

conditionality is ineffective and possibly inappropriate. A strategy of cooperation and accountability, she argues, is therefore preferred.

It is probably worth bearing in mind that CIDA is in the business of development and that the imposition of conditionalities could curtail their operations significantly. In other words, it is in CIDA's interest not to adopt such a strategy. Unfortunately, *Ours By Right* offers no such critique of the role of the donor despite its promise to consider the role funding agencies play in women's human rights promotion. None of the chapters provides a thorough or critical analysis of the relationship between donor and recipient. Rather, the authors confine themselves to calls for additional funding—with the exception of Carolyn Hannon-Andersson, who raises the concern that women's issues have become marginalized in many development agencies through the creation of Women in Development (WID) programmes.

The book's strength lies primarily in its case studies (and Marsha A. Freeman's excellent chapter on the CEDAW), which are thoughtful and informative. These chapters demonstrate that, as Kerr points out in her conclusion, while oppression may be culturally-specific in form, women around the world are nonetheless united in their subordination, be it economic or social—a message which will be delivered yet again at the Fourth UN Conference on Women in Beijing.

### **CHALLENGING RACISM AND SEXISM: ALTERNATIVES TO GENETIC EXPLANATIONS**

Ethel Tobach and Betty Rosoff, Eds.  
New York: The Feminist Press, 1994.

*by Satish K. Sharma*

Ever since the revolutionary developments taking place in the science of genetics one question has persistently

been raised: is it possible to improve the quality of human behaviour through the transmission of particular types of genes? This question has raised an unending debate, with some scientists holding a position for and others against. A paper presented by J. Philippe Rushton in 1989 asserted emphatically that genes determine the difference in intelligence, socio-economic status, brain size and sexual behaviour. The issue was not only critically debated, but it culminated into a book which has dealt with it at length. The book under review in fact is a critique of Rushton's thesis of genetic determinism.

The editors, Ethel Tobach and Betty Rosoff, introduce readers to the existing paradox between science and societal processes, which to them has resulted in the emergence of racism and sexism in human society. They have argued that the struggles of the oppressed seeking equality have often been without support from the scientific community. The opposition to their cause has been coming from the pseudo-scientific theory of genetic determinism which asserts that genes not only determine the characteristics of all organisms, but also program the cognitive, emotional and social processes that guarantee genes' succession. Despite the tall claims, the editors point out that the genetic deterministic explanation itself is not complete, as there is lack of consensus among the scientists. Many in the divided scientific community do not subscribe to such a viewpoint and therefore described it as a *non-issue*. Rather, they believe that genes alone do not influence human behaviour, whatever influence there is due to their interaction with environmental factors.

The articles by Hubbard, Tobach and Rosoff, Woodward, Kaplan and Rogers, Reid, and Green included in the first part of this collection examine the concepts of racism and sexism from the perspective of biology, physiology and psychology. The key issue raised in this part is: can biology and physiology account for racism and sexism which are also socio-psycho-

logical categories? The answer certainly is in the negative, as biological or psychological explanations cannot explain the differences between individual and group behaviour. The inadequacies of such explanations are obviously due to the fact that nowhere do they take into consideration the role of class and history in human evolution and behaviour. The other questions discussed at length relate to the adequacy of genetics in bio-medical research and human evolution; the inadequacy of molecular genetics; socio-biological interpretations of genetic processes; and unscientific usages of morphology and hormonal processes. The stress is laid on the idea that instead of generalizing the genetic influences, an analytical distinction between the genetic functions affecting the human body and the factors having a bearing on human evolution must be made. In this context, it is important to remember that besides biological and physiological factors, environmental factors affect human evolution considerably. The articles by feminist scholars make it clear by referring to the impact of racism and sexism on the development of educational and social policies, which affect the women and their evolution in varying. Thus, a critical examination of biological, physiological, and psychological explanations of racism and sexism reveals their one-sidedness. From the methodological and empirical point of view, a holistic explanation of these phenomena is highly desirable. This in fact is emphasized as an alternative to genetic determinism.

The second part—philosophical and historical issues in racism and sexism comprising four theoretical papers—examines racist and sexist discrimination which has been going on in human society for a long time. The basic question raised here is how feminist movements have dealt with the question of the relationship between race, gender, and class. It is pointed out that understanding about the above question has been inadequate. The reason for this is the conception of women as a universal

category which excludes the history of a particular society and the forces affecting the women.

