'Cannibals and Kings': An Exchange

To the Editors:

According to Marshall Sahlins (*NYR*, November 23), the "overall view" of *Cannibals and Kings* is that "culture is business on the scale of history." He derives this idea from the fact that cultural materialism finds explanations for sociocultural phenomena in the relative costs and benefits of alternative activities. Sahlins's *idée fixe* is that costs and benefits are the same as "profit" and "loss" and that they therefore are applicable only to cultures which economize in conformity with the formal categories of capitalism. However the costs and benefits of cultural materialism refer to the more or less efficacious ways of satisfying the need for food, sex, rest, health, and approbation. Although these costs and benefits cannot be measured with precision, rough approximations can easily be obtained in terms of rising or declining death rates, calorie and protein intake, incidence of disease, ratio of labor input to output, energetic balances, amount of infanticide, casualties in war, and many other "etic" and behavioral indices.

These costs and benefits clearly constitute categories that are epistemologically distinct from price market and econometric notions of profit and loss measured in monetary

terms. Moreover, they are relevant to much broader sets of concerns, namely the more or less efficient solution of biological, psychological, and ecological problems experienced by all human beings and all cultures. An interest in efficacious solutions to such universally experienced problems is scarcely a trait that is peculiar to members of the bourgeoisie. But anyone who has a lively concern with the basic material conditions of human welfare including Marx and Engels emerges from Sahlins's analysis as a proponent of "western business mentality." This is one monopoly that businessmen east or west neither merit nor enjoy.

"To Get Some Meat"

Sahlins does not stop at fantasizing the ideological implications of a science of culture rooted in the analysis of material costs and benefits. He renders an inaccurate account of the manner in which cultural materialists actually apply optimizing principles to the explanation of specific puzzles. From Sahlins's account, one would suppose that cultural materialism treats the costs and benefits of alternative innovations as if they were timeless options open to any society at any moment in its history. But the corpus of cultural materialist theory is evolutionistic. In *Cannibals and Kings* I view specific optimizing alternatives as actionable only at a definite moment in a developmental process.

Neglect of this aspect of cultural materialism leads Sahlins to misrepresent the explanation of Aztec cannibalism (first proposed in Harner 1977). The point of my version of this theory according to Sahlins is that in effect the Aztec ate people "to get some meat." What Sahlins omits is that both Harner and I insist that cannibalism was widely practiced in Mesoamerica before the Aztecs arrived in the Valley of Mexico and that as part of the small-scale ritual sacrifice of prisoners of war it was probably almost universal among chiefdoms in both hemispheres. We contend further that as states developed, they usually reduced or eliminated human sacrifice, substituting animal for human victims, and that they invariably gave up the practice of eating prisoners of war. The explanation for this trend is that it was part of the general tendency for successful expansionist states to adopt ecumenical religions and to incorporate defeated populations into the victor's political economy as peasants, serfs, or slaves.

However, in the Aztec case, and as far as we know only in the Aztec case, the state itself took over the earlier human sacrifice and cannibalism complex and made it the main focus of its ecclesiastical rituals. As the Aztecs became more powerful they did not stop eating their enemies; instead they ate more and more of them. At least 20,000 captives were immolated in four days at the dedication of the main Aztec temple in 1487 and by the beginning of the sixteenth century at least fifteen to twenty thousand people were being eaten per year in Tenochtitlan, the Aztec capital (Harner 1977:119). Since the skulls of the victims in Tenochtitlan were placed on display racks after the brains were taken out and eaten, it was possible for the members of Cortés's expedition to make a precise count of one category of victims. They found that the rack contained 136,000 heads but they were unable to count another group of heads that had been used to make two tall towers consisting entirely of crania and jawbones (ibid.:122).

The scale of this complex bears no resemblance to any other cannibal complex before or since. The Aztec are a unique case and they therefore demand a unique explanation. Sahlins, however, tries to lump the Aztec complex with instances of small-scale pre-state ritual cannibalism in Oceania and elsewhere. He distorts the problem from one of explaining Aztec cannibalism in particular, to one of explaining cannibalism in general. What has to be explained is not why the Aztec sacrificed and ate people but why they sacrificed and ate more people than anyone else.

