

Why Don't They Just Say So?

The International Division of Labour, Profits, Resources, and Suffering

Paul Jackson

Volume 66, Fall 2010

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/llt66re01>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Canadian Committee on Labour History

ISSN

0700-3862 (print)

1911-4842 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Jackson, P. (2010). Review of [Why Don't They Just Say So? The International Division of Labour, Profits, Resources, and Suffering]. *Labour / Le Travail*, 66, 141–161.

REVIEW ESSAY / NOTE CRITIQUE

Why Don't They Just Say So? The International Division of Labour, Profits, Resources, and Suffering

Paul Jackson

Arsenault, Chris, *Blowback: A Canadian History of Agent Orange and the War at Home* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing 2009)

Engler, Yves, *The Black Book of Canadian Foreign Policy* (Vancouver: Fernwood Publishing 2009)

Kowaluk, Lucia, and Steven Staples, eds., *Afghanistan and Canada: Is There an Alternative to War?* (Montreal: Black Rose Books 2009)

Laxer, James, *Mission of Folly: Canada and Afghanistan* (Toronto: Between the Lines Press, 2008)

Teigrob, Robert, *Warming Up to the Cold War: Canada and the United States' Coalition of the Willing from Hiroshima to Korea* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 2009)

Wright, Robert, and Lana Wylie, *Our Place in the Sun: Canada and Cuba in the Castro Era* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 2009)

THE NATION AND THE STATE PENETRATE all of the studies that *Labour/Le Travail* has asked me to review. In 1970, Charles Pentland took a step back from contemporary debates over the question of the independence of Canadian foreign policy to caution that the nation-state is a passing phenomenon in human history.¹ States are currently the primary tools through which the

1. Charles Pentland, "Mandarins and Manicheans: The 'Independence' Debate on Canadian

international division of labour, profits, resources, and suffering is organized. Who mediates the relationships that form between populations divided by states and nations? The challenge of this essay is to see how intellectuals position themselves and their subjects in relation to the nation and the state. What opportunities for transnational relationships do they close down and open up for the populations they study?

Nation-states facilitate the penetration of capital into local economies and control domestic populations. The fundamental contradiction of the American empire is that it claims to be expanding its form of capitalism in the name of freedom and democracy while forcing those who would choose another path to accept "freedom" at gunpoint. In constructing their identities as participants of empires, English- and French-Canadians have long experience in dealing with the contradictions inherent in both of colonizing and being colonized. These contradictions are also discursive openings through which states and nations are vulnerable. How can they be used to challenge unjust systems of domination?

All of the writers under review are critical of Canadian foreign policy. Beyond that, they frame their studies in very different ways. Following Pentland, I am asking who speaks for the nation through the state. We should not view either nations or states as fully formed entities. They have been formed in the context of global historical struggles for power. In relation to foreign policy, I also want to know who is at the receiving end of Canadian utterances, decisions, and actions. Abroad, with whom is "Canada" speaking? What openings exist to enlarge the dialogue? If the state is an obstacle to transnational communication, can it be undermined? If the nation is a conceptual roadblock to intercultural dialogue, can it be transcended? Without understanding the possibilities and obstacles to dialogue across the divisions of class, race, and gender in the context of the international division of labour, demands for an altruistic foreign policy are as noble as they are meaningless.

Teigrob goes the furthest in helping us to see the barriers to meaningful transnational dialogue. He analyzes the (mostly) English-speaking postwar media commentators across the political spectrum with great sensitivity. He follows them as they position themselves in relation to the emerging Cold War world order. What is most disconcerting for my review is the extent to which the objects of Canadian foreign policies were necessarily excluded from the public discourse. Commentators from the left and right had their own objectives in defining their position in the world. Actual foreign populations with their own internal divisions would have taken over the discourse from the commentators had they been allowed to intrude on their own terms. Teigrob outlines the problem. In complete contrast, Yves Engler marshals a wealth of evidence to show that the state consistently represents Canada's business elite. However, his work is analytically weak. Having divided Canadians into an elite

and a misinformed public, Engler believes that only education stands in the way of an altruistic, “citizen-based” foreign policy. (143) Teigrob would disagree. He shows that Canadians create useful myths about their place in the world, which makes the problem more complex than Engler supposes. The precondition for Canada’s business class to exploit foreign populations came from its first winning control at home. What is missing from Engler’s story is how the Canadian state came to represent the interests of its business elite. The world he describes is populated by foreign victims and the Canadian state. While Engler demands that the state behave better, this review essay asks why the state is there at all and what we can expect of it. Reifying it concedes far too much power. What is the relation of the state to the nation? Why are Canadians susceptible to the national myths that he, correctly, exposes?²

James Laxer demonstrates how the Canadian state tries to manipulate rather than inform the public. He also offers insights into how a small group of determined citizens that has the support of the state can disproportionately influence Canadian society. He supports a more independent and ambitious foreign policy for Canada in multilateral cooperation with other similar-sized countries. He presumes that they will work towards a more just global order. However, if Ellen Wood has correctly described the role of nation-states in the current “Empire of Capital,” then we cannot look to them, in their present form, for change.³ While both Engler and Laxer offer important insights into the abuse of office and the consolidation of economic and political power, we need to be more sensitive to the social formation that underwrites them. For instance, what role do nationalisms – especially English and French – play in separating Canadians from (each other and) the populations of other jurisdictions? Which Canadian interests is the state promoting abroad? Who is the state protecting Canadians from? Arsenault’s study of the struggle for reparations by Canadians who were subjected to the toxic Agent Orange by their governments describes how even the most nationalistic citizens can come to see the state as hostile to their interests. In analysis of foreign policies and actions, the relationship among states and the nations that they claim to represent needs to be very patiently examined. Not only do we need to identify the interests represented by the Canadian state, but we also need to probe what international relations states defend against. We can survey *Our Place in the Sun* and *Afghanistan and Canada* for a sense of how states both sanction and preclude relations among the diversity of their populations.

2. Other scholars have probed the reasons for the creation of myths in Canadian history. What purposes do they serve? For Engler, myths are simply lies. For a different, more thoughtful approach, see Patrice Groulx, *Pièges de la mémoire : Dollard des Ormeaux, les Amérindiens et nous* (Hull 1998); and Daniel Francis, *National Dreams: Myth, Memory and Canadian History* (Vancouver 1997).

3. Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Empire of Capital* (London 2003).

Laxer severely criticizes the Canadian government for its support for the war in Afghanistan and, with insight into Canadian culture, shows how small militarist minorities have manipulated the public discourse through intimidation and appeals to nationalism. As a result, Canada foolishly followed George W. Bush into a war that Laxer thinks was always a sideshow. Subsequent events have called that judgment into question. In fact, as others such as Foster and Warnock show, controlling Afghanistan was an important pillar of American Middle East policy. Laxer is dismissive of both the continentalist school of foreign policy and those who focus on addressing the imbalance of North-South relations in world affairs. Not surprisingly, all of the questions that he argues should frame a national debate over the war are about Canadians and Canadian society: Afghans do not appear. Instead, he wants to see Canada as an independent and consequential actor on the world stage. He criticizes Canada's business elite for their tepidness compared to American business giants like Rockefeller, Walton, and Gates. The international division of labour does not enter into his analysis. Laxer does not pursue the possibility of "reform from below" in global affairs, for the cryptic reason that "the consequences will not be those that warm the hearts of liberal democrats, with their preference for pluralism, the rule of law, civil liberties, and fair elections." (147) Why would the approval of liberal democrats concern progressives? Consequently, Laxer looks to Canada, reconstituted as a proper middle power, to influence global affairs for the better and from above.

Ironically, as Laxer's work was going to press, Chinese workers were rising up in unprecedented numbers to protest their place in the global economy. The Chinese state, pressured by Western corporations that once employed North Americans, has not been able to quell their demands.⁴ Laxer does not develop his claim that a more just global order will come from the same institutions that constructed the present arrangement. His analysis rests on an unfounded, nationalist argument that Canadians – in particular the Canadian state – are inherently more compassionate or noble than Americans. In fact, it is surprising that he names France and England as the models for his vision of Canada's place in the world. What humanitarian role they have played in world affairs is not at all clear. Before prescriptions about what role Canada should be playing on the world stage can be tabled with any credibility, the analyst needs to understand why the state is acting as it does. In international relations, the analyst must also engage with the foreign population in question. Laxer's claim that Canada should consecrate a larger proportion of its GDP to developmental aid came at the moment that Afghans were targeting development workers and NGOs in Afghanistan. Stephen Cornish in *Afghanistan and Canada* shows that developmental aid is thoroughly controlled by

4. Johann Hari, "And now for some good news," *The Independent*, 6 August 2010, <http://www.independent.co.uk/opinion/commentators/johann-hari/johann-hari-and-now-for-some-good-news-2044578.html>.

the imperial forces trying to impose a free-market economy on that country. What do they see that Laxer does not? Ellen Wood argues that in the current empire, Capital is able to retreat and reconstitute itself in any form, including through humanitarian and developmental organizations, to continue to penetrate resistant markets and force populations into dependency. Consequently, it is not the institutions that determine the progress of world affairs, or their purported purposes, but rather who controls them and in whose interests.

John Foster has forty years of international experience in the petrochemical industry. At the end of an article in *Afghanistan and Canada*, detailing the extent to which gas and oil have dominated American geopolitical strategies since the Second World War, and unquestionably ground current interests in Afghanistan, he asks, "Why don't they just say so?" Of course, geopolitical strategists do say so to certain audiences, such as the one where Foster spent his career. Much of Engler's work demonstrates that the revolving door connecting business, academic, and political players in Ottawa is in constant motion. But Foster's question is a good springboard. We can reformulate it as, "Who is allowed to say what to whom?" We will see from the wealth of analysis and research contained in the studies the way that the powerful manipulate the state and the nation to promote their interests. With that understanding, we can imagine how to engage in transnational relations proscribed by the state and unwelcome by the nation.

Tariq Ali observes that "Rarely has there been such an enthusiastic display of international unity as that which greeted the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001." (*Afghanistan and Canada*, 52) It was absurd to "twist a flukishly successful attack by a tiny, terrorist Arab groupuscule into an excuse for an open-ended American military thrust into the Middle East and Central Eurasia." Like all commentators, Ali refuses to countenance the possibility that American planners may have been involved in the World Trade Center attacks, which formed the launching pad for two imperial wars and the intensification of the security state in NATO countries.⁵ How were nations convinced to support the aggression and how did states direct that campaign?

Échec à la guerre (*Afghanistan and Canada* 71–116) struggles most effectively with the problem of how to ground an analysis in a world where ruthless powers control the very institutions established to protect victims. The authors document that the invasion of Afghanistan was not sanctioned by the Security Council and was therefore illegal (the Ligue de Droits et Libertés shows that Security Council resolutions do not confer legal status in themselves, since they must also be consistent with the United Nations Charter, 169–77). However, they wisely describe how its resolutions are not meaningful in themselves: the United States has been able to control the structure of the United Nations, the votes cast, and even what is allowed to be voted upon. In other

5. David Ray Griffin, *New Pearl Harbor Revisited: 9/11, the Cover-up, and the Exposé* (Northampton, MA 2008).

words, nothing but a close examination of any UN action will be meaningful. This insight points the way to the daunting challenges facing anyone willing to challenge power. Those who control the government of the United States have enormous resources at their disposition. A feedback loop is in motion by which the accumulation of power and wealth leads to the dependency of those who are impoverished. Analysts must be alert to the ways that money and power are put to work to influence and control the institutions and organizations that could offer change.

In the case of Afghanistan, the American planners have used the United Nations, the World Bank, NATO, and complicit NGOs to pursue their designs on the Middle East and Central Asia. The invasion could only proceed with a measure of support from NATO countries. As Foster makes clear, business interests are not only supportive but initiated the belligerence. How do the populations of “democratic” NATO nations position themselves in relation to the war? How did Canadians come to believe that Afghanistan was their problem? Pentland made the crucial observation that the proposition that there is such a thing as a distinct nation-state is a conceptual trap: modern states came into being within a global system. For instance, Canada would not exist except as a result of imperial struggles among France, England, and the United States. Those states, in turn, came into being only through struggles for power, territory, and resources. However, in order to seduce populations to respond to the needs of empire builders, states are framed in popular discourse as fully formed, coherent, distinct entities. National identities have long been, as Teigrob will show, the building blocks of empire.