The articles by Burnham, Allen, Kaplan, and Horn, although they look at philosophical and historical issues from different perspectives, are quite revealing. It is argued that while racism and sexism characterized the society, researchers in biology, especially in eugenics, formulated theories which contributed to repressive social policies. Evidence of this comes from IQ studies which have been used to classify races and sexes, Hitler's racialized anti-semitism, Nazi ideology which applied racist policies even to women in the name of maintaining racial purity, and other such oppressive measures. The studies included in this section of the book demonstrate how the people and communities in power abused genetic information to maintain their vested interests. Therefore it was not genetic differentials which created inequalities but the abuse of this information. Historically continuing policies even affected the legal processes and systems. Skin colour became the criterion for determining the nature and quantum of treatment of offenders including women belonging to different racial groups. In totality, the articles included in this section expose the pseudo-scientific theories, including genetic determinism, used by the people in power to exploit the weak in society.

The third part of this volume, dealing with contemporary racism and sexism in different ethnic groups, contains six articles, one each by Daly, Blustein, Valacarcél, Yatani, Sharoni and Sanders. The contributors focus on the American native woman; science, ideology and political action; blacks in Puerto Rico; Asian Americans and Asian children; and the interplay of racism and sexism in Israel. Racist and sexist policies in America destroyed the native American women. They were not only ousted from their lands and made to suffer economic deprivations, but were entrenched in such a vicious circle that they could never come

out. Thus they remain poverty-stricken and abused by their men. Genetic determinism has even been applied in educational and economic systems in such a way that certain groups are projected as incapable of learning skills and unable to carry on specialized economic activities. In this way the policies followed in America and even in South America have been perpetuating racial and gender inequalities. The case of blacks in Puerto Rico is a living example.

It is argued that it is not merely the genetic structure of different populations that determines the level of intelligence but that other factors, such as family organization and practices, value structure, and cultural goals, determine different levels of scholastic achievements. Thus the specificity and generality of the problems in question need to be analytically understood in their respective socio-cultural context. The reason obviously is, as Max Weber puts it, that it is not just one factor but many which account for the development of a phenomenon. There is historical and sociological causality determining differences between individuals and groups. The genetic explanation therefore remains a partial view. In my personal understanding, racism and sexism are the products not of biology but of social structure of a society. Therefore any alternative explanation must originate from the social structure and the societal processes.

### **THE STORK AND THE SYRINGE: A POLITICAL HISTORY OF REPRODUCTIVE MEDICINE**

Naomi Pfeffer. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993.

*by Jan Clarke*

Naomi Pfeffer's *The Stork and the Syringe* focuses on an area of the sociology and history of reproduction that usually remains hidden; in-

fertility and involuntary childlessness (both disturbing terms in need of feminist critique). This study of reproductive medicine links personal struggles, clinical practices, state policies, and commercial interests to provide a rich political history of infertility and involuntary childlessness. While many of the myths exposed and insights identified have widespread relevance, Pfeffer locates her analysis in the recent response of British medicine to infertility during the twentieth century.

The explanations in this book are clearly informed by a political economy perspective, which is often missing from feminist critiques of reproductive medicine. For Pfeffer, understanding involuntary childlessness requires an appreciation of the political economy in which reproductive medicine is situated. Issues which other contributors may sidestep are given political importance in the context of both medicine and the lives of women and men. While freedom from unwanted pregnancy has gained political significance, Pfeffer questions why desire to have a child has not earned a similar position. While women's roles and obligations in reproduction are obviously important, why male fertility is excluded from both medical and political discourse is questioned. In the context of Britain, the refusal of successive governments to provide services for research and treatment of involuntary childlessness is also investigated.

Pfeffer never loses sight of the importance of separating moralism and materialism in an analysis of infertility and reproductive medicine. The persistent view that childless women are either abnormal or inadequate is explored in terms of embedded cultural norms, conventions of medical practice and the development of reproductive technologies. Ideology and politics that influence views of women and reproduction demonstrate that "ideas about a nation's fertility and women's procreative bodies and behaviour" inform both politics and medicine, and structure women's experience of infertility.