Why then were the Aztecs unique? Our explanation is that the Aztec did not give up cannibalism because the faunal resources of the Valley of Mexico had become uniquely depleted. As a result of millennia of intensification and population growth the Central Mexican highlands had been stripped of domesticable ruminants and swine and of wild birds, fish, or ungulates in numbers sufficient to supply significant amounts of animal protein per capita per year (Sanders and Santley in press). The few available domesticable species—birds and dogs—could not be raised in sufficient quantities to make up for the absence of cattle, sheep, goats, horses, pigs, guinea pigs, llamas or alpacas. All other populous ancient states, including the Inca of Peru, possessed several domesticated herbivores whose meat and blood were substituted for human flesh in state-sponsored sacrificial rituals and feasts. These ecclesiastical redistributions of animal protein were used to reward loyalty to the state, especially loyalty on the battlefield, and to enhance and consolidate the power of the ruling class.

This is not the place for a lengthy discussion of the biochemical and physiological advantages associated with animal versus plant sources of protein. It is sufficient to note that animal sources of protein in the form of milk or meat are universally valued over plant sources of protein and are everywhere given a central place in ecclesiastical redistributions, honorific feasts, and upper-class commissaries. (Hindu India, the world center of vegetarian ideologies, is one of the world's largest consumers of milk and milk products.) The reason for this is that proteins are essential not only for normal body function but for recuperation from infections and wounds.

To make proteins, the human body needs twenty different kinds of amino acids. It can synthesize all but eight or nine of them, the so-called "essential" amino acids. To obtain these essential components from plants, one must eat large amounts of carefully balanced combinations of plant foods *at the same meal*. Meat, eggs, and other animal proteins, however, provide the essential amino acids in balance even when eaten in small quantities. The world-wide preference for animal protein therefore reflects an adaptive cultural and nutritional strategy. Any population which did not seek to maximize its animal protein intake relative to that of neighboring populations, would soon find itself physically smaller, less healthy, and less capable of recuperating from the trauma of disease and the wounds of combat (cf. Scrimshaw, 1977).

The theory advanced by Michael Harner and me is that the uniquely severe depletion of animal protein resources made it uniquely difficult for the Aztec ruling class to prohibit the consumption of human flesh and to refrain from using it as a reward for loyalty and bravery on the battlefield. It was of greater immediate advantage for the Aztec ruling class to sacrifice, redistribute, and eat their prisoners of war than to use them as serfs or slaves. Cannibalism therefore remained for the Aztecs an irresistible sacrament and their state-sponsored ecclesiastical system tipped over to favor an increase rather than a decrease in the ritual butchering of captives and the redistribution of human flesh.[1] The Aztec ruling class, unlike any government before or since, found itself waging war more and more not to expand territory, but to increase the flow of edible captives. All of this bears little resemblance to the economistic fable concocted by Sahlins in which the Aztecs go to war to "get some meat" because it is cheaper for them to cook people than eat beans. The critical optimized costs and benefits are not only those associated with the choice between two sources of protein—but also between alternate modes of justifying ruling-class hegemony in a severely depleted habitat at a definite moment in the evolution of the state in Mesoamerica.

Sahlins's Aztec Arcadia

Our theory of Aztec cannibalism is based on the contention that the Valley of Mexico was a uniquely depleted habitat. Sahlins however rejects this contention. Indeed, he makes the claim that the Valley of Mexico was a veritable protein paradise. He writes that "of all the peoples in the hemisphere who practiced intensive agriculture, the Aztecs probably had the greatest natural protein resources." However, it is an established archaeological, ecological, and plain common

[1] It is true, as Sahlins points out, that the Aztec sometimes fattened up their prisoners before eating them but that scarcely means that they were engaging in some final mismanagement of resources—they had to provide food only for the fattening, not for the rearing of their victims. It is also true that the "trunks" of the victims were fed to animals in the zoo. But no one knows if the flesh was still on the bones; nor is the feeding of carnivores at the zoo at odds with the other amusements of the Aztec ruling class.

sense fact that the hunting, fishing, and collecting of non-maritime natural protein resources cannot provide densely urbanized populations with nutritionally significant amounts of animal protein on a sustained yield basis. Only domesticated protein resources can do that. Even with densities of less than one person per square mile, hunters and collectors need hundreds of square miles of reserve areas in order to sustain per capita animal protein at modest levels (say, thirty grams per capita per day, or less than half of the current US ration). In this perspective, Sahlins's contention that the 1,500,000 people who lived in the Valley of Mexico could have gotten an ample supply of meat from hunting deer is worth about as much as the suggestion that New York City could get its meat from wildlife in the Catskill mountains.

