

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, Valacarcel, 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.

By unravelling the political and economic history of numerous clinical techniques and tests in use in the early nineteenth century, Pfeffer shows the sexism of gynaecological science, medical practice and state policy. For instance, whether the tests for fertility/infertility were based on physical characteristics like pitch of voice and facial hair, or physiological characteristics based on X-rays, or bioassays of semen and vaginal mucus, a view of women's bodies as passive and men's as active is continually reinforced. While it may appear that involuntary childlessness is principally a concern for women, many tests which have been used to assess men's fertility are also discussed in considerable detail. The evidence that is cited makes it obvious that the scientific and social basis of fertility and infertility is still poorly understood.

In the context of British reproductive medicine, the implementation of the National Health Service in the late 1940s, its gradual erosion since the 1980s, and increasingly evident private medicine in the 1990s, have had striking effects on the services and treatment of infertility and involuntary childlessness. Pfeffer identifies the links between the doctors, the National Health Service and the pharmaceutical industry, with the increased interest in and market for hormonal and technological treatment for both contraception and conception. While Pfeffer generally limits her critique to Britain, the analysis of the effect of privatization of the health care system is particularly relevant to the current Canadian context, where privatization of parts of the health care system is under consideration.

On the one hand, in the 1970s and 1980s state policies regulated the use of hormones for contraception, and the use of artificial insemination for infertile heterosexual couples. On the other hand, since the 1980s the use of assisted conception technologies, or new reproductive technologies, to provide services for childless couples has been a key element of the privati-

zation of medicine in Britain. These services are, therefore, largely outside the limits of state policy which can protect women and men from being unfairly exploited by unethical doctors and the commercial interests of pharmaceutical companies. In this political and economic history, Pfeffer also makes it clear that assisted conception technologies once again place the responsibility for infertility on women; whereas, in the 1970s and 1980s interventions like artificial insemination had more explicitly included men as contributors to the issue of infertility.

*The Stork and the Syringe* is an important contribution to the sociological and historical literature on women and reproduction which effectively accounts for gender and class, even though analysis of 'race' and ethnicity are less explicit. Pfeffer provides a complex analysis of the political economy of reproductive medicine in Britain that links science and technology, medical practice, state policies and commercial interests, with women's and men's experiences of infertility and involuntary childlessness.

## THE STRATEGIC SILENCE: GENDER AND ECONOMIC POLICY

Isabella Bakker, editor. Published by Zed Books Ltd. with the North and South Institute, 1994.

*by Ana Isla*

We are at the stage where we must reconstruct our notion of progress on a just and ecologically sound basis in concert with new forms of political and social relations or face the continuing destitution of the majority of women and the world's people and inevitable environmental catastrophe.

To overcome the present economic and social inequalities that serve as a pretext to maintain the dominant patriarchal structures, women need to achieve an equitable and autonomous co-existence.

From a feminist perspective, we have no choice but to resist Neoclassical General Equilibrium Economics (NGEE) and its neoclassical economic theory, the inspiration of the policy-makers, for the following reasons: it is profit centred, not life centred; it masks the fact the workers in the labour market reproduce their own value and produce a surplus-value; it suffers from gender blindness because it obscures the link between production and reproduction and mystifies the link between household production and the so-called formal sector production; it ignores the exclusion of large segments of the population based on race and the discrimination within the labour market; it fails to acknowledge the value of nature and the goods and services produced, mainly by women, outside the market; it downplays ecological stress, which can not be measured in a system which accords no value to nature, laying too much emphasis on the role of individuals while ignoring institutional factors, such as the treadmill of production

- It ignores power in gender relations, based on a hierarchy of access to resources and unequal terms of exchange between women and men
- It legitimizes the coercive power that is used to protect the dominant structure, especially power relations among nations and the domestic and international interest of corporations.

Even if we conclude that NGEE, is solid as an exercise in logic but inadequate for resolving social questions such as gender inequity, the best way to empower women is by refuting its presumptions, and supporting the search for economic alternatives.

Although not written specifically to counter prevailing economic theory, this book helps to explain feminist concerns regarding Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) and Restructuring and why they need to be reformed or challenged.

Articles in Part II document the outcomes of SAPs in the North and the South. Empirical research and case studies show the effects on women, Barbara Evers explains that