As Laxer and others show, Canadians were encouraged to join the fight in order to distinguish their nation on the world stage (Laxer would choose to distinguish Canada in other ways). They were also building a state in Afghanistan. Instead of asking how Afghanistan had existed without a police force, Canadians accepted the necessity of creating one. However, since real authority has never been exercised through the state in Afghanistan, but through local power structures, the project can only exist in any meaningful way in the Canadian imagination. Canadians, accepting the legitimacy and necessity of a state that has the monopoly of violence within a national territory, see themselves as helping Afghans achieve it. Many critiques of imperial aggression accept uncritically the terms under which the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan proceed. The philosopher Michael Neumann severely criticizes the occupation of Afghanistan, arguing that the RAND Corporation and many military analysts had advised that a successful mission would require 500,000 soldiers. The invading forces having allocated only a small percentage of this number, the mission was doomed to failure. However, more soldiers would not legitimate an illegal, immoral, and illogical invasion. (*Afghanistan*, 27–34)

Similarly, anthropologist Richard Preston follows the unfortunate example of Eugene Lang and Janice Stein⁶ in qualifying General Hillier as charismatic and “remarkably competent and up-to-date.” (176) Hillier demonstrated his “competence” by hitching his wagon, and his country’s, to the proposition that Canada should consecrate itself to intervention in failed states throughout the world. This was an easy sell (hence, “charismatic”) to Prime Minister Martin who was looking to define Canada’s role in the world in a way that would also ensure his reelection (it didn’t) by a population flattered to know that it belonged to a “successful” state. Something called the United States Fund for Peace measures states to determine when they have “failed.” The standard for success is a liberal democracy allied to the United States; however, dictatorships and feudal states are only judged to have failed when America wants to invade them.⁷ The very term “failed state” forces you to acknowledge the necessity and desirability of the state. However, the alternative to a failed state is not understood to be “no state,” but rather a state that has the monopoly over the exercise of violence. Canada has taken on the role of training police forces to strengthen states against the menace of their populations. So, the creation of a nation-state was the condition for the entry of Afghans into “the international community.”

Cheshmak Farhoumand-Sims, a scholar of Conflict Studies, helps lay the groundwork for our inquiry into the possibility of meaningful transnational relations in her study of “The Role of Women in Building Afghan Society.” (*Afghanistan and Canada*, 181–228) As Pentland cautioned, the notion of non-interference in national affairs is conceptually misguided since nations and states are already formed in the context of global systems of power and domination.

Farhoumand-Sims is an intriguing analyst whose survey of Afghan gender history recognizes the different reactions to “progress” imposed from outside the contexts in which people lived their lives as opposed to changes that came from within. She largely follows historians who have studied legislative reform under different monarchs and governments. The reactions to attempts to alter the patriarchal structures of tribal society have been consistently violent. Afghanistan, like Canada, is not a coherent nation. Its central government has little credibility in much of the country. The ethnic and rural/urban divisions mean that change can only come unevenly and organically. The peasants have always suspected (correctly) that changes initiated from the central government originate from outside of the country. However, she is wrong to assume that changes from inside Afghanistan would be welcome. Kabul can be just as foreign as Washington and equally resisted within Afghanistan. The Pash-tun tribes will not welcome reforms tabled by the Tajik or Hazara minorities.

6. Eugene Lang and Janice Stein, *The Unexpected War: Canada in Kandahar* (Toronto 2007).

7. John Warnock, *Creating a Failed State* (Winnipeg 2008), 24. Warnock’s essay in *Afghanistan and Canada* demonstrates Canada’s deference to America’s objective of regime change.

Afghanistan can only exist as a coherent nation-state in the eyes of NATO countries like Canada. That requires that Afghans speak as little as possible in Canada.

Our Place in the Sun tells us something of the limits of communication and exchange between the peoples of Canada and Cuba. Most articles deal with political, economic, and diplomatic actors while several probe the response of Canadians sympathetic to revolutionary Cuba. The most important issue raised by the book for our study is why there are no meaningful transnational relations or, if they exist, they are not a focus of study. Relations between Canadians and Cubans are carefully mediated through their state structures.

The moment of the Cuban revolution is important for us since many Canadians were, at the time, considering how to resist the American empire. Canadian and Québécois nationalisms were on the rise and were sometimes grounded in a rejection of empire. The two nationalisms have been used tactically to offer Canadians the illusion of independence and even defiance in the face of external control, which has not precluded the integration of the Canadian or Quebec nations into the American empire. In that context, how have the Canadian and Cuban states responded to the actual liberation of Cuba from American control? Most noticeable is the almost total absence of the Cuban people from the essays. Even those contributors who appear to be discussing solidarity between Canadian and Cuban peoples neglect the latter, except as they are assumed to be part of an ideological struggle against capitalism, the empire, and the Canadian state. More typically, economist Archibald Ritter establishes the framework for discussion of Canada-Cuba relations in which the totality of the human condition is reduced to trade statistics. For Ritter, the expansion of trade is self-evidently good.

Though Canada's substantial wheat exports were cut off for several years after the fall of the USSR as a result of Cuba's contracting economy, Ritter writes only that trade dipped. There is no help for readers wondering how Cubans responded when they were suddenly cut off from a food staple. Why did Canadian producers respond to the "contraction" of the Cuban economy by ending food exports? From another source, we know that the end of petroleum-based fertilizers and imported wheat led to the development of urban, organic agriculture in Havana.⁸ That achievement could be imagined as a model for the slum dwellers throughout the global South.⁹ But Ritter cannot see beyond the lamentable dip in trade. Likewise, we find that Cuba has entered into equal partnerships with a number of Canadian enterprises, of which Sherritt International of Alberta is far and away the most important. (In fact, Cuba is an investor in the smelting plant in Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta, where its copper is processed.) In the context of the Cuban revolution, and the

8. Sinan Koont, "The Urban Agriculture of Havana," *Monthly Review*, January 2009, <http://www.monthlyreview.org/090119koont.php>.

9. Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums* (London 2006).

sacrifices that Cubans made to reclaim control over their lives, it is unsatisfying to see economic relations reduced to agreements between Castro and Canadian corporations. Considering the trend towards electrical grids that draw on small, local sources of power, Sherritt's large generating plants in Cuba seem inconsistent with the revolution.¹⁰

Ritter's account opens important questions when he describes the problems that Canadian enterprises have in Cuba: activities in the domestic peso economy are effectively closed to foreign enterprises since they cannot repatriate profits except at a loss. The Cuban state controls workers' salaries paid by foreign enterprises operating in Cuba. Workers receive a percentage of the wages that the Cuban state negotiates for their work. The rest of the monies collected by the Cuban state from foreign enterprises are used to guarantee education, health, and equal standards of living for all Cubans. For Ritter, the "interference" of the Cuban state to create social equality constitutes a roadblock to development. For exploited populations, Cuban-style social programs could represent relief from the daily struggles for life. Instead, Ritter claims that Canadian corporations may be reticent to work in the Cuban context where collective bargaining is not permitted. For obvious reasons, he does not specify how or where Canadian multinationals have been advocating for workers' rights, either in Canada or abroad.

What possibilities does the Cuban revolution open up for alternative economies in Canada? A crucial question, especially in the context of the book's other essays, is whether the Canadian state promotes exchanges in fair trade products and alternative technologies. Since Canada, like the United States, has been waiting for Castro's regime to pass so that Cuba might enter the global economy, Ritter's assertion that "training in economics, and economic policy making will have important benefits in the long run" (*Our Place*, 270) is unclear: what economic teaching models has CIDA been funding? How have they been received? His predictions for Canada-Cuba economic relations are framed around the recovery of the Cuban economy and the normalization of its relations with the USA. He does not speculate upon the attraction of Latin America, where admiration for the Cuban model has played a part in the development of new trading networks. Ritter offers no evidence that Cubans would prefer to integrate their economy into the American empire. But, neither do other authors probe what Cubans want.

The bulk of *Our Place in the Sun* deals with diplomatic, political, and economic relations. Don Munton and David Vogt analyze the dispatches to Ottawa from ambassadors in relation to the rise and success of the revolution. They chose their methodology as a counterbalance to most writing on Canadian foreign policy that focuses on decisions made in Ottawa. Following the observations of diplomats based in Havana, they say, allows the historian a

10. An overview of renewable energy feed-in laws is discussed by the Suzuki Institute: http://www.davidsuzuki.org/publications/downloads/2004/Smart_Generation_full_report.pdf.

sense of the immediacy of the lived experience. However, we need first to know more about the worldview that inscribes those lived experiences. The authors note that, in Havana, even Cubans had incomplete information of what was happening in the rural regions where the future of Cuba was being decided. We should also ground our reading of their work in the less-than-startling observation that Canadian diplomats were not appointed in order to further the interests of Canadian workers. The diplomats misinterpreted the lukewarm response to Castro's call for a general strike as evidence the people were not behind him. It might have been difficult for anyone at the time, including Castro, to properly understand the course of events. But there are signs that the diplomats were insensitive to class politics. Like Ritter in the present volume, the diplomats reported on whether "stability" – normal trade relations – would be restored after the revolution. We know from other important studies in the volume that a number of Canadians were encouraged by events in Cuba. Perhaps it is a sign of how firmly the capitalist class continues to control Canada that Munton and Vogt do not frame their study in terms of how this revolution might have opened up possibilities for many Canadians outside business circles. The authors presume that their readers will know and accept that Canadian diplomats were in Havana to represent the business class. But as we ask what relationships can be realized between Cubans and Canadians, we need to make explicit that diplomats, like the neoclassical economist Ritter, represent the interests of the business class and corporate trade. In that context, we can ask what influence Canadians had over the formation of foreign policy. The study of foreign policy, like the vocation of diplomat, is so colonized by the business class that Canadian workers need not apply.

For instance, at the time that diplomats were writing their dispatches reassuring Ottawa of the continuation of trade, the Fair Play for Cuba Committees (FPCC) in Canada and the United States were trying to shape opinion in North America. Arguing that left nationalist analyses have buried transnational trends in Canadian history, Cynthia Wright studies the FPCC in order to imagine a space "Between Nation and Empire." She shows that the mainstream press presented Canada as the peaceable kingdom in relation to Cuba's violent history: "anxieties about foreign policy are fundamentally linked to anxieties about 'national' identity." (101) Writers like Farley Mowat were excluded from commenting on the revolution on the basis that, according to his rejection letter from Maclean's magazine: "any report that [he] might make would be too much at variance with the accepted attitude towards Cuba of the US dominated press." (100) Her insight allows us to formulate a framework for pursuing subversive and, therefore, meaningful transnational relations. First, the participants must free themselves of the mythology that grounds their national identity; second, they must struggle against structural barriers to communication with foreign partners; third, they must compete against well-established economic, cultural, military, and political interests. That

must proceed in the context of the difficulties inherent in any dialogue across cultural and linguistic barriers.

Meanwhile, transnational relations are facilitated for those who represent established interests. The discontented begin with few resources and must struggle against global and national structures wielding enormous powers of coercion and control. When support for Cuba threatened to undermine American interests, the RCMP pressured key people to withdraw support. Professors Kenneth McNaught and Leslie Dewart resigned when the FPCC refused to respond to police pressure by explicitly denouncing communism and firing a particular executive member. The FBI in the USA and the RCMP in Canada demonstrated the same ruthlessness in their pursuit of people who identified with the struggles of Cubans: black Americans or left-wing Canadians, to name two important groups (distinct demographics resulted in different sympathizers with the Cuban revolutionaries).

In the USA, FPCC did not survive the general repression that followed the Kennedy assassination. In Canada, led by leftists already attuned to state surveillance and harassment, it survived to protest the Vietnam War in the context of rising Canadian and Québécois nationalism. However, the only evidence of actual communication with Cubans that Wright offers is a passing mention of student excursions to Cuba. Her work describes instead the impediments to transnational relations that might translate into progressive change. Cubans entered the discussion among FPCC groups, at least in Wright's telling, in theoretical terms. Canadians interested in understanding what the revolution signified to actual Cubans who were forging a new country could be known with difficulty when the corporate media controlled the message and the state limited access. Unfortunately, *Our Place in the Sun* continues that same trend. Beyond Fidel Castro, we do not get to know Cubans. Perhaps a primary program of research would uncover the impediments to communication.