William Sanders and R. Santley (in press) have studied the archeological evidence for overkill and depletion in the Valley of Mexico for the period 1500 BC to AD 1500. They estimate that at the beginning of this period deer meat contributed 13.5 percent of the calories in the diet. In Aztec times "overkill had become so acute" that only 0.1 percent of calories could come from deer meat. They estimate that "total meat from all wild sources could not have exceeded 0.3 percent of the annual requirement [of calories]."[2] This works out to 0.6 grams of protein per capita per day. (For reference, it is useful to think of the amount of protein in a hen's egg, namely about six grams.)

The idea that the lakes in the Valley of Mexico could have supplied significant amounts of fish protein per capita per year is no less incorrect. These lakes in pre-contact times averaged less than three feet deep; at the lower elevations in the chain the water was too salty to drink and during the dry seasons the surface area shrank considerably due to evaporation. After the conquest the Spaniards began to drain the lakes. However, even in Aztec times the surface was covered with algae out of which the Aztecs made their famous "scum cakes." These algae blooms suggest that the lakes had a low oxygen content and that vertebrate species were not abundant below the surface.

According to Charles Gibson (1964:340), in the early seventeenth century, the two most productive lakes were yielding over a million fish, none larger than nine inches and most smaller. If we assume that the other lakes yielded an equal amount and that the total surface area had been reduced by one-third since Aztec times, one can estimate that there were in generous round numbers 3 million fish captured each year by the Aztec fishermen. This works out to the equivalent of two herrings per capita per year or about 0.12 grams of protein per day per capita.

Next come the waterfowl. Sahlins says there were "millions of ducks." Gibson (ibid.:343) estimates that about one million ducks were taken annually in the eighteenth century. Since these were hunted with guns when the population of the Valley of Mexico was much smaller than in Aztec times, there is no reason to adjust Gibson's total upward. That gives every Aztec something less than three quarters of a duck per year. Allowing a generous two kilos undressed weight per duck this yields about 1.0 grams of protein per capita per day.

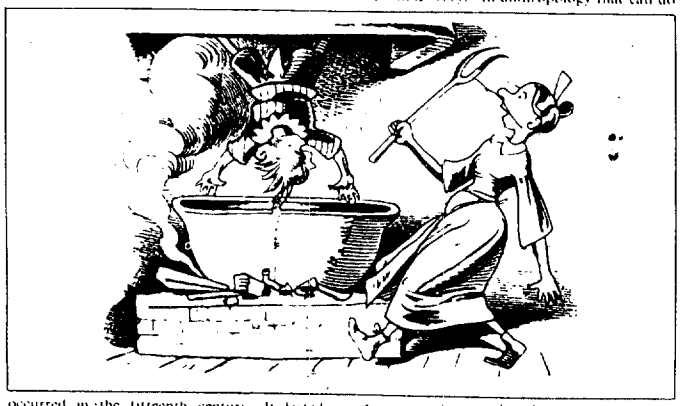
But the real worth of the Aztec arcadia we are told lay in its invertebrates. The place was "teeming" with small "wildlife" writes Sahlins—with "bugs, grubs, and small red worms." Sahlins again accuses me of bourgeois ethnocentrism for my failure to realize that such *animalitos* taste good to non-Westerners. Regardless of how bugs and worms taste (I happen to like some invertebrates myself), the question is whether small, patchy, and trophically subordinate creatures can be harvested on a scale sufficient to provide a dense urbanized population with significant amounts of animal protein on a sustained yield basis.

It is one thing to relish piquant morsels of witchety grubs and snails as a supplement to meat and fish; it is quite another to make such fare one's primary source of animal flesh. In well-endowed habitats, people usually let the fish and the birds eat most of the worms, and then they eat the birds and the fish. The only sensible conclusion to be drawn from the fact that Aztecs ate more worms than anything else is that they had eaten up most of the birds and the fish, and having eaten up most of the birds and the fish, they ate people as well. Sahlins however thinks eating lots of bugs and worms shows that the Aztec were an affluent society.

To further establish the point that the Aztec actually inhabited an environment rich in natural sources of protein, Sahlins declares "there was no shortage of meat in the markets described by the Spanish," neglecting to add that Cortés was convinced that much of it was human meat. (If they can't eat scum cakes, let them eat people.) In places like Calcutta one also finds that for those who can afford it there is no shortage of anything.

