

Welfare and Punishment in the Bush Era

Editors

UNDER THE NEW BUSH PRESIDENCY WE CAN EXPECT A CONTINUATION OF WELFARE and criminal policies developed during the Clinton years. The Democratic and Republican platforms on these issues were interchangeable. With Clinton in the White House, the Democrats seized the low ground of “law and order” and completed a total break with liberal agendas of the past. The federal guarantee of national welfare standards, forged during the New Deal and expanded during the tumultuous 1960s, was replaced in the 1990s by tougher eligibility standards, time limits, and work requirements. As a result, between 1996 and 1999 welfare caseloads nationwide dropped by 38%, or 4.6 million people. During the Clinton presidency, the populations of state and federal prisons rose more than under any other president, exceeding Reagan’s two terms by 235,000.

Although the Clinton and Bush administrations share similar assumptions about welfare and crime policies, there are some new developments that require our attention. The supply-side tax cutters now in ascendance in Washington seek ultimately to shrink the size and mandate of the federal government, further reducing the aim of promoting social welfare, and rationalizing such cuts with bloated, deficit-producing military budgets, if the rhetoric of compassion is insufficient. In this issue, three essays and one book review address the Bush initiative on “faith-based” welfare programs, which further the larger end of reducing the government’s social policy obligations. Long-time critics of American welfare policies, Wendy Mink and Rickie Solinger, raise their concerns about the dangers of mixing church and state in the funding and support of community-based services. Herb Kutchins goes to the ideological source of Bush’s “compassionate conservatism” in his devastating critique of Marvin Olasky’s pseudo-scholarship. And the White House’s point man for articulating faith’s place in government, John DiIulio, is the subject of Robert Weiss’ investigation, which views this development in terms of emergent Republican electoral strategies and the labor market conditions of the New Economy. In addition, we include articles by Shanta Pandey and Shannon Collier-Tenison, and Ingrid Phillips Whitaker and Victoria Time on the long-term consequences of devolution of welfare policy from the federal to state governments. A classroom resource, especially useful for revealing the interconnections between past and present welfare policies, is

provided in Anthony M. Platt and Jenifer Cooreman's "Multicultural Chronology of Welfare Policy."

The other half of this issue focuses on new developments in criminal justice. In "Social Insecurity," Anthony M. Platt updates with data and analysis an article ("Crime Panic") that first appeared in *Social Justice* in 1995. This article provides strong empirical support for the analysis that in the last 35 years, there has been a qualitative transformation of the American criminal justice system, which has become increasingly influenced by national politics and policies, with less and less local accountability. Police and prisons expanded at unprecedented rates in the 1970s and 1980s, paid for primarily by drastic cuts in public health, welfare, and education. Moreover, the increasing racialization of social control (from San Quentin to city planning) reinforces the conclusion that the struggle for civil rights remains very much unfinished. In Sandra Bass' "Policing Space, Policing Race," the tenuous and often contentious relationship between racial minorities and the police is examined. She argues that *de jure* segregation and discrimination have given way to *de facto* discriminatory policies and practices that perpetuate a relationship between racial minorities and the police that is substantially authoritarian, regulatory, and punitive in character.

The final four essays address aspects of punishment internationally. From the U.S., Stephen Richards and Jeffrey Ian Ross introduce a "Convict Criminology" as an emerging school and social movement concerned with the humanitarian reform of criminal justice. Joane Martel studies the damaging effects of the confinement of women in segregation in Western Canadian prisons and lends support to the literature suggesting that since the 17th century, surveillance and regulation often have been closer and more omnipresent toward women prisoners than that usually directed at men. Matthew Yeager looks at the demise of a pilot project on sentencing advocacy in Ottawa, Ontario, in which social workers prepared alternative disposition reports for defense counsel. In this struggle over jurisdictional hegemony, marginal populations were deprived of resources, power, and access to property, and were thus deprived of legal services. Finally, Leanne Fiftal Alarid and Hsiao-Ming Wang study the little-examined relationship of Buddhism to the death penalty in Southeast Asia. Since the death penalty is inconsistent with Buddhist teachings, the authors explore reasons for the continuing existence of capital punishment there. The final essay is a review of Susanne Jonas' book on Guatemala.

We are sad to report the untimely death of Ian Taylor, a pioneer in radical criminology and a long-time supporter of *Social Justice*. The spirit and content of Ian's contributions are expressed in Jock Young's tribute.

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