Under these conditions, how much influence does civil society – in Canada or Cuba – have in determining foreign policy? Like Cynthia Wright, David Sheinin uncovers Canadians deeply concerned from a moral position about the effects of Canadian foreign policy on Latin American peoples. He shows that the Cuban revolution influenced the Progressive Church Movement (PCM) in Canada from 1970 to 1987. The PCM worked to influence Canadian foreign policy in regards to repressive Latin American military dictatorships, especially Argentina, Chile, Panama, Brazil, and Peru, all allied to the United States. They lobbied to expand the definition of refugee and to end foreign aid to countries identified as human rights abusers. The list, from which Cuba was conspicuously absent, challenged Canada's complicity in American foreign policy. Cuba entered their analysis as a beacon of hope against imperialism abroad and capitalism at home. Sheinin's article allows us to see how the discourse fashioned to sell American aggression abroad as humanitarian opened a door of resistance. Tabling the abuses of America's brutal allies forced the

empire onto the defensive, on both sides of the border. America was patently not exporting democracy and was not a champion of freedom.

The movement's leaders avoided explicitly Marxist analysis in their public statements. Moreover, they were frustrated by the conservatism of their constituents in the nation's churches. This calls into question Engler's assertion that support for the American empire was against the wishes of "the Canadian people." Those who tried to educate the public to the repercussions of foreign policies were not preaching to the choir. The history that Sheinin tables also suggests that "Cuba" and "Cubans" entered into Canadian politics instrumentally, as symbols to challenge the capitalist world. This was a great weakness of the movement and ultimately precludes the possibility of meaningful transnational relations. A relationship is limited to the extent that one side presupposes the life experiences, problems, hopes, and challenges of the other. Meanwhile, Sheinin shows us how the Canadian state rigorously opposed any meaningful engagement with the Cuban people. As with the FPCC movement, there is a passing mention of student excursions to Cuba. What influence did they have on the students and on the Cuban hosts? Who were the Cubans? What influence did those trips have on the PCM and Canadian politics? Did they lay the groundwork for structural changes in Canadian foreign policy? I suggest that real relations between peoples are the prerequisite for a defensible foreign policy. To what extent are they even possible?

What does the question mean? Are transnational relations uniquely human? Who speaks for the territories, the atmosphere, and ecologies? What does it mean to speak of relations between distinct peoples? How do nations communicate? Who speaks? Nations are, as we will see, at least partly, discursive phenomena intended to divide peoples. Does it follow that communication between nations is an exercise in undoing the damage that nationalist propagandists have already done? Perhaps this explains why the question is almost never broached. *Our Place in the Sun* offers two competent overviews of Canadian and Cuban histories in the age of empire that frame how the question of transnational relations can be asked.

Hal Klepak offers some good insights into hemispheric relations during the rise of the United States as a world power. Canada's privileged position in the British Empire both protected it from American aggression and isolated it from its southern neighbour. Before the Statute of Westminster, the United States blocked Canada from relations with Latin America through the Pan American Union, fearing it would become a Trojan horse for British interests. As Robert Wright and Lana Wylie note in the introduction to their volume, all Canadian governments up to that of Brian Mulroney tried to remain independent of American foreign policy. That, it must be noted, does not imply that Canada had espoused a fundamentally different approach to international affairs; it simply did not want to be subsumed within the American empire. It is not surprising, therefore, that Canada, no longer seen as a threat by Washington, entered the Organization of American States (OAS) in 1989.

While many Latin American nations had looked to Canada in the 1970s as a potential ally in opening up the question of Cuba's exclusion from the OAS, Ottawa did not see the open rupture with the USA that this issue would provoke as worth the fight. Klepak keeps the discussion on the familiar terrain of nation-states pursuing their interests. That choice narrows what Klepak can see in Canadian history. He accepts the received academic wisdom that French Canadians distinguished themselves from their English-speaking compatriots in seeing themselves as rooted in North America, whereas the latter felt they belonged to a global empire. In fact, French Canadians felt they belonged to a universal Catholic empire and, with Belgium and Ireland, produced the most missionaries in the service of the Vatican throughout the twentieth century.¹¹ A state-centric analysis overlooks movements that arise from civil society. In fact, religion and spirituality can subvert the very notion of the primacy of the state in human affairs. Likewise, class identities can overshadow or even negate national identities.

The nation-state is a seductive tool for scholars, allowing them to infuse countries with the will of their ruling class and then struggle for power on the world stage. When we ask instead what domestic interests are defeated or suppressed to allow nations to enter into transnational or multinational relations, we begin to understand how a global system of power maintains itself. Accepting official policy statements uncritically, Klepak sees Canada's professed refusal to join the coalition of the willing in the Iraq War as a sign that it is a champion of democracy on the world stage. The problem with this line of analysis is that "Canada" did not form itself as a coherent political actor that it took to the world stage. Canada came into existence by ruthlessly colonizing North America, destroying indigenous cultures, and using the state's monopoly of violence to weaken labour. The state called Canada has been one of the key architects of the international division of labour under which Canadians are unemployed while their stores are filled with goods produced by impoverished foreign populations.

Wright and Wylie, in their introduction, offer a similar liberal narrative: "In contrast with Canada, a vast and resource-rich land, climactically stable, with a long history of peaceful progress towards parliamentary democracy, Cuba is a poor island nation with an extremely violent history, a single crop economy (sugar), and a climate that regularly delivers devastating hurricanes and ruinous drought." (4) Imagine indigenous Canadians or unemployed workers articulating such a narrative of the history of Canada. Imagine if cod, waterways, or forests could speak on their own behalf.

In another article, Robert Wright shows us the limitations of the highest public servants in speaking for the "nation." Lloyd Axworthy's moralistic liberal internationalist rhetoric was subsumed within Chrétien's primary goal

11. Lionel Groulx, *Le Canada français missionnaire* (Montréal 1962); Nive Voisine, *Histoire de l'Église catholique au Québec (1608–1970)* (Montréal 1971).