Adding up all possible sources, exclusive of human flesh, it is difficult to see how the Aztecs could have gotten more than two or three grams of animal protein per day, or about half an egg.[3]

Finally, against Sahlins's ducks, bugs, and scum cakes there is hard evidence from the chroniclers concerning devastating crop failures and famines. Between 1500 and 1519, the year of the arrival of Cortés, there were either famines or near famines in 1501, 1505, 1507, and 1515. The worst recorded famine occurred in the fifteenth century. It lasted from 1451 to 1456 and was followed by an intense period of warfare and prisoner sacrifice. (Harner estimates that famines occurred on the average every three or four years.) No scholar has ever questioned the reports of Aztec famines. Their occurrence discredits Sahlins's notions about the abundance of wildlife.



Positivist Cant

From the ardor with which Sahlins argues for abundance on the basis of the evidence for scarcity one might suppose that he wishes to promote his own explanation of the Aztec puzzle. But Sahlins has no alternative explanation. The sole purpose of his unremittingly negative critique is to prove that Aztec "culture is meaningful in its own right," a proposition to which one cannot object but which has no bearing on the question of whether or not Aztec cannibalism can be explained by cultural materialist theories.

According to Sahlins, the fascinated contemplation of the richness of human sacrifice as the Aztec priests and their victims understood it, alone defines the anthropologist's proper task. Indeed Sahlins warns that if I persist in trying to learn something about the etic and behavioral conditions that create butcher priests skilled at yanking the hearts out of living people, "we shall have to give up all anthropology." I rather think it more likely that we shall have to give up anthropology once the idea gets around that Sahlins's constriction of anthropology to the "emic" and mental aspects of Aztec sacrifice exemplifies the true anthropological calling. No one can doubt that "culture is meaningful in its own right," but many will doubt Sahlins's authorization for telling us what it meant to be dragged up the pyramid by the hair—even if it was "magical hair," as he proposes in a footnote—to be bent back spread-eagled and cut open.

Sahlins claims that what mattered to the victims whose screams ended 500 years ago was that they were part of a sacrament and not that they were part of a meal. "It is positivist cant," writes Sahlins, to impose Western categories such as cannibalism on these high holy rites. It wasn't cannibalism, he continues, it was the "highest form of communion"—as if communion is not also a Western concept and as if labeling human sacrifice "communion" transubstantiates obsidian knives and human meat into things we can't recognize as being sharp and nutritious respectively. Anthropologists should certainly try to understand why people think they behave the way they do but we cannot stop at that understanding. It is imperative that we reserve the right not to believe some explanations.

Most of all we must reserve the right not to believe ruling-class explanations. A ruling class that says it is eating some people out of concern for the welfare of all is not telling the whole story. An anthropology that can do no more than make that viewpoint seem plausible serves neither science nor morality. Aztec cannibalism was the "highest form of communion" for the eaters but not the eaten. For the eaten it was not merely cannibalism but the highest form of exploitation. (Even bourgeois businessmen refrain from dining on their workers.) If it be positivist cant to describe human relationships in such terms, long live positivism. If it be anthropology to struggle against the mystification of the causes of inequality and exploitation, long live anthropology.

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William Sanders, Jeffrey R. Parsons, and Robert Santley, *The Basin of Mexico: Ecological Processes in the Evolution of a Civilization* (to be published by Academic Press).

Nevin Scrimshaw, "Through a Glass Darkly: Discerning the Practical Implications of Human 'Dietary Protein-Energy Relationships,'" *Nutrition Reviews* vol. 35 (1977), pp. 321-337.

Marshall Sahlins *replies:*

Nutritional science will not help. It indicates that in normal times the combination of corn and beans, the substance of the Aztecs' main daily meal, would supply them with the full range of amino acids at levels comparable to or surpassing animal protein.[1] On the other hand, human meat could have no redeeming nutritional value. The ritual calendar of human sacrifice had no particular relation to lean periods in the annual agricultural cycle; on the contrary, the greatest of these sacrifices coincided with the harvest.[2] And if food were truly scarce, as in famine, the meat from sacrificial victims would not prevent protein malnutrition, since people cannot synthesize body proteins from it so long as their caloric (energy) requirements are not satisfied.[3]

But then, Aztec cannibalism was not uniquely intensive. The figures adopted in *Cannibals and Kings* are 15,000 human sacrifices annually for a population of 2 million in the Valley of Mexico. This rate of less than one body a year for every hundred subjects would embarrass many self-respecting cannibal chieftains. Even if all the flesh were consumed (which it was not), and even if it were eaten exclusively by privileged parties in the city of Tenochtitlan (say 25 percent of the 300,000 inhabitants), cannibalism would yield protein rations to the elite on the order of one mouthful of hamburger a day.[4]

