

'Pathological Poor' Cause Urban Ills, Banfield Says

New Analysis by Ming Robinson

Former Chairman of the President's Task Force on Urban Cities and political scientist Edward C. Banfield addressed a group of about 50 students and faculty members on Tuesday in Trotter on "The Myth and Reality of The Urban Crisis." Banfield, a controversial figure since his entry into urban policy advising, delivered a sketch and unsettling review of his latest book, *The Urban Underclass*.

Defining the lower class of society as those individuals universally condemned with a pathological present orientation, he described its inhabitants' distant lifestyle. According to Banfield, the problems of the city are largely attributable to this

subset of individuals, who comprise about five per cent of the total population.

Barren unemployment, violent crime, juvenile delinquency, sexual promiscuity and illegitimate births are the behavioral results of the lower class' "negative propensity" to delay gratification.

The lower class culture is born, he felt, with the values of the middle and upper classes. Discrimination



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against these underclasses, most of whom happen to be black, is therefore class prejudice and not race prejudice, Banfield maintains.

Race prejudice is the myth, class discrimination the reality. Banfield does concede that it is unfortunate that nonlower class blacks are often mistaken for lower class individuals by "normal society."

"What are we to do with these 'pathological cultural deviants'?" Ban-

Ford stressed that this problem is a serious one "on absolutely apocalyptic" an even. I did not, however, discuss actual solutions, except to note that the policy implications of his arguments are a widely understood.

Barfield's talk provided a background of criticisms in the question-and-answer period which follows. Questions on the origins of the low class culture, the circularity of his arguments, and policy conclusions dominated Barfield's presentation. In all three areas he went off-targets, and his responses were no exception.

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One question, however, was answered directly: If present attitudes exist in the culture for defining a lower class, then wouldn't today's middle class youth who drop in take drugs and reject mainstream values belong to it? No, according to Barfield.

These people are "superclass men." They are at least capable understanding middle class values though they reject them. Lower class individuals are cognitively unable perceive any alternatives to their lifestyle.