of expanding Canadian trade. Chrétien attempted to distinguish Canadian policy from American by claiming that, through “constructive engagement,” Canada might positively influence Cuba’s repressive political system. Playing to a certain Canadian and American audience to rationalize Canada’s refusal to support Cuba’s membership in the OAS in 2001, Chrétien told the press that he had spent hours during the 1998 state visit to Cuba, “trying to persuade an intransigent Fidel Castro to abide by international human rights covenants.” (214) A lucid Castro was not about to passively accept Chrétien’s slander. Wright reports that the following day, Castro publicly detailed the entire state visit to undermine Chrétien’s foolish claim. He took the opportunity to clarify the nature of international relations: “[Chrétien] appeared to be sincerely patriotic. He is loyal to his country and proud of it. He is a fanatical believer in the capitalist mode of production, as if it were a monotheistic religion, and in the naïve idea that it is the solution for all of the world’s countries, on every continent, in every era, in every clime or region.” (214) Castro struck back at Chrétien: “I am sure that Trudeau would never have said that he spent four hours giving advice to someone who had not asked for it; nor would he seek excuses for excluding an honorable country from a meeting that it did not ask to attend ...” (215) Wright concludes that constructive engagement “was a policy designed primarily to position Canada on the right side of history. In this sense, it was an affront to the Cuban people in general, and to Fidel Castro personally.” Chrétien’s Liberals shared the conceit of successive American administrations that the Cuban people longed for liberation from their oppressor so that they could enter the capitalist world order. Wright argues that any real engagement with the people of Cuba would have undermined that rationalization: “Canadian politicians, diplomats, business people, students, academics, artists, and tourists have for years been building the myriad relationships and networks upon which real influence with the Cuban conferees rests – the influence not of the hard sell or the grand gesture but of the everyday.” It is not clear what Wright means by “real influence.” Canadian state policy, he shows, constricts the possibilities of meaningful engagement. Despite a personal connection and respect between Castro and Chrétien, at least before the incident mentioned earlier, Canada neither promoted Cuba’s entry into the OAS, nor did it accept its right to assist African nations in their quest for independence, nor fund a planned joint medical program in Haiti. How are human interpersonal relations more influential in bilateral relations than government policies? The essays in *Our Place in the Sun* demonstrate the opposite: that the state thwarts attempts at progressive engagement and the media attempts to control what can be thought about Canada-Cuban relations. To slip past those gatekeepers, we will soon see, is a lonely undertaking.

Teigrob’s *Warming up to the Cold War*, a thoughtful and subtle analysis of the public discourse regarding Canada’s place in the postwar world from the Gouzenko affair to the Korean War, helps us to understand how certain English Canadians shaped the national consciousness. He argues that Canadians

must be seen as active decision-makers of their foreign policy, rather than reluctant victims of American bullying. But which Canadians? While he is aware that certain interests control the media, he does not shed light on how views were either welcomed or excluded in Canada's mainstream and alternative media. We need to ask of his work what relations were opened up or closed down by this system.

Teigrob shows that Canadian conservative journalists had been the most ardent supporters of the British Empire before the Second World War. As such, they had defended against American influence in English Canada. Afterwards, in the face of Britain's conclusive fall as the centre of the world's premier empire, those influential journalists reluctantly accepted American leadership in the continuation of global capitalism. Teigrob's evidence suggests that it was not liberalism, as George Grant lamented, that undermined English Canada's traditional attachment to Britain. Canadian conservatives revealed themselves to be more anti-communist than pro-British or Canadian. In the emerging postwar global order, they insisted the United States accept its role as global superpower and defender of the imbalance of power that favoured them. Their allegiance was primarily to power, not Britain.

The commentators with a public platform positioned Canada in relation to other nations. They understood the nation as the medium through which their interests would be represented on the world stage. Discourses established in the United States were not necessarily transferable to the Canadian context. Canadians had a different history, different racial and ethnic demographics, and a tradition of defining themselves in opposition to Americans. For instance, the American black press saw the bombing of Japanese cities as an assault against non-whites, using the moment to advance arguments for racial justice. In Canada, with no black publications, criticisms came mostly from religious sources, notwithstanding the fact that evidence for the same racial argument existed.

Teigrob rejects theses that would posit Canada as either exclusively colonized or colonizing. It has been both in different contexts. He shows that in many ways Canada was at least as racist and repressive as the USA. Canadian state repression is remarkable for its secretiveness. Only through ignorance of their state's actions can Canadians believe they are exporting democracy and freedom abroad. His analysis must be taken further: what are the cultural conditions which allow repression to go unrecognized? What mechanisms of social control allow Canadians to accept precisely what the state requires to maintain the peaceable kingdom? Teigrob does not address these questions, but offers insights into the Canadian psyche that will help us to explore constraints on meaningful transnational relations.

Teigrob is writing about the postwar period that enters into the narrative of Canadian history as a period of triumph and promise. However, we should remember that it was also the moment that inspired George Orwell to write *1984*. Orwell was far more insightful than the intellectuals who framed

Canada's vision of the postwar world. Teigrob shows that it was the dominant American culture that promoted imperialism that tended to be exported out of the United States to the exclusion of other perspectives. Canadian intellectuals who positioned themselves in opposition to this "American" view were often in fact articulating popular American perspectives that were stopped at the border. Teigrob's observation is important but can be overstated. He is analyzing the print media. Dissenting views may have arrived in Canada from other cultural forms and exchanges that are not reported in the mainstream or alternative presses.

Conservative Canadians had formed their identity not as subjects of Britain, but rather as partners in the Empire. Race, ancestry, and traditions allowed them to imagine themselves as the purveyors of civilization. Meanwhile, Americans framed their vocation on the world stage in terms of the expansion of the four freedoms. This could allow them to criticize the British and French Empires, paving the way for American expansionism to proceed in the name of anti-imperialism. Teigrob sees that critiques of anti-imperialism among both English- and French-Canadians were marshaled opportunistically in terms of their own subjugation within the British or American empires. Such positions are more akin to resentment than principle and hold within them the seeds of renewed imperialism. This pretence of anti-imperialism has been the foil for American critics from Mark Twain to Noam Chomsky. That fact also underscores the importance of Teigrob's work: good discourse analysis allows us to see imperialism's weak points.

The 1946 "independence" of the Philippines from a half-century of American rule was hailed in the American mainstream press as unique in world history. While in reality the Philippines moved from colony to protectorate under continued economic and military control of the United States, the press underlined the "liberation" of subjugated peoples fortunate to fall under American influence. In contrast, the USSR was busy enslaving free peoples into a communist empire. In Canada, the journalistic class did not disseminate America's incipient Cold War narrative. Conservative Canadian analysts had always stood on guard against the American threat to Canadian sovereignty. The notion that America was a force of liberation did not come easily (in fact, as we see from Wright's analysis in *Our Place in the Sun*, not until Mulroney's government did Canadian conservative intellectuals espouse America's preferred delusion). Teigrob has to juggle some contradictions in his analysis: conservative Canadian journalists looked to the United States to carry the torch against the communist threat as early as the Gouzenko affair. At the same time, he argues that by the time of Philippine "independence" in the summer of 1946, the anti-Soviet consensus was still tentative in Canada. This analytical tension may be more apparent than real: conservative commentators, loyal to the British Empire, may have espoused contradictory positions as they adapted to a regrettable new world order.

