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BOOK REVIEW

Keith R. McConnochie : *Realities of Race - An Analysis of the Concept of Race and Racism and their Relevance to Australian Society*. Australia and New Zealand Book Company, Sydney, 1973.

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During the last few years there has been an increase in the number of newspaper reports of the activities and general unrest of Black Australians. This has been coupled with an increase in interest and publications by academics in the field of Aboriginal affairs. It is in this context that Keith McConnochie sets out to present a concise introduction to the concepts of race and racism and to relate these to the Australian and New Zealand experiences.

The book is divided into two sections. The first begins with an analysis of the variety of different meanings of race. Three main usages are distinguished:-

1. The cultural or ethnic definition referring to the cultural traits held in common by a group of people. This definition is closely related with the concept of ethnocentrism - the belief by members of a social group that their culture is superior to the cultures of other groups.
2. The biological definition referring to groups of people characterized by a common distinct gene pool. A quite detailed section on genetics is included here.
3. The social definition of race which is the definition most social scientists are concerned with in race relations. This refers to groups who are classified by a referent group as belonging to some out group characterized by ethnic uniqueness and perceived biological traits. This definition does not assume the reality of the ethnic or biological traits but refers to the reality of the perception of the referent group.

Racism is seen as the extension of ethnocentrism to include the biological concept of race and involves three elements:

- a. ethnocentrism;

- b. the belief that real or imaginary physical differences between groups are evidence that the "inferiority" of another culture is based on the biological inferiority of individuals within that culture;
- c. the belief that these two factors provide a legitimate basis for discriminating against these groups.

McConnochie delineates two forms of racism, both conceived as continuums. Individual racism refers to the expression of racist attitudes in the behaviour of individuals in face-to-face situations, ranging from overt (pathological) through covert to nonracist individuals who judge on a personal behaviour basis rather than on membership of any group.

The second form of racism - institutional racism - relates to the manner in which social institutions have functioned to oppress and control minority groups within larger societies. Societies on this continuum range from those in which racism is legally enforced to societies where all individuals have equal access to societal benefits and discrimination is condemned, that is, a pluralist society.

These two continuums of individual and institutional racism interact in relation to individual behaviour patterns resulting in four distinct strands:-

- Type 1. Learnt racism where people are likely to adopt the racist behaviour patterns expected by the society regardless of their personal beliefs.
- Type 2. Active individual racism in a society which either supports or fails to condemn racism.
- Type 3. Individuals living in a nonracist society who have to suppress and rechannel the personality problems which would be expressed in race hatred terms in a racist society.
- Type 4. Nonracist people living in a nonracist society.

In the light of his two forms of racism, McConnochie then examines a premise currently in vogue with regards to the origins of racism, namely, that the problems of race relations and concepts of race and racism are inventions of Western colonial societies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He argues that

examples of individual racism can be found right throughout history, but agrees that institutional racism emerged as a major factor during this period of colonial expansion. He notes that the degree of institutional racism differs from society to society and attributes these differences to three sets of factors:-

1. Institutional factors.
 - a. Capitalist exploitation of which the greatest factor was the slave trade. Racism developed as a vehicle for rationalizing this exploitation.
 - b. Enlightenment - During this period came the emergence of the great egalitarian myths of the French and American Revolutions. Faced with the contradictions between the treatment of slaves and colonized people and the democratic ethos, the dissonance was resolved by dichotomizing humanity into men and sub-men and denying humanity to the latter.
 - c. The emergence of the scientific racists who lent legitimacy to those who denied the humanity of colonized groups by arguing the multi-evolution of man with the Europeans seen as evolving first and thus being furthest from the apes. The publication of Darwin's Origin of the Species gave justification for the view that the dominance of European society was evidence of the superiority of both the society and its members, in terms of the survival of the fittest, thus justifying racism as part of the natural order.

Whilst the institutional factors account for the emergence of institutional racism, the variance in its expression relies more on the next two sets of factors.

2. Individual factors which are probably the most important and rely on the nature of interaction between individual members of the society concerned.
 - a. Belief system congruence. This states that when a person rejects, a priori, a member of another group he does so because he assumes the outsider holds different views of basic issues and lives by a different value system.
 - b. Somatic norm image. This is part of concept formation theory and refers to the dissonance produced by new objects which don't fit into the established mental categories. Thus racial differences when first encountered would not fit into the European's concept

of what constitutes a "man", that is, his somatic norm image.

Both these images would interact in racial and ethnic contact such that in the situation where there was an incongruent image and different values, racism would be most likely to occur. The differences of treatment of the Maoris and the Aborigines in the colonial period is discussed in these terms as well as in terms of idiosyncratic factors (three) such as geographic, political, economic and personal factors of the particular country.

The discussion then shifts to an analysis of Australian society today in terms of racism. He leads into this discussion via the I.Q. controversy which states that the differential performance of different classes, ethnic and racial groups can be attributed to either the environmental factors in the home or the genetic effects in different sub-population gene pools. This controversy ranges around the effectiveness of compensatory education programs and their chief critic in genetic terms, Jensen. McConnochie deals with the issues involved in this controversy in some length but fails to include one of the main challenges to Jensen's viewpoint. Jensen's argument develops from *his* assumption that the genetic input into I.Q's is 80%, but this assumption can be seriously challenged. Given the paucity of knowledge surrounding the whole area of genetic and environmental effects (which Jensen himself acknowledges), to arbitrarily assign such weighting is at best simplistic and at worst racist.

Another different environmentalist argument is put forward not in terms of the home situation but in terms of institutional racism with particular reference to the education system. There are two aspects of this argument:-

1. The role of the school system in the development of a self concept and with its associated problems of value dissonance. Tracing the historical development of institutional racism in Australian society and comparing it with the differing situation in New Zealand, McConnochie points out that the treatment of Aborigines can be compared with the behavioural effects in such total institutional situations as mental asylums, which give rise to a lack of identity. He argues that the school system contributes to this negative self concept by

degrading and denigrating Aboriginal society and the traditional Aboriginal culture through curricula, textbooks and teachers' attitudes. He cites examples from textbooks which (i) treat Australian history as commencing with the first landing; (ii) categorize Aboriginals as primitive, child-like, stone-age people, and furthermore (iii) suggest that the Aboriginals are a problem to be solved by the white society. Compensatory education programs can be seen as just one attempt to solve this problem. No adjustment is suggested for the white community.

The clash between teachers' attitudes (which tend to reflect white middle-class values), and parental attitudes also affect the adjustment of the child to the school system and his subsequent performance within the education system.

2. The structure of the school system. Such factors as facilities and finance spent, teaching techniques, teacher expectations, teacher abilities, tracking, classroom peer group dynamics, all tend to be oriented towards the white culture's advantage and racial isolation does nothing to counter this.

McConnochie concludes that the Education system is a clear example of institutional racism.

The second section of the book is mainly a description of race relations in Australia today. Some of the recent studies on the existence of individual racism are examined, and further evidence of institutional racism in the areas of health, the law and economic opportunity is presented.

McConnochie also sets out a very interesting and clearly reconstructed description of Aboriginal society before European contact. This is especially helpful in clarifying the conceptual differences in values that existed (and still exist) between the two cultures.

The book amply fulfills its role as an introductory text and the inclusion of an annotated bibliography for further detailed reading in the area adds to its value. It is worthwhile reading for anyone interested in race relations and should be seriously considered as a text to be set for the upper levels of secondary education.

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