Why did Victorian women endure the tortures of tightlacing? Historian Bernard Rudofsky contends that respectability was one reason: "An unlaced waist was regarded as a vessel of sin." Davies suggests that tightlacing was a sign of status analogous to the Chinese practice of footbinding, "which incapacitated the female and thereby attested to the . . . ability of the husband to maintain her idleness."

Tightlacing began to die out during the 1890s, as middle-class fashion began to stress the importance of exercise and recreation. By then, Davies notes, smaller families had become the norm, and couples turned to contraception and other means to limit family size.

Zoning Enterprise

"The Zoning of Enterprise" by Edward C. Banfield, in *The Cato Journal* (Fall 1982), 224 Second St. S.E., Washington, D.C. 20003.

Conservatives have long favored the creation of inner-city "enterprise zones" to attract businesses and reduce hard-core unemployment. But Banfield, a Harvard political scientist, contends that the idea suffers from some of the same flaws as Great Society efforts at social uplift.

Under a plan proposed by President Reagan in March 1982, Washington would grant companies in 75 slum neighborhoods special tax credits; state and local governments would be expected to ease regulations within the zones and to provide other incentives. So far, however, Congress has not passed the legislation.

Even if the proposal were adopted, Banfield argues, it would founder on reality. Few of the hard-core unemployed, he says, really want the kinds of jobs that would be created. In a 1968 experiment, for example, the IBM Corporation established a small factory in Brooklyn's blighted Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood, aiming specifically to provide jobs for 400 chronically unemployed black men. Despite high wages, job training, an all-black environment, and special dispensations—foremen went to workers' homes to fetch them from bed if they were late for work—IBM was forced to abandon its original goals after one year and began hiring other kinds of workers.

The problem, in Banfield's view: "If he must pay for [job opportunities] by accepting the discipline of a well-run workplace—if he must work whether he feels like it or not, learn new skills, take responsibility, and so on—a worker who is accustomed to the [underclass] style of life . . . may not accept opportunities of the kind that IBM presents." As for the upwardly mobile, he adds, it would be better to encourage them to leave the ghettos than to offer false promises.

Shoe-string enterprises that offer low wages and substandard working conditions but demand little discipline are the only firms that can profitably employ workers from the underclass. Once common in the big cities, such businesses have been driven out by government regulation of workplace health and safety, wages, and other conditions. The proposal now before Congress does not eliminate these barriers.

Compassion, Banfield concludes, is the quality most responsible for

SOCIETY

the failure of U.S. antipoverty efforts. "Goodness," he says, "admirable as it is in private affairs, may be disastrous in public ones. What is required . . . is not goodness but virtue [which] often necessitates actions that are harsh or even cruel."

Cars and Snobs In Detroit, 1910

"The Price of Conspicuous Production: The Detroit Elite and the Automobile Industry, 1900–1933" by Donald F. Davis, in *Journal of Social History* (Fall 1982), Carnegie-Mellon University, Pittsburgh, Pa. 15213.

In the 1980s, the U.S. auto industry's woes appear to be strictly a matter of markets, competition, and interest rates. According to Davis, a University of Ottawa historian, the first upheaval in Detroit was caused not by economics but by the snobbery of some auto-makers.

Spurred by the success of Samuel Smith's Olds Motor Works, which paid annual dividends of 105 percent between 1899 and 1903, Detroit's "establishment" families invested heavily in the fledgling auto industry. By 1905, the companies they owned—Olds, Packard, Cadillac—were building 12,000 cars annually, half of Detroit's output.

But the auto market changed drastically after Henry Ford, scorned by Detroit's old guard, set up his own company in 1903; he was determined to build "a motor car for the multitude." By 1907, Ford was Detroit's leading producer. Within three years, Detroit's old-line families had dumped most of their holdings and owned less than three percent of the industry.

What happened? Davis argues that snobbery blinded the older companies. Cars had become America's ultimate status symbols, and the old-line auto-makers insisted on producing only luxury models, "particularly as the product carried the family name into every neighborhood and country club in the nation," Davis says.

Indeed, he notes, "In choosing a price class auto manufacturers almost invariably elected to serve their social peers." The directors and top executives of firms like Packard and Cadillac were mostly college-educated sons of successful businessmen and professionals. But "lower class" companies that mass-marketed cheap autos, such as Ford and Dodge, were led by a different breed. Twenty-two percent of their top executives were sons of workingmen, 24 percent were foreign-born, and only 25 percent had attended college. General Motors and Maxwell (later Chrysler) were exceptions: Owned by many far-flung stockholders rather than a few families, they were run by impersonal bureaucracies and thus, Davis says, manufactured cars in every price range.

In the end, the old families were doomed by their own parochialism. They lost their last strongholds in Detroit, the banks, when the Big Three automakers refused to bail them out during the 1930s. Thereafter, Detroit became a "satellite" of Wall Street, Grosse Pointe auto executives, and other outsiders.