For those journalists, the independence of India and Pakistan from Britain one year later represented meaningful liberation. As opposed to the paucity of commentary in relation to Philippine independence, this event demonstrated the great humanizing and civilizing force of the British Empire. White settler Canadians typically saw themselves not as colonized, but as partners of the British in this global project of the uplift of inferior peoples. In their telling, Indian independence was a British achievement: “having so thoroughly and properly set Indians and Pakistanis on the road to democracy, all current and future problems would belong to the newly sovereign states alone.” (109) Canadian defenders of the Empire had to reconcile their fight against Axis expansionism in the face of Britain’s domination of India. The answer was always some variant of the assertion that certain races or cultures were unready for self-government, but were progressing under British tutelage. The Second World War has entered NATO culture as “the good war,” a template for modern wars of aggression. Scholars have good reason to carefully examine the contradictions in the justifications for that war and for the conflicts that cite it as a model.¹²

Teigrob analyzes the print media from right to left. In deconstructing the intellectual underpinnings of Canadian foreign policy in the postwar era, Teigrob also reveals its poverty of meaningful engagement with the world. Actual Koreans, Indians, Pakistanis, and Russians do not enter into their calculations. In keeping with Edward Said’s theory of Orientalism, other peoples entered into Canadian public debate in quite instrumental ways. Canadians had a history to explain their place in the world, a present to which they were forced to adapt, and a future that they wanted to fashion in their interests. Actual relations with the subjects of Canadian foreign policies would only have thrown those coherent stories into chaos. They were necessarily excluded. That fundamental obstacle to transnational relations continues to organize all foreign policy and actions. In fact, as the international division of labour deepens, the types of relations admissible by the state, capital, and the media narrow. It is much easier to write a story when you control all of the characters.

Chris Arsenault shows how certain kinds of transnational relations can take the form of blowback from imperial aggression. The seeds of its undoing are sown in the everyday violence of Empire. Whatever rhetorical fertilizer is used to justify the aggression, the internal and external victims can be left to harvest the truth together. Such is the case among Canadian veterans and civilians together with Vietnamese victims of chemical warfare. Arsenault’s study of the struggle by Canadians poisoned by Agent Orange in New Brunswick shows how state and corporate interests align against the welfare of citizens inside and outside the nation. From 1956 to 1984, the Canadian military

12. Andrew Bacevich, *Washington Rules: America’s Path to Permanent War* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2010) shows that each new threat to the United States is compared to Adolf Hitler, 142, 149, 261. Jeffrey Keshen, *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers: Canada’s Second World War* (Vancouver 2004), 3.

contracted with chemical companies such as Dow to destroy the brush and trees in order to make room for training areas. As early as 1964, the hazards of the mutagenic toxin were known. Nevertheless, the government chose to save on the labour costs that would have normally been paid to workers for clearing brush. As a result, both civilians in Queens County and veterans who served at CFB Gagetown were exposed to the extremely toxic herbicide. In the United States, exposed veterans of the Vietnam War were compensated token amounts through a class action suit that enriched lawyers on both sides of the issue. Vietnamese citizens, who continue to endure the greatest suffering as a result of Agent Orange, have been excluded from compensation since the United States had not signed the Geneva Convention until 1975. Successive Canadian governments also stonewalled domestic victims seeking justice. The toxin Agent Orange has brought Canadian and Vietnamese victims together in opposition to two separate, but equally intransigent, states.

Arsenault documents a pattern of government officials more concerned with containing potential public outrage than with responsible public service. The Canadian state has tried to deflect attention onto the American military that was given permission to spray at Gagetown in 1966 and 1967. While the American spraying program was far less extensive, the Canadian state cynically tries to arouse, and then hide behind, anti-Americanism. The federal and New Brunswick states protect themselves against the public they are meant to serve, creating an antagonistic relation that alienates its most loyal citizens. Arsenault describes the most dedicated and tenacious activists as “white, patriotic, lower middle class, church going and conservative voting.” (*Blowback*, 102) Recalling Howard Zinn, Arsenault wonders about the revolutionary potential of the defenders of the nation-state. He shows that the bitterness is class-based, with former soldiers now pitted against mandarins and politicians protecting the privileges of the wealthy. Arsenault is an investigative journalist who places the people and the environment first in his work. Along with them, he opens up some important lines of analysis.

Other critics and apologists of foreign policy avoid engagement with the real subjects of their analysis. In so doing, the debate remains on an intellectual plane with the author in command. Arsenault, on the other hand, gives his pages over to the people who are paying the price for the callousness and avarice of state actions. Yves Engler is also critical of foreign policy, but does not hand the reins of his analysis over to the people. He writes against the foreign policy establishment, drawing on a wealth of critical studies, to demonstrate that business interests have controlled foreign policy over Canadian history. His goal is to disabuse Canadians of the myths and delusions that ground their sense of global citizenship. It’s an extremely ambitious job, made more difficult by Engler’s insensitivity to the cultural mechanisms that ground “Canadian” identity in the world. Identities do not collapse under the weight of the truth. What opportunities for transnational relations are opened up by Engler’s work?

Engler shows that Canadian foreign policy is formulated and implemented in the interests of a small elite in Canadian society: "if there are no countervailing voices speaking up for the poorly paid miners or peasants whose land is being destroyed, or a hundred other scenarios, Canadian foreign policy can be anti-democratic, colonial and environmentally destructive." (34) Engler's observation is crucial. Within Canada, workers have struggled against their employers and the state. The state has not defended small farmers against the power of agribusiness. Many environmentalists fight for ecological responsibility against the state and industry. The limited success of these groups in long struggles within Canada has laid the groundwork for their own dispossession in favour of more vulnerable populations and ecologies abroad. The network of states working in the interests of capital means that Canadian mining companies, as documented by Engler, can search the globe for the greenest pastures. Manufacturing multinationals have found the most vulnerable populations to take the place of Canadian workers. It is both the strength of Canada's civic groups and the weakness of the global environmental and labour movements that allow capital to seek out – or create if need be – states most receptive to its terms.

