

this year. If it was in Day-Lewis's frequently autobiographical poems, detective novels, or several works of prose—even as subtext—it was fair to discuss.

Stanford has always been in the camp of biographers who believe it's necessary to like their subjects in order to write about them. And he did grow to admire the charismatic Day-Lewis for his idealism, "his refusal to accept easy answers in his struggles between duty and love," and "his consistent commitment to public service." But the biographer's close cooperation with Balcon also led

him to observe the wounds that Day-Lewis's infidelity and sometimes cruel treatment of her had inflicted.

"I felt guilty for putting her through it, but it was necessary and invaluable for the biography for it highlighted the greatest contradiction in Day-Lewis's character," he writes. "One part of him craved domesticity and the exclusive love of a woman who was in many ways his soul mate. Yet another part of him remained forever dissatisfied."

Stanford concludes that his book benefited tremendously

from his collaboration with Balcon, and that she managed to avoid the pitfall to which literary widows can fall prey: forcing biographers to "draw a veil" over their husband's betrayals, sometimes punishing uncooperative writers by refusing them permission to quote a single line of the subject's work. Many biographies have been crippled by such restrictions. "Contrary to the popular stereotype . . . , this book was for her, I came to appreciate, an act of unlocking and sharing a memory that she has held so very close to her for so long."

## OTHER NATIONS

# India's Creamy Layer

**THE SOURCE:** "The Effectiveness of Jobs Reservation: Caste, Religion, and Economic Status in India" by Vani K. Borooah, Amresh Dubey, and Sriya Iyer, in *Development and Change*, May 2007.

NO NATION HAS EMBRACED affirmative action more fervently or for a longer period of time than India. When the British pulled out in 1947, India's new constitution "reserved" jobs for untouchables and other disadvantaged groups that had suffered centuries of oppression. Twenty-three percent of government jobs were set aside for members of "scheduled castes" and "scheduled tribes." Now a controversial new law calls for reserving another 27 percent of public-sector jobs and slots at the nation's top universities for members of "other

backward classes."

The change comes as India is struggling to meet the booming

economy's demand for educated workers. Vani Borooah, Amresh Dubey, and Sriya Iyer, economists at the University of Ulster, North-Eastern Hill University in India, and St. Catherine's College, Cambridge, argue that since 1947, the reservations policy has resulted in the "scheduled" groups getting only



Medical students in cities across India demonstrated last year against proposals to reserve up to 50 percent of seats in the nation's elite universities for students from the "backward" classes.

about five percent more good jobs—defined as salaried or wage paying positions, rather than casual work—than they would have secured otherwise. They reached their conclusion by comparing the status of men in various “scheduled castes” to similarly educated and trained Muslim men, who got no help from affirmative action.

The new affirmative action policy, which would expand the number of workers covered and university positions reserved from 23 to 50 percent, will not help the “backward” groups the new legislation is intended to benefit, the authors say. Most of the beneficiaries will be the well-off groups within each caste—known as the “creamy layer.” These are skilled workers who would likely have been hired anyway. And India’s rural poor, for most of whom higher education is beyond reach, won’t benefit at all.

The group most in need of help is made up of Muslims, the authors write. Widely discriminated against and excluded from the reservation set-asides, they make up 14.7 percent of the nation’s population, but only a tiny fraction of the Indian workforce. Many Muslim parents believe that discrimination is so severe that their sons will never be hired for salaried or wage-paying jobs under any circumstances, the authors note. This leads parents to “devalue the importance of education as an instrument of upward economic mobility.” More than a third of Muslim men are illiterate, compared with only 10 percent of Hindus.

Instead of increasing the number of reserved jobs and university

Critics say a new affirmative action policy in India will not help the “backward” groups, but rather the “creamy layer” within each caste.

places, the better plan would be to tackle the dysfunctional primary and secondary schools of India that serve all castes and religions. Many lack learning materials and even teachers. Before the deprived children of India can succeed in the country’s fabled Indian Institutes of Technology and Management, they need a solid grounding in the three R’s.

#### OTHER NATIONS

## Egghead on Downing Street

**THE SOURCE:** “An Intellectual in Power” by John Lloyd, “Lessons From History” by Iain McLean, and “An American Liberal” by Geoff Mulgan, in *Prospect*, July 2007.

AMERICANS HAVE ELECTED AS president a polio survivor and a peanut farmer, a baseball team owner and a movie actor, but Britain has now chosen a politician of an almost rarer breed: Prime Minister Gordon Brown is an intellectual.

Brown, who served as chancellor of the exchequer under Tony Blair for nearly 10 years before becoming prime minister, holds a Ph.D. in history from Edinburgh University and has written books on such topics as poverty, greed, the early history of his party, and, most recently, courage. He heads the Labor Party, but reads American neocons such as James Q. Wilson and Gertrude

Himmelfarb. He can cite Harvard’s Samuel Huntington on the clash of civilizations and other theories and is on close terms with serious Christian writers. “Most politicians scan books for an idea or two,” writes Geoff Mulgan, director of Britain’s Young Foundation. “Brown actually reads them.”

Although Brown rarely talks publicly about religion, politics is, to him, about helping society act as a moral community rather than just a collection of individuals, Mulgan says. Brown’s focus on morality is often attributed to his upbringing in the Scottish church as the son of a Presbyterian minister. The new prime minister is steeped in the Bible, even as British society becomes more secular and multicultural, and he seeks out writers who go beyond the “simplicities of neoliberal individualism.” These include Americans such as Robert Putnam, author of *Bowling Alone* (2000), and Francis Fukuyama, author of *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992).

“His sources of influence are very American, or to be more precise, northeast American, drawn from an academic culture where rigorous rationalist Enlightenment thought has fused with a vigorous Protestantism,” according to Mulgan. Brown’s economic views, says John Lloyd, a writer for the *Financial Times*, started out just to the democratic side of socialism. Today they are that of a market liberal. His favorite book on globalization endorses it.

Brown joins a formidable roster of British intellectuals at 10 Downing Street, notably Winston