 1992 working undercover in a Perry, Iowa plant owned by IBP, the industry’s largest employer. Workers today wear gloves and arm guards, and are at less risk of getting infections from cuts. “But [packers] have reduced entire jobs to a small set of motions,” she says. “Twenty years ago it was considered a skill to be able to bone a ham. Now all workers do is make one cut all day.” So, instead of infections, workers are prone to getting repetitive-motion injuries.

Worker turnover is high, “between 80 percent and 120 percent” for the major packers, says Nunes. While packers insist they want to reduce turnover in order to cut the expense of training new workers, critics strongly doubt it. “Employees stay for a limited time, earn no seniority, don’t retire, and have no access to paid vacations or, in many cases, health benefits,” observes Donald Stull, an anthropologist at the University of Kansas.



“Line work is demanding on people’s bodies,” but the meatpacking industry, says a specialist, assumes it can keep replacing workers.

In Sinclair’s day, the Chicago-based “Beef Trust” actively recruited workers from Ireland and Eastern Europe. Today, the “Big Three” packers (IBP, Cargill’s Excel Corporation, and Con-Agra’s Monfort), have turned to Central America and Asia. Last year, the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service “shook the foundation of the industry,” Nunes says, when it methodically reviewed the papers of 24,310 Nebraska workers and found irregularities in a fifth of them.

For all the dramatic changes in the industry, Stull says, *The Jungle*’s Jurgis Rudkis would be disappointed to learn how much in a 21st-century meatpacking plant remains sadly the same.

## SOCIETY

### *Jack versus Jill*

“The War against Boys” by Christina Hoff Sommers, in *The Atlantic Monthly* (May 2000), 77 N. Washington St., Boston, Mass. 02114.

A decade ago, Harvard University’s Carol Gilligan, author of the influential *In a Different Voice* (1982), announced that America’s adolescent girls were in crisis. Soon, with the help of two studies by the American Association of University Women, it became the conventional wisdom among educators that schools shortchange girls. Yet there is almost no solid empirical support for that conclusion,

asserts Sommers, a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and author of *Who Stole Feminism?* (1994). She contends that it is adolescent boys who are the troubled sex.

“The typical boy is a year and a half behind the typical girl in reading and writing; he is less committed to school and less likely to go to college,” she writes. In 1997, 55 percent of full-time college students were