Engler does not however engage with the foreign victims of Canadian foreign policy. This weakness becomes clearest in the section on Haiti, where he has done the most research. Citing Phillip English, Engler notes that the "first allocation of Canadian aid to Haiti went through Catholic groups in 1968." Engler footnotes another journalist with little patience for the complexity of human relations when he surmises that those "religious groups downplayed voodoo's significance despite the crucial role this domestic religion played in the Haitian revolution and the country's culture." (246) It was not "despite" the crucial role that vodou has played in Haitian culture that it has been feared by Haiti's ruling class, but rather because of its revolutionary potential. But, more profoundly, Engler makes no effort to reconcile the fact that Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide was a Catholic priest chosen by the people to represent their interests. He had been educated by the Canadian Pères de Sainte Croix at Collège Notre-Dame in Cap Haitien and ordained into the Silesian order. He was loved and respected precisely as a Catholic priest who, like many others, retained a respect and psychic attachment to vodou. Ignoring the incontrovertible centrality of liberation theology to the Haitian democratic movement that rose to overthrow the Duvalier regime, Engler simply implies that Catholic foreigners were anti-vodouist bigots. His own defence of Aristide should move him to question such a position: what part did Catholicism play in the Haitian uprising that overthrew Duvalier? What was Aristide's relation to foreign and indigenous Catholics? Why was he chosen by the masses? Why did the Haitian masses respond with joy to Pope John Paul II's profession of solidarity in 1982 and then bitterness as the Vatican turned its back on the people and Aristide? In brief, it is not possible to engage with Haitian society and

culture without an appreciation of spirituality and religion.¹³ That the “left” in Canada has written religion out of its worldview only serves to distance it from meaningful engagement with whole populations. The answer is not for critical Canadians to rediscover religion; the challenge is to appreciate and respect the distinctiveness and meaning of other cultures. The Ti Ligliz movement created by the Haitian peasants and urban poor was powerful enough to frighten the powers to the North.

The left and the right form themselves within Canada’s national discourse. A mature view of foreign policy and actions must transcend the national framework. Like Canada, Haiti has been culturally, economically, and politically tied to external powers in complex ways from its inception. The poverty and misery of the majority of the Haitian people result from the interplay of powerful sources in and out of Haiti. The poor found an exit route from their oppression through spirituality and religion. While many Catholic foreign missionaries based in Haiti chose to throw their weight behind the wealthy, others committed themselves to the poor. Only a respect for history and its subjects can reveal the legacy of that movement and its continuing potential for progressive change. The Haitian poor found the entry point into a new economic order through religion, in the theological principle that all people are equal. They formed partnerships with outside forces that could, at least momentarily, help them in their internal struggles.¹⁴

The principle of the right to self-determination of the nation-state can seduce analysts who resist a profound analysis of history. As Pentland suggested, nations and states are always, already interdependent. Closing the door when the fox is already in the henhouse leads to predictable results, devastating for the victims. At this point in the neoliberal world order, “unfailed-states” have already allowed capital to enter and have handed over resources and populations for exploitation. Hiding behind the states’ claims to autonomy, capital has established almost perfect commodity fetishism. Contrary to Laxer, the challenges to that system are coming from below, from the workers who refuse to suffer so that consumer nations may shop. The moral choice for researchers and scholars is to probe how that system is structurally maintained. What

13. The interplay of vodou, Catholicism, and Protestantism in Haiti is complex. Haitians are looking for a way to accommodate all spiritualities within a pluralistic society. Some indeed have found liberation through reclaiming vodou from its historic suppression by Catholic authorities: see Jean Augustin, *Le vodou libérateur: et si le vodou était une valeur!* (Montréal 1999) and Laënnec Hurbon, *Dieu dans le vodou Haïtien* (Paris 2002). Others found liberation in the appeal of Christ as universal saviour: Jean-Bertrand Aristide, *Tout homme est un homme* (Paris 1992), Frère Francklin, *Paysan de Dieu: la longue route du peuple haïtien* (Paris 1997). The centrality of religion, and Christianity, to the overthrow of Duvalier and the rise of the peasant class is demonstrated by Mical Nérestant, *Religions et politique en Haïti* (Paris 1994).

14. Paul Jackson, “Canada and Haiti: A Detour through History that Leads to the Present,” <http://heartofhaiti.wordpress.com/2010/04/24/> describes the influence of Canadian missionaries on the Ti Ligliz movement.

mechanisms keep consumers and producers in separate worlds? What transnational relations are forbidden in order that the neoliberal empire stand? Where is the system weak?

“Why don’t they just say so?” Teigrob has perhaps the best answer for Foster. All nations and empires flatter themselves about their munificence in world affairs. Every decrepit global power has promoted itself as a force for positive change. Only by keeping the victims apart and suppressing their voices can states and empires maintain their myths. They can’t say so. However, the victims find ways to say so. The environment is speaking with incontrovertible authority. Striking Chinese workers cannot be ignored. The key for those in the heart of the empire is to enter into forbidden relations. What common interests transcend national and cultural differences? Once found, they must be nurtured.

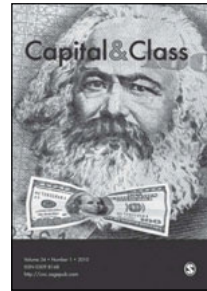
New to SAGE in 2010!

Capital & Class

Managing Editor: **Owen Worth**
University of Limerick, Republic of Ireland

Reviews Editor: **Adam David Morton**
Nottingham University, UK

Published in association with Conference of
Socialist Economists



Since 1977 Capital & Class has been the main independent source for a Marxist critique of global capitalism. Pioneering key debates on value theory, domestic labour, and the state, it reaches out into the labour, trade union, anti-racist, feminist, environmentalist and other radical movements. It analyses the important political, economic and social developments of our time and applies a materialist framework unconstrained by divisions into economics, politics, sociology or history.

Subscribe today and become a member of the CSE!

Individual subscribers to Capital & Class become members of the Conference of Socialist Economists with the right to vote at the AGM, elect members to the executive committee and editorial board, and influence policy. Members are encouraged to set up CSE local groups and participate in and initiate discussions and debates about both theoretical understanding and practical action.

Free online sample copy available!
<http://cnc.sagepub.com>

Quarterly: March, June, September, December
ISSN: 0306-4220

Membership Services +44 (0)20 7324 8500 Email membership@sagepub.co.uk

 **SAGE**

www.sagepublications.com