Like many such interdisciplinary excursions, Harris's appeal to nutritional study succeeds merely in multiplying the uncertainties of his own subject matter by the unknowns of some other science. One of the most definite unknowns emerging from recent debates among nutritionists is that "no diet in the world with a concentration of protein below the minimum requirement has been identified."[4] The authors of this conclusion,

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[1] The main daily meal of Aztec common people consisted of maize-cakes, beans, pimento or tomato sauce, and tamales, if rarely any game meat or poultry: Jacques Soustelle, *Daily Life of the Aztecs* (Stanford University Press, 1961), p. 149. On the dispensability of animal proteins for people whose diet includes the complementary vegetable proteins of beans and corn, notably "many Central American people," see M.G. Wohl and R.S. Goodhart, *Modern Nutrition in Health and Disease* (Lea and Febiger, 1964), p. 144. For amino acids in corn, beans, and animal products, see the relevant entries in P.L. Altman and D.S. Dittmer, *Metabolism* (Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology, 1968), pp. 53-55.

[2] Bernard R. Ortiz de Montellano, "Aztec Cannibalism: An Ecological Necessity?" *Science* 200 (1978), pp. 611-617.

[3] On proteins available from human flesh, see Wohl and Goodhart, op. cit., p. 125; also, S. Garn and W. Block, "The limited nutritional value of cannibalism," *American Anthropologist*, 72 (1970), p. 106. On hamburgers: C.F. Adams, *Nutritive Values of American Foods* (USDA Agricultural Handbook 456, 1975). In my calculations I adopt Ortiz de Montellano's figures of 1,810 grams of protein from the arms and legs (the part of the human body the Aztecs consumed) and 5,180 grams for the whole body. Supposing 15,000 victims were consumed annually by the 75,000 elite of Tenochtitlan, and even if all body flesh were eaten, the yield would be 2.83 grams of protein a day for each consumer; whereas, the legs and arms alone give 0.99 grams per person per day. One *ounce* of cooked hamburger (lean red meat and 21 percent fat) has 6.33 grams of protein. Taking the whole of the supposedly protein-starved Valley of Mexico (population 1.5 million), and a figure of 20,000 victims annually, the protein made available from human legs and arms would be 0.06 grams per person per day.

[4] M.A. Crawford and J.P.W. Rivers, "The protein myth," in *The man/food equation*, F. Steel and A. Bourne, eds. (Academic Press, 1975), p. 238; see also, in the same volume, P.V. Sukhatme, "Human protein needs and the relative role of energy and protein in meeting them," pp. 53-76.

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[1] At 2,000 calories per capita; at 2 calories per gram of lean meat; and at 20 percent protein per gram of lean meat.

[2] If we assume that they got as much protein from the bugs and worms as they did from the ducks, then the total is as follows:

meat	+	fish	+	ducks	+	"animalitos"	=	2.7 grams
0.6		0.12		1.0		1.0		

Of course, this does not take into account the seasonality of many of these creatures nor does it take into account the sharp differences in consumption privileges among the Aztec's social classes.

[3] Those who are interested in my response to the many other distortions and inaccuracies in Sahlins's review may wish to consult the chapters on structuralism, structural Marxism, and obscurantism in my *Cultural Materialism, The Struggle for a Science of Culture* (Random House, 1979).

speaking to the supposed "protein gap" in Third World countries (more likely a caloric deficiency), as well as to our own historical obsession with meat as the only "flesh-forming food" (the word for "food" in English used to be "meat"), call all this "the protein myth." Nor have Mr. Harris's own assertions about protein resources among the Aztecs and others fared well under expert scrutiny.[5]

Speaking of science, I have to make some protest about the way Mr. Harris uses the evidence. Cortés never suggested that the meat in Aztec markets might be human flesh. (Since there is no such suspicion in Cortés's account of the conquest in his *Letters* to Charles V, it is difficult to understand why Harris accuses me of neglecting to notice it.) Similarly, I am taxed by Harris with the notion that the Aztecs got adequate protein from hunting deer, although I do not even mention deer in this connection. The precise mathematical refutation Harris proceeds to make of this imaginary contention seems worthy of its inspiration. The same credence can be accorded to Harris's calculations of grams of protein from seventeenth- and eighteenth-century economic conditions, when the population of the Valley of Mexico had fallen from about 1.5 million to under 100,000, and the lakes' resources had been seriously depleted. Nor do the historical sources warrant such suppositions as that the Aztecs bought and sold human flesh, that all human sacrifices were also eaten or that merely the bones of the victim but not the trunks were fed to Moctezuma's animals. I know that Harris has long and vigorously argued, as a matter of scientific principle, for the priority of the anthropologist's interpretations over what people actually say. But there comes a point when the exercise of this privilege can no longer do credit to the scientific enterprise in whose name it is invoked.

