

drainage and permit maximum freedom for arm movement.

Other equally provocative design proposals encompass the bath and shower facilities, and the water closet. For reasons having to do with the physiology of the human abdominal cavity, Kira feels the latter should be built close to the floor so that the user must "assume the full squat [position] we are accustomed to seeing primitive peoples assume." Ideally, each bathroom would have a "home urinal" that would fold into the wall (above the water closet) and that "should look as little like the urinal found in 'men's rooms' as possible." Such proposals, of course, require—and merit—more discussion and consideration than can be devoted to them in the short space of a book review.

Less revolutionary and probably less controversial are Kira's criticisms that bathrooms are inadequately lighted, not properly ventilated (thus the steaming up of mirrors), and not nearly as sound-proof as they ought to be—and as people would like them to be. Noise emanating from the bathroom would be greatly reduced by the adoption of sound-absorbing (and moisture resistant) ceilings and wall-to-wall (washable) carpeting, he suggests. Carpeting would also lessen the chances of slipping, as would "non-slip surfaces" in the tub and shower.

Since it is a multi-purpose room, the bathroom area should also be enlarged to accommodate the large number of miscellaneous activities not connected with personal hygiene that are performed there. These range from shining shoes and steaming clothes to employing the bathroom as a photographic dark room or a "telephone booth" for making "personal" phone calls. The privileged character of the bathroom, it is pointed out, is often utilized to obtain privacy for a variety of emotional purposes like sulking, crying, daydreaming, and

in some unfortunate instances, committing suicide.

But despite all its uses, and its necessity, the bathroom—unlike, for example, the kitchen—has remained virtually untouched by the advances of modern technology. Why? "The reasons for this neglect are complex," writes Kira, "and involve the societal and psychological taboos which surround the subject and which seem almost to have built up into a culture-wide embarrassment. The simple and inevitable body functions have largely come to be regarded as unmentionable and vulgar."

This attitude is reflected in the incredible array of euphemisms Americans have devised to avoid saying "the toilet" when they refer to that room in front of other people. Not surprisingly, in one survey conducted by Cornell a significant number of respondents indicated a desire for considerably larger windows than those commonly found in bathrooms, because larger windows could not be identified from the outside as belonging to the bathroom—"implying that they did not even have a bathroom."

Part of the responsibility for this "neglect," Kira contends lies with the "plumbing industry" which is "dominated by a handful of companies" that manufacture most of the basic fixtures. These manufacturers have little "direct contact with the consumer" and sell their products to the public "through plumbers who, for various reasons, have little concern with, or understanding for, the consumer's wishes or needs."

"A minor revolution," asserts Professor Kira, will have to take place before this "isolation from the consumer" is ended, and before "the veil of embarrassment" is entirely lifted. Then the "most basic human activity can be examined without fear and the facilities to accommodate it can assume their proper place of importance in the home."

Letting Sleeping Dragons Lie

**THE MOYNIHAN REPORT
AND THE
POLITICS OF CONTROVERSY**

*By Lee Rainwater
and William L. Yancey*
MIT Press. 493 pp. \$3.95.

Reviewed by

RICHARD J. MARGOLIS
*Author of the forthcoming,
"Something to Build On"*

THIS IS A TALE which sociologists will doubtless repeat to their children on dark, stormy nights. Outside the winds will howl and the shutters will bang, to remind the children that mysterious forces, beyond the grace of reason, are astir in the night. Rainwater and Yancey have fashioned a kind of socio-epic. They sing of arms and the Moynihan, wherein an intrepid reformer with friends at court goes forth to slay a dragon (Negro family instability), only to learn that the dragon has friends, too. In the end, the King turns his back on our hero and decides to let sleeping dragons lie.

The writers tell the story faithfully, if somewhat repetitiously. They have interviewed 61 people "who seem to be the main participants in the controversy." And they have had the good sense to reprint all pertinent documents, including the Moynihan report and President Johnson's Howard University speech, which was largely based on the report and which Moynihan helped to write.

On the whole this is good "instant history," and it deserves retelling, if only because it was so incredibly garbled the first time. Berl Bernhard's quip to civil rights

leaders who were meeting at the White House in the fall of 1965—"I have been reliably informed that no such person as Daniel Patrick Moynihan exists"—contains a measure of truth. Moynihan's message never did reach the general public.

My own national sampling of opinion, largely confined to fellow airplane passengers and strangers in hotel bars, confirms this. Few of the travelers I chat with have heard about either Moynihan or his "famous" report. Moreover, many of them remain convinced—after more than a decade of putative soul-searching—that most Negroes are lazy, unintelligent and inclined to riot. I take these casual acquaintances, who speak with passable precision and prefer their martinis dry, to be roughly representative of upper-middle class America. If so, a really thorough airing of the Moynihan report might interest them. It might help them to shed their dear delusions of race.

The report has never enjoyed such an airing. In the beginning it was a confidential government document, primarily for White House consumption. Later, as Rainwater and Yancey make clear, the White House leaked parts of it in a way that guaranteed general confusion. By the time the full report was made public, nearly everyone in the civil rights establishment had already concluded it was a menace to the cause. As a result, and with a hint of White House complicity, they quashed it.

It was Peter Finley Dunne who pointed out that "No wan cares to hear . . . th' short an' simple scandals iv th' poor." It was Daniel Patrick Moynihan who unintentionally proved it. Early in 1965 Moynihan, then an Assistant Secretary of Labor, submitted to the White House a confidential report on "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action." In it he argued that many of the Negro poor were different from you and me: They not only had less money, they had

more handicaps, and these handicaps effectively barred them from achieving real equality. In short, their suffering had rendered them powerless to seize the new day of freedom which civil rights victories had presumably inaugurated.

