

dants have committed crimes against person and property. But many are guilty of nothing other than ingesting certain chemicals and selling them to Kristen or Jim upon request. Beneath the fog of her growing drug dependency, it dawns on her that there is no moral justification for betraying such people. But the police chief is pushing for more cases, and she and her partner oblige by continuing to entrap smalltime dealers.

Her sense of guilt becomes acute during the "bustout," when the police reel in all the defendants that Kristen and Jim have been building cases against. Witnessing the arrest of a dealer who will later get a life sentence, she says: "He trusted me. They had all trusted me....I hadn't counted on growing close to so many of the defendants. They'd believed I was their friend. I had pretended to be their friend. I felt like a snail, spreading ooze in front of me so that I could slither ahead another inch or so, not really getting anywhere, just going for the sake of moving forward. I sat there wondering if there was any way I could rationalize all one hundred and twelve arrests, knowing that I couldn't."

But while it's easy to incriminate druggies, netting the bigger fish requires some creativity. Under pressure from the police chief, Jim and Kristen fabricate evidence against a pornographer and suspected dealer, which ultimately leads to a bloody reprisal and their own conviction on perjury charges. Wozencraft describes the impact of these experiences, along with the depredations of Jim's and Kristen's addictions, in compelling prose, remarkably free of self-pity or lecturing.

Which is not to say that the book lacks a moral perspective. Accounts of police corruption can too easily turn into excuses for nihilism, not only denying the classification of certain people as good or evil but rejecting the categories themselves. Certainly Wozencraft tears down the distinction between drug users who carry badges and those who don't: "The difference between them and me was that I understood there was no difference."

But she is also firm in her indictment

of those who know the score and look the other way, such as the police chief. The real villain of the book, he wants to stay squeaky clean and advance his career while benefitting from other people's dirty work. Wozencraft also has harsh words for the decent, middle-class citizens who demand a war on drugs but don't want to know what it entails.

Kristen describes the attitude she encounters when she tries to tell them the real situation: "This is Texas, not New York City. This kind of thing can't happen here. Leave us alone. We have bills to pay, children to raise; you took the job, now just do what you have to to keep the drugs out. And do it quietly. We don't want to hear about it. The lawn needs edging."

Wozencraft does not shrink from ac-

cepting her share of responsibility. Neither in the book nor in the news media (she was profiled by the *Washington Post* and appeared on the "Donahue" show) has she sought to minimize her own crime, for which she served 13 months in federal prison. But the success of *Rush*—the movie rights went for \$1 million, unusual for a first novel—will give supporters of drug prohibition an excuse to dismiss her as just another felon seeking undeserved celebrity. They will also suggest that her story is atypical and that no lessons can be drawn from it about the morality of the effort to suppress drug use. They don't want to hear about it.

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In a Word, No

BY BEN WILDAVSKY

A Future of Lousy Jobs?: The Changing Structure of U.S. Wages, edited by Gary Burtless, Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 256 pages, \$10.95 paper

A shadowy drone holds a wrench in one hand, his neck shackled by a thick chain that extends straight into the air—held tight, no doubt, by some invisible hand. The grim image on the cover of this new release from the Brookings Institution demonstrates at least one marketer's belief that, where American jobs are concerned, misery still sells. So it's reassuring to discover that the worried question mark in the book's title, *A Future of Lousy Jobs?*, is far from perfunctory. The answer given here is no.

This anthology of five papers on changing U.S. wage patterns presented at a March 1989 Brookings conference incorporates a wide array of research findings. Although the various sections—with comments from other labor economists appended—form a disparate, occasionally contradictory whole, a helpful introduction by editor and contributor Gary Burtless, a senior fellow at Brookings, guides the lay reader through what might otherwise seem a morass of economese. The collection would come

alive with more vivid, real-world examples of workers and their jobs. But it's interesting for the way the authors at once reject certain conventional notions about what is wrong with the U.S. labor market and suggest some different problems that bear serious consideration.

The author's central premise—one which Burtless acknowledges is not shared by all economists—is that earnings inequality between the high, middle, and low ends of the wage distribution has grown for male workers, particularly in the last decade. To the extent that the rapid rise of wages at the top of the distribution accounts for this trend, it should alarm only those who find the very fact of differences among workers disturbing. The earnings gap, however, also reflects an absolute drop in wages for workers below the median. Robert A. Moffitt, for example, states that the real earnings (in 1982 dollars) of men in the 25th percentile dropped from \$9,500 in 1967 to \$8,400 in 1987.

