

Book Reviews/Comptes rendus

JOHN PRATT, DAVID BROWN, MARK BROWN, SIMON HALLSWORTH, and WAYNE MORRISON (Eds.) *The New Punitiveness: Trends, Theories, Perspectives*. Portland, Oregon: Willan Publishing, 2005, 319 pp.

Punitiveness is nothing new, of course. Different societies at different points in their history have exhibited quite punitive tendencies. However, a number of commentators have in recent years pointed to certain contemporary trends that arguably constitute a new punitiveness associated with some broader social changes. This collection of articles – organized into four subject areas: punitive trends; globalization, technology and surveillance; non-punitive societies; and explanations – provides a very good overview of the major themes and debates on this topic.

A general introduction clearly outlines the scope of the text and identifies the main issues to be addressed. The editors' introduction begins by trying to identify the main characteristics of the new punitiveness, that is, forms of punishment that seem to violate the productive, restrained, and rational tenets of modern disciplinary punishment. They point to such defining characteristics as the trend toward much longer prison sentences, penal laws that seem to abandon long-standing limits to punishment, public humiliation, revocation of prison "privileges," curtailment of civil liberties of ex-prisoners, and the more active involvement of the public in penal affairs. The editors note that there is still considerable debate about the extent, range, meaning and explanation of these changes. A key issue is the extent to which these developments mark a break from or continuity with existing tendencies at play within modern penal regimes. The editors also ask whether the new punitiveness is a feature of all late-modern societies and emphasize the importance of a comparative methodology and a diversity of theoretical standpoints and interpretations of penal change. They claim that while most commentators accept that the recent punitive turn is related to important social changes in Western societies from the 1970s onwards, they differ in their interpretation of the specific causal forces in operation. The work of David Garland, those of a neo-Marxist perspective, and John Pratt are briefly contrasted to illustrate this theoretical diversity.

The first, and longest, section of the book examines several dimensions of punitive trends, with a particular focus on the United States, Australia and Canada. Wacquant reviews the "carceral boom" in the USA starting in the mid-1970s and argues that this is not the result of changes in the frequency

and character of criminal behaviour but rather should be attributed to a changed attitude of society and responses of authorities to urban poverty and the resulting street crime. These changed attitudes and responses to crime include: the demise of rehabilitation; the politicization of crime and criminal justice; and the use of the penal system as a mechanism of racial control of the black urban sub-proletariat. The second chapter by Brown focuses on an empirical assessment of a variety of penal trends over the last thirty years in the more localized jurisdiction of New South Wales Australia, resulting in a cautionary note regarding generalized conclusions of a “punitive turn,” the “demise” of penal welfarism, and the rise of “popular punitiveness.”

Hinds investigates variation in crime control among states in the USA, Europe and Australia from 1970-2000 using two measures: incarceration rates and police per capita. The great diversity in custody rates challenges some aspects of the “new punitiveness” thesis. However, the police rates show greater homogeneity and stability, challenging Garland’s concept of the responsabilization strategy. Hinds concludes that crime control is not uniform or singular in Western states. Lynch illustrates the new punitiveness at work in the USA by reviewing two federal appeal court cases regarding the effects of confinement conditions in a supermax death row prison. She examines the rhetoric of these cases to show how extreme punitiveness is normalized through the construction of the criminal as a rational actor with the free will to choose to die. Canadian readers will be particularly interested in the chapter by Moore and Hannah-Moffat. They argue that the “punitive turn” thesis fails to capture the complexity and diversity of Canadian penalty which continues to emphasize the goal of rehabilitation but under the “liberal veil” of prisoner choice. However, these authors claim that the various therapeutic practices are not antithetical to punishment since they target the mind and behaviour of prisoners in a coercive space which offers the antithesis of the support and empowerment required for such personal change. The final chapter in this section offers a materialist critique of the new penology thesis, grounded in an empirical case study of strategies of punishment and social control in Liverpool. The authors are critical of what they consider the dichotomous, ideal-typical model of social change and ahistorical generalizations of the new penology thesis.