"The single most important social fact of the United States," Moynihan wrote, was the "massive deterioration" of Negro society and its institutions. And: "At the heart of the deterioration of the fabric of Negro society is the deterioration of the Negro family."

Citing various statistics on non-white illegitimate births, divorce rates, unemployment and welfare caseloads, Moynihan sought to prove that three centuries of pain had brought many low-income Negro families to the brink of ruin. Fathers without jobs wandered off; children without fathers gave up; mothers without husbands endured. And since, in our society, the family unit was held to be the main source of all blessings—spiritual as well as financial—it followed that millions of Negroes were condemned to permanent deprivation.

The notion that some Negroes were born damned was probably as close to a doctrine of original sin as a modern sociologist could get. But Moynihan made it clear that the sins were those of a white society. The Negro bore only the mark of oppression, not the mark of Cain.

If we grant all this, then we must seriously entertain the possibility, sad as it seems, that our civil rights triumphs are really hollow trophies. They are nice to have around, but they do not lead to Negro equality. What we need are not more empty chalices of liberty but a solid, massive, Federally sponsored campaign to put Negro families together again.

While Moynihan did not spell out the substance of such a campaign, the implications were plain enough. Any meaningful program to strengthen low-income Negro

families would have to concentrate on more jobs, better housing and reforming the nation's welfare machinery which, through its program of Aid for Dependent Children, appeared to be perpetuating the very weaknesses Moynihan decried.

In any case, the Administration bought the Moynihan thesis—rather casually, it seems, and without profound deliberation. Rainwater and Yancey think "the very positive feedback" that Moynihan got from White House officials was based on solid considerations. "The report," they write, "gave the Administration . . . a specific means to measure the effectiveness of existing or new programs aimed at the pathologies of the urban slums." Maybe so, but the reader gets a quite different impression—namely, that the White House was looking more for a gimmick than a solution.

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The Administration apparently wanted to "leap-frog" the civil rights movement by coming up with a program which the movement had not yet thought of demanding. In other words, the Administration wished to lead, not follow, and the Moynihan report seemed to be just the ticket. The dialogue at the White House, one gathers, was distinctly upbeat. "Pat, I think you've got it," exclaimed one White House official.

Whatever the reasons, the report appeared to have carried the day. The President's Howard University speech, on June 4, 1965, was really a distillation of its main points. The President noted that the Negro was winning his freedom, but "freedom is not enough." He said many Negroes were losing ground every day "in the battle for true equality," and he attributed his setback, by and large, to "the breakdown of the Negro family structure." Therefore, he was calling a special White House conference of scholars and experts to find a way to help American Negroes "move beyond opportunity to achievement." "To Fulfill These Rights" was to be both the theme and title of the conference.

That was the high point of

Moynihan's efforts to influence national policy. After that, according to Rainwater and Yancey, it was downhill all the way. First the welfare establishment struck back—mostly through "conversation, rumors and verbal analysis communicated where it would do the most good." They claimed the report was unscientific.

At the same time White House sources were leaking contradictory interpretations of both the report and the President's speech. One interpretation stressed the importance of big, new Federal programs to strengthen Negro families. The other minimized the Federal responsibility and emphasized, of all things, Negro self-help. "You could pay your money and take your choice," note the authors: "The President sought to encourage Negroes to pull up their socks and stop asking the government for so much money or he was building toward massive Federal programs . . . dealing with the social and economic plight of Negro citizens."

It was not long before civil rights leaders, who knew only what they read in the newspapers, began to hear in the still "secret" Moynihan report the sour echoes of racism. One could understand why. Moynihan was using unpleasant examples commonly associated with racist propaganda: delinquency, illegitimacy and welfare. And now the President seemed to be telling Negroes to clean up their own mess. The press meanwhile, in summarizing the report, usually compounded the confusion by omitting Moynihan's causal connection between white brutality and Negro inequality.

Actually, as Rainwater and Yancey observe, there was little that was new in the Moynihan report. E. Franklin Frazier said most of it 30 years ago (Moynihan credits him), and Whitney Young, with his domestic Marshall Plan for the poor, has been saying something similar right along. Had Moynihan

buried his notions in a novel or written them from the point of view, let us say, of a man-child in Harlem, he would doubtless have been hailed as a sensitive chronicler of the lower depths. As it was, he was accused by civil rights leaders of promulgating "a subtle racism." That is something like a Russian writer being accused by *Pravda* of espousing a subtle capitalism. One understands that he may have meant well, but one expects him to recant just the same.

Moynihan never recanted, and he was more or less drummed out of the corps at the White House civil rights planning conference that fall and at the big White House conference—"To Fulfill These Rights"—the following spring. The people who attended these conferences came to bury Moynihan, not to praise him. They succeeded handsomely. The literature table was laden with pamphlets and papers rebutting the Moynihan report. The report itself was not in evidence.

Soon after the fall planning conference it became pathetically plain that the President was no longer interested in "leap-frogging" the civil rights movement. He was escalating his rhetoric but not his program. With ill-concealed bitterness, Rainwater and Yancey quote a St. Louis *Post Dispatch* report on the President's state of mind in December 1965: ". . . in the struggle for civil rights, the quest for liberty and equality has ended and the much more difficult search for true fraternity has started. . . ."

In the Howard University speech, the authors remind us, liberty had been nearly achieved and the next struggle would be for equality. Now, by year's end, the quest for equality had also been achieved, leaving us to meet the challenge of true fraternity. "Surely this was an Administration achievement of the first order: the struggle for equality had been won in only six months!"

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