

metropolitan areas, such as Springfield-Holyoke-Chicopee in Massachusetts, in fact comprise “aggregations of numerous small cities and towns,” Wright points out. And 50,000 people hardly make a metropolitan hub. Kokomo, Indiana, 30 miles from his hometown of Logansport, now falls just below that cutoff, but aside from its two large manufacturing facilities, says Wright, it “strikes me as wholly indistinguishable from the hundreds of other small towns that dot the Indiana landscape.” Fort Wayne, Indiana (pop. 173,717), in contrast, seems like “a real city.” Only about 22 percent of Hoosiers live in the five cities with populations greater than 100,000, but the Census Bureau has 72 percent living in metropolitan areas.

And what about suburbanites? Are they truly part of “urban” America? The term *suburb* implies “inferiority and dependence,” Wright notes, but “the whole point of these communities is to be something other than the cities.” People fled to the suburbs to escape

the ills of the cities and “to reclaim for themselves and their children some of the still-accessible virtues and insularity of small town American life.”

When suburbanites (48 percent of the population in 1990) are added to the 20 percent of the population in non-metropolitan areas, Wright says, it becomes clear that most Americans live in small towns or in places that resemble or seek to emulate small towns.

The small town is much changed, of course. Most of the corner grocery stores have been replaced by supermarkets, and residents now watch cable TV, read national newspapers, and wear clothes made in Taiwan. But over the past half-century, Wright says, “there has been a strong *resurgence* of traditionalism, of religiosity, of small town ‘American’ and ‘family’ values, and an equally substantial *repudiation*” of big-city ills. Are these the characteristics, asks Wright, of an urban society?

The Next Welfare Reform

“Reforming Welfare Reform” by Jared Bernstein and Mark Greenberg, in *The American Prospect* (Jan. 1–15, 2001), 5 Broad St., Boston, Mass. 02109–2901.

When welfare reform turned from buzzword into law in 1996, many liberals feared the worst: that one million children would be pushed into poverty, and 11 million families made worse off than before. So far, those fears haven’t been realized. Yet many of the affected families are not really better off today, contend Bernstein, an economist at the Economic Policy Institute, and Greenberg, a senior staff attorney at the Center for Law and Social Policy.

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 transformed welfare from a federal entitlement into a program of fixed block grants, with the states given much more discretion over spending. The law (antedated by some state-level reforms) accelerated a decrease in welfare caseloads that had begun in 1994. In that year, the number of American families getting aid was five million; by the end of 1999, it was 2.4 million. Meanwhile, the employment rate for low-income single mothers rose from 39 percent to 55 percent.

While a majority of former welfare recipients are employed at any given moment, “for many the connection to the labor market is quite tenuous,” Bernstein and Greenberg say. Only about 40 percent work consistently throughout the year, according to recent studies, and the wages they earn are very low, averaging around \$6–8 an hour. Nationwide, about 40 percent of former welfare recipients “are not working and have very high poverty rates.” Working or not, many former recipients report having experienced some hardships since leaving welfare.

Yet “state studies consistently find that roughly half of those surveyed report that life is better . . . and that if they could choose to go back on welfare, they would not want to do so,” write Bernstein and Greenberg. These mothers seem to have “a sense of hope for the future that was absent in the past.” Low-wage workers made significant earnings gains during the 1990s, thanks to the tight labor market, a hike in the minimum wage, and the expansion of the federal Earned Income Tax Credit.

That does not mean welfare reform should be regarded as an unqualified success, say the authors. "There's more work but not much more disposable income, especially after . . . the expenses associated with work." Many poor families that leave welfare fail to obtain food stamps or Medicaid because of "administrative mistakes, lack of information, [or their desire] to leave stigmatized systems that treat them badly." Most mothers who've gone from welfare to work do not receive child care subsidies.

"For the families who haven't been able to break into the labor market," write Bernstein and Greenberg, "the tattered safety net is providing

less help than ever. Furthermore, the [new Temporary Assistance for Needy Families] program, which has been greatly supported by the strong economy, is not prepared for the next recession."

Bernstein and Greenberg urge Congress to shift the 1996 law's focus when it comes up for renewal next year. "In 1996 Congress emphasized the need to cut welfare caseloads and states responded impressively." The states should next be challenged, and given sufficient resources, to meet "a national goal of reducing, and ultimately eliminating, child and family poverty."

'Ordinary' Mass Murderers?

"Were the Perpetrators of Genocide 'Ordinary Men' or 'Real Nazis'? Results from Fifteen Hundred Biographies" by Michael Mann, in *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* (Winter 2000), Dept. of Academic Publications, Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 100 Raoul Wallenberg Place, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20024-2126.

Was Nazi Germany's murder of six million Jews and millions of other unarmed persons the work of "real Nazis"—i.e., fervent Nazi ideologues and murderous sadists—or was it carried out by "ordinary" men? Passionate debate has raged over this question in recent years.

In *Hitler's Willing Executioners* (1996), a bestseller in Germany and America, historian Daniel Jonah Goldhagen argued that "ordinary Germans" full of anti-Semitism did much of the Holocaust's work. In *Ordinary Men* (1992), historian Christopher Browning contended that the killers in Hamburg's Reserve Police Battalion 101, for instance, were unexceptional men driven to act by the atmosphere of total war and their fear of breaking ranks.

Clearly, committed Nazis, as well as some sadists, were leaders in the genocide, and the perpetrators were so numerous that "fairly ordinary people" must also have been involved, says Mann, a sociologist at the University of California, Los Angeles. But after examining the backgrounds and characteristics of 1,581 presumed German war criminals—"the largest and most representative sample of mass murderers yet studied"—he finds these individuals "clustered toward the 'real Nazi' end of the spectrum."

Ethnic German "refugees" who had been

living abroad in Alsace-Lorraine and other territories lost after World War I, or living in regions near borders threatened with Allied intervention, were especially "overrepresented" among the war criminals, Mann notes. Their circumstances apparently inflamed nationalist and Nazi sentiments. A conspicuous exception: the Sudeten Germans, whom Czechoslovakia treated quite well during the interwar years. "When Hitler marched in, fewer than two percent of Sudetens were in the Nazi Party."

Ninety-five percent of the war criminals were men. Few of the women had any record of having joined an adult Nazi organization before 1939, or of having taken part in any previous violence. The women, the Sudeten Germans, and the foreign ethnic Germans not recruited until after their "liberation" by the Wehrmacht—these, says Mann, seem the likeliest candidates among the war criminals for "ordinary" status.

"Most of the remaining 90 percent of the sample had some [prior] Nazi record, rising to a large majority in the upper ranks," he writes. One-third of the men on whom pre-war records were available, he says, had been involved in serious violence or noted as especially fanatic Nazis.

It appears, says Mann, that at the center of Nazi genocide were "ideological, experi-