Where does the "lousy jobs" thesis fit

in all this? Many have assumed that growing earnings inequality must mean an increase in low-skill, hence low-wage, jobs. But Burtless dismisses this as a "naive view of recent history," saying that if employers were really "creating a disproportionate number of jobs that required few skills and little education, we would anticipate that the wages of less skilled workers would be bid up relative to those received by better skilled, more educated workers." He points out that the exact opposite has occurred in the 1980s. In addition to a growing, baby-boom-driven gap between the wages of older and younger males, the earnings premium for male college graduates "has exploded," leaving less educated men behind.

A paper by McKinley Blackburn, David Bloom, and Richard Freeman gives limited support to the common notion that structural shifts from manufacturing to service jobs have contributed to wage inequality. They find that 20 percent to 30 percent of the earnings losses less-skilled men have experienced can be explained by these kinds of industrial changes. But the overriding importance of education and skills is buttressed by their finding that "about 70 to 80 percent of the increase in the earnings gap between college graduates and high school dropouts from 1979 through 1987 occurred within industries."

Attributing this intra-industry differential to businesses' attempts "to change their production techniques in a way that requires more able and more skilled workers," Burtless arrives at his bottom line. The problem low-skilled men face, he writes, "is not an overabundance of bad jobs, as suggested in the title of this book, but a surplus of unskilled workers in a market requiring more skill than ever."

Since *A Future of Lousy Jobs?* focuses on rising inequality in male earnings, it is important to stress the corollary to this finding: Income inequality among women, Burtless says, is "falling or remaining stable." This brighter picture for women workers, whose labor-force participation rate has risen enormously in the past 20 years and who are increasingly

closing the wage gap with men, is amplified in a particularly interesting paper called "Are Part-Time Jobs Bad Jobs?"

Rebecca Blank, a Northwestern University professor currently with the Council of Economic Advisers, finds that while part-time workers overall tend to earn slightly lower hourly wages than those working full-time, the differences are smaller within occupations. In fact, she says, "Women in part-time service jobs actually appear to earn higher average wages than full-time workers." Blank points out that three-quarters of all women working part-time in 1987 were not interested in full-time work. She notes

The book's most instructive lesson is that there are too many unskilled workers rather than too many bad jobs. Education seems to be the key. Ultimately, this is an encouraging message.

that "part-time jobs fill an important role for many women who desire income and labor market involvement but cannot make a full-time labor market commitment."

This crucial factor is too often underplayed or ignored in discussions of part-time work. The downside to the benefits of part-time work lies in the poorer fringe benefits such jobs tend to offer. As Burtless points out, this will be more of a problem for single women than for those who already receive such benefits through their husbands' jobs.

Poor benefits may also be a problem for some men. Although far fewer men than women work part-time in the first place, 43 percent of those who do say they would prefer full-time work. This figure has risen during the last 20 years, along with the overall amount of part-time work. The growth in the number of part-time jobs, however, cannot be blamed for male

earnings inequality, Burtless says. His paper and another find that "earnings inequality among men has risen because wage inequality has risen, not because there has been a rise in inequality of annual hours of work." This finding, says Burtless, combined with Blank's account of part-time jobs, "should lay to rest many fears about the adverse effects of part-time employment on the quality of U.S. jobs."

In the anthology's final paper, Robert Moffitt pays Charles Murray the peculiar compliment of attempting to refute something Murray never said. Moffitt explores the notion that increased male earnings inequality might have been caused by work disincentives like those Murray has charged the U.S. welfare system with creating. He acknowledges that Murray's *Losing Ground* "does not directly consider the earnings distribution" and cites no one else who has made such a critique. Yet Moffitt proceeds to take great statistical pains to tear apart his own straw man limb by limb.

This exercise is odd. To take one example, Moffitt says that most literature about the effects of transfer programs is "not germane to the issue at hand" since it deals with Aid to Families with Dependent Children payments received by female family heads. The very fact that most welfare payments go to women, of course, would go a long way toward explaining why no one has proposed holding welfare responsible for male earnings inequality. And Moffitt says that the AFDC program has "had disincentive effects on the work effort of female heads."

