

Notes on Immigration Crises - III

Immigration & the Crisis of Management

- reading: S. A. Hewlett, "Coping with Illegal Immigrants"
- reading: "The Impossible Class"

The Crisis in Managing Immigration: View from the Top

- Hewlett's article is a good example of a top-down discussion of immigration "control" or "management"
- she is a policy analyst and advisor; the article is published in *Foreign Affairs*, addressed to the elite
- "illegal immigration", she says, is "our" problem, she identifies with policy makers
- why is illegal immigration a "problem"?
 - because "national sovereignty" requires control over entry by "non-citizens"
 - because growing net immigration is a problem, why?
 - because it threatens social instability
 - on the one hand she mentions a growing unprotected and exploited underclass, nativism and racism
 - in a way which seems to imply her concern with the immigrants themselves
 - on the other she evokes the Brixton Uprising in London in 1981
 - which was led by (not against) immigrants in revolt against their exploitation
 - see film Blacks Britannica about the conditions and responses of immigrants in the UK
 - she also evokes threat of Third World hordes "pouring over the border" (old Yellow Peril)
- Hewlett surveys previous efforts to develop policy: Carter Plan, Select Commission, Reagan Task Force
 - conclusions always same: too much immigration, need to cut inflow
 - in each case she finds them not restrictive enough, especially opposes any "guest worker" program, pointing to
 - the Bracero Program in the US and the European experience, mentions 2nd Generation problem
- Hewlett says any effective policy must contain four elements of "carrot & stick":
 - 1. Employer sanctions: penalties severe enough to dissuade
 - 2. Worker identification cards: if you can't get cards, get identification system for everyone (NB: Maxwell's demon's computers at work!)
 - 3. Control of borders: double INS/border patrol
 - 4. Amnesty: to get long term illegals to regularize status
- this package, minus identification system was passed a few years later

The Crisis in Managing Immigration: View from the Bottom

- the piece "The Impossible Class" (IC) appeared in a pamphlet called "We Want to Riot, Not to Work!" which was written in the wake of, and for the purposes of analyzing, the Brixton Uprising of 1981
- IC critiques both mainstream and Left analyses, seeing both as a search for "solutions"
- IC critique of Left/Marxist analyses argues that the "impossible class" (that launched the uprising) can't be defined in the traditional way, i.e., in terms of the relations of the class to the relations of production
- instead, the "impossible class" is made up of those who have largely broken out of the labor market and have been creating a "subterranean unofficial economy" in which work is subordinated to other activities; this corresponds to some analyses of the "informal sector" in the 3rd World, those that point to the systematic breaking of the usual rules of the game and the creation of new ones
- this "class" is portrayed as diffuse, but organized informally, can appear (to others) and disappear quickly
- the Brixton Uprising is argued to have been a manifestation of the growing confrontation between the state and this invisible class which refuses to cooperate with economic or legal norms from above
- uprising was aimed at police (confrontation with state rules) and direct appropriation (consistent with a logic of refusing the mediation of exchange more generally)
- how the uprising might be a response to rising pressures becomes clear in the film "Blacks Britannica" which teaches about police methods such as arresting young people on "sus" or suspicion of the intent to commit a crime and on the violence used against them; violence begets violence
- in all of this immigrant youth, especially 2nd generation immigrant youth play a central role; although the author/s emphasize that the uprising involved a multicultural, white as well as "black" mass of young people; Brixton is a very mixed community, poor of all races