The second section on globalization, technology and surveillance consists of four chapters that examine the links between these global trends and the new punitiveness. Baker and Roberts assert that globalization has resulted in the proliferation of punitive policies in a number of countries, although they offer no direct evidence of a link between them. Ryan discusses how the public voice is increasingly being heard in crime and justice policy debates such that politicians are required to engage with the public in new ways. He suggests that progressive forces will need to use the new technologies to engage with structuring the public voice outside of the academy and established lobby groups. In chapter 9 Aas argues that the seemingly contrasting discourses of populist speech and administrative decision-making are both embedded in a shared cultural context of the information society which is badly suited for handling complex scientific

discourses and narratives. New styles of communication demand more accessibility and understandability so they must be short and self-contained, as illustrated by the administrative form and political advertisement. Chapter 10 explores the significance of electronic monitoring and satellite tracking in England and Wales in the context of increasing punishment. These technologies are said to be embedded in narratives that prepackage their supposed social utility and moral meaning linked to already familiar penal concepts. However, Nellis claims that electronic monitoring falls short of the serious punishment demanded by the punitive-repressive perspective such that its “punitive weight” is likely to be increased.

In part III, titled non-punitive societies, Bondeson validates the Scandinavian exception to the increased punitiveness of many countries since the 1980s. In another chapter devoted to Canada, Meyer and O’Malley conclude that we have not experienced a drastic increase in imprisonment and that penal populism has had only limited influence; so Canada is not part of a global punitive turn. Rather, federal governments have pursued a balanced strategy of both punishment and correction. After first discussing the cross national and cultural meaning and measurement of punitiveness in chapter 13, Nelken examines the Italian case. He argues that the key to its relative leniency has less to do with the value placed on professional expertise in penal policy and more to do with a variety of historical aspects of political and social life. He claims there is little law and order discourse in Italy and that the youth justice system is very lenient.

The final section of the book consists of four chapters dealing with different aspects of explanations of punitiveness. Hallsworth argues, contrary to Bauman, that violence is not a normal feature of modernity such that increased punitiveness cannot be a simple outgrowth of it. Rather, punitive excess emanates “from the resurrection of violent heterogenaic forces normally precluded in modernity by the homogenizing projects to which it is normally attached” (p. 250). Pratt situates the new punitiveness within Elias’ theoretical framework, in particular the concept of “decivilization.” He argues that the latter is likely to occur simultaneously with the civilizing process in particular societies, and describes these trends in Anglo-American countries post 1970. The new punitiveness arises in this context with a new kind of state authority framed more around the relation between government and the general public, with a reduced role for the penal bureaucracies. He claims that a dramatic emphasis and attention on the prison is the main consequence of the combined effects of civilizing and decivilizing processes at present, although other penal outlets may also be increasingly affected. Chapter 16 situates the new punitiveness within the context of liberal political thought and its use in colonial strategies of exclusion. Brown argues that this model provides the space for the radical forms of punishment and exclusion in contemporary Western societies. He identifies at least three recent penal innovations that radically exclude persons from society and the rights-based realm of political citizenship as the essence of the new punitiveness. In the final chapter, Morrison claims that our narrative of penal change must be reassessed by

analyses of the global context. In global terms we inhabit a remarkably non-punitive world in the face of state-sponsored crime and genocide.

Overall, this is a well-balanced collection that covers the major themes and issues in the literature concerned with the “new punitiveness.” Its scope is wide, including descriptive analyses of punishment trends, case studies of particular penal strategies and/or locales, theoretical argumentation, and cross-national comparisons. It would be suitable as a text in graduate courses or in specialized advanced undergraduate courses. As in any collection, readers will be more interested in some chapters than others, but all should find much of value in a number of these articles.

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