

**CAROL M. SWAIN, *The New White Nationalism in America: Its Challenge to Integration*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2002, 526 pp. £18.21 (hbk)**

Carol Swain's new book, *The New White Nationalism in America*, is an extremely controversial work that will lead to much discussion in both academic and public policy circles. The book's title is only partly accurate. The work is as much a critique of the multiculturalism of white liberals and black ethnic leaders as it is an analysis of a resurgent white racial nationalism. Notwithstanding the interventions of William Julius Wilson, it presents the first systematic attack on the American multicultural apparatus by a distinguished black academic. What makes it so pointed is that it is written by a poster child of the multiculturalist Left: an African-American single mother who rose from an impoverished background to become a Harvard professor.

The book commences with an outline of the contours of the white extreme right. Here we are treated to a summary of many of its main actors, among them the Christian Identity Movement, Aryan Nations, KKK and World Church of the Creator. We also hear from the more respectable face of white nationalism – notably academics and journalists of both Christian and Jewish background like Jared Taylor, Philippe Rushton, Michael Hart and Michael Levin. Later in the book, Swain takes a look at Don Black's popular Stormfront website, as well as emergent actors like the National Association for the Advancement of White People.

This nationalist activity, claims Swain, now has the potential to emerge as a mass social movement due to a new constellation of forces engulfing white America. These include the demographic decline of the white population, the presence of affirmative action for a growing minority population, the loss of well-paid blue collar jobs due to globalisation, and a rising rate of black-on-white crime.

Swain considers each of these issues in detail, citing William Frey's finding that liberal immigration policies are fuelling white flight – especially among the working class – from high immigration metro areas. Crime and Affirmative Action receive extended and sophisticated treatment in subsequent chapters. All of these forces are contributing to a fertile environment for the extreme white right to press its claims. Swain suggests that future trends in all these policy areas only point in the direction of increased pressure on white America, hence she portends the rise of racial conflict on an 'unprecedented scale.' A violent scenario is implicit in this picture.

Yet one of Swain's major contentions – supported by both opinion polls and her own focus group research - is that beneath the din of multiculturalism, ordinary white and black Americans share many 'politically incorrect' views, including opposition to high immigration levels and globalisation, as well as a negative assessment of racial preferences. The challenge, she asserts, is to build on this common ground by encouraging debate, in the top tiers of the media and higher education, on controversial racial issues - a debate currently suppressed by the white liberal cultural establishment. The result will be a clearer vision of unity-in-integration and a defusing of the explosive environment in which white extremism can take root. The new consensus should lead to a renewed focus on socio-economic inequality as opposed to race-specific remedies.

As she proceeds, Swain castigates current black civil-rights era leaders who claim to speak on behalf of black America. Their preoccupation with symbolic battles like reparations for slavery comes at the expense of attention on the real – yet unacknowledged - issues, namely rising rates of black illegitimacy and crime, and

steadily worsening educational attainment. Swain's two-pronged attack on the white liberal/black ethnic establishment will not be popular with the American cultural elite. But her in-depth research, passionate intensity and intellectual honesty will serve to stimulate a much-needed debate.

In academic terms, the book serves more as a summary of diverse currents of scholarship than as a genuine intellectual departure. Most importantly, it fails to substantiate the claim of a rising white nationalism. One can easily agree that large-scale nonwhite immigration, globalisation and affirmative action *ought* to fuel white nationalism. If such policies were attempted in 1920's America, they undoubtedly would have led to mass rioting. Today, however, Pat Buchanan struggles to get 1 percent of the vote. A thick description of white nationalist websites and hate groups that have a following in the tens of thousands in a population of nearly 300 million does not constitute proof of any major movement. Moreover, the author fails to chart any trend suggesting significant growth in these figures. All of this merely underscores the more important question: why hasn't the dog of white nationalism actually barked?

One answer is individualism and the decline of the associational bonds (religious, fraternal, neighbourhood) which might have nurtured a white populist revolt and alternative version of American history – as occurred in the 1890-1925 period. Another might be the very cosmopolitan authoritarianism (i.e. political correctness) of the white liberal elite which Swain disparages. This is not to defend political correctness, but merely to point out that it may be a ruthlessly effective strategy – so long as it can hold the fort until whites become a minority.

Though she fails to make an empirical case for a resurgent white nationalism, on the policy side, Swain is devastating. Her missives to both white liberals and black leaders reflect both her black working-class common sense and her wide-ranging intellect. The arguments presented here will surely contribute to the growing swing away from the use of racial preferences which will culminate in the Supreme Court ruling set for March. In summary, this is an excellent book, rich in policy analysis, that presents a useful synthesis of work on affirmative action and white nationalism. It will undoubtedly leave its mark on the American racial conversation in the years to come.