Even if Murray's argument about welfare could be related to the changing distribution of wages, Moffitt's elaborate attempt to refute it seems of a piece with other critics' efforts to provide meticulous quantitative documentation showing that welfare does not directly cause illegitimacy and unemployment. Murray has answered such critics by countering that his argument was "expository and speculative" and hardly based on the strict causal model his detractors consider it their duty to rebut. Thus, while Moffitt's paper includes many interesting details, when he says

triumphantly that accelerating earnings inequality growth coincided with declining government transfer growth, he isn't necessarily saying much.

The most instructive lesson of *A Future of Lousy Jobs?* concerns the increasing role education and skills play in determining the fate of American workers. "If the nation has too many unskilled workers rather than too many bad jobs," Burtless writes, "both efficiency and equity will be served by improving the skills of workers now lodged at the

bottom." No doubt some will argue that government should take part in this process, and some businesses may also do so in the spirit of enlightened self-interest. But the most encouraging news here is that individuals can exercise a great deal of control over their future in the job market, provided they make the right kinds of choices about their own human capital.

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ordeal. But the rest of the book is no ordeal at all. Each successive chapter draws the reader quickly into the life and aspirations of the "utopia" with which it deals and communicates a wealth of insight in remarkably few pages. McCord has an eye for the illuminating incident, the revealing statement, the crucial fact, and he knows how to present each of them effectively. Not once did I find myself thumbing ahead to see how far it was to the end of a chapter.

Voyages to Utopia begins in modern Tahiti and then takes us back to the first encounter of Europeans with "the fragrant isle," comparing the myth of a Pacific Eden with the reality of Tahiti both in the 18th Century and now. After that we remain in the contemporary world, traveling through Israeli kibbutzim; a retreat center and a countercultural commune in California; an anarchist commune in France; an Anglican religious order dedicated to serving the poor; the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt; communities of Gandhians in India; the diverse socialisms of Yugoslavia, Hungary, and China; and the so-called capitalist utopias of Singapore, La Jolla, California, and Denmark, with numerous short side trips along the way to see what can be learned from related experiments.

Each chapter begins by trying to make the new utopia attractive to the reader before turning to the problems it has encountered and the ambiguities of its mission or self-understanding. McCord professes to be in sympathy with all the societies he studies, and with the exception of La Jolla and perhaps the Muslim Brotherhood, I found this stance credible. He does not set up straw men.

But neither is he a misty-eyed observer. He has a clear eye for the tensions and contradictions that develop when social ideals become incarnate, and he portrays them candidly. He also puts on his scholar's suit at appropriate times to discuss the deeper sources of success and failure within the ventures he describes.

McCord is generally a reliable reporter and analyst. He makes minor mistakes, such as giving Clark Kerr credit

"No Place"-Like Homes

BY PAUL HEYNE

Voyages to Utopia: From Monastery to Commune—The Search for the Perfect Society in Modern Times, by William McCord, New York: W.W. Norton, 381 pages, \$22.50

For readers (like myself) who learned that *utopia* means "no place," the title *Voyages to Utopia* is thoroughly misleading. The places to which the author takes us in this captivating book are all quite real.

William McCord claims that the *u* in *utopia* doesn't necessarily derive from the Greek *ou*, meaning "no" or "not"; it might also come, he says, from *eu*, which means "well" or "good." He opts for the latter derivation and subsequently takes us to visit a fascinating variety of contemporary experiments in creating a good place to live. The extended tour leads through secular and religious fellowships and communes, socialist states, and—somewhat surprisingly—what the author calls "capitalist utopias."

McCord is a well-known sociologist who, in the course of a long career exploring social problems from delinquency and urban conflict to alcoholism and psychopathy, seems to have made the study of utopian ventures a semiprofessional hobby. He has actually visited each of the utopias he describes and has talked with the people who live there, sounding them out on their experiences, their frustrations, and their hopes. He has also read extensively both in the general literature of utopian experiments and the



The Quaker route: Students and teachers pray at a Philadelphia school.

more specific literature of the ventures he discusses. On top of that, he writes easily and well, almost as if he had never learned the techniques that social scientists commonly employ to reduce all writing to shades of gray.

Almost! Beware of the opening chapter, "Prelude to a Journey." After reading its odd combination of personal reminiscence and anticipatory synopsis, I drew a deep breath in preparation for a 350-page