Of course, it is not really a question, as Mr. Harris believes, of scientific concepts versus native rationalizations. All societies are ordered by meaningful logics of which the people are more or less unaware, such as the historic Anglo-American fascination with meat.[6] But then, anthropologists themselves (like physicists) are not immune to the universalization of their own native folklore in the form of scientific categories and measures—thus risking obliteration of the order in the societies they study. Once again, in his own reply, Mr. Harris indicates he is unaware of the "bourgeois" ground of his science, since he repeatedly conflates the *more or less efficacious* ways that people maintain themselves with the *optimizing* or *maximizing* behavior characteristic of capitalist enterprise. And even as he denies such optimizing is a timeless option, but actionable only at certain historical moments, he tells us that "*any* population which did not seek to maximize its animal protein intake relative to that of neighboring populations" would go under.[7] For Harris, doing well enough to get along (adaptation) is the same as the principle of greatest gain. So is living confused with profit-making—the great American problem.

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[5]For a thorough ecological critique of the Harner-Harris thesis on the Aztecs, see Ortiz de Montellano, op. cit.; on the Yanomamö, see Napoleon A. Chagnon, "Protein deficiency and tribal warfare in Amazonia: New data," *Science* 203 (1979), pp. 910-913, and Jacques Lizot, "*Economie primitive et subsistance*," *Libre* 4 (1978), pp. 69-112.

[6]Cattle have long had a marked ritual/prestige status among Indo-European domestic animals, whether as food (Anglo-American), standard of marriage payments (pre-classical Greece), preeminent sacrificial victim (classical Rome), or sacred and taboo animal (India). The metaphor of increasing the stock is still dominating us, whether as sociobiology or capitalism (a word having common origin with "cattle"). Mr. Harris's defense of the carnivorous basis of cultural forms in *Cultural Materialism* (and elsewhere) includes a denial of all this. His idea is that the American "preference" for beef over pork developed after 1860 as a consequence of the opening of the Western ranges, and of technological developments that made beef more economical.

This idea, which is like judging that silver has a greater cultural value than gold because it has a greater (quantitative) demand, can easily be corrected by reference to standard histories of British and American foods. For example:

> Americans no doubt have always preferred beef, but what they actually ate was necessarily that which was available, and for the first three centuries of white history in America, what was readily available was pork. [Waverly Root and Richard de Rochemont, *Eating in America: A History* (Morrow, 1976), p. 192]

As would be expected of a prestige meat, the consumption of beef relative to pork was greater among prosperous New Englanders before the mid-nineteenth century; as for the workers, in 1842 the Democrats were writing satirical ditties on Whig promises of "Two dollars [a day] and roast beef" (Richard O. Cummings, *The American and His Food*, University of Chicago, 1940, pp. 16, 28-29). The historical relation between the intensification of beef production in America and its cultural value was rather the opposite to what Mr. Harris believes.

[7]Of course, it is not even true that, "any population" would have to *do better* in proteins than their neighbors, let alone "maximize" their intake, even if the failure to do better left them in poorer health. All of that depends on the type of relations among neighboring societies, including the type and intensity of warfare (if any), as well as their respective sizes, modes of organization, and much else.

LETTERS

THE SAUDI WAY

To the Editors:

Our correspondents report that advertisements for faculty positions at the University of Riyad appear in the *NYR*. Of course, why shouldn't you run such ads, if they are properly submitted? Why shouldn't you accept my subscription?

Predicated on the assumption that this is a place like any other, with a university like any other, my questions must seem delusional. I am really writing to ask if my perception that this part of the world receives no serious treatment in current publishing and the literary intellectual press is confirmed by your experience. To put this question another way: Have I only missed them, or are responsible books, articles, letters, and the like about the Islamic kingdoms and shiekdoms simply not being written and discussed?

If my observation is accurate, why is it so? Does the *NYR* receive no other correspondence relative to this area besides subscriptions and advertisements?

There are 15,000 students from this country currently studying at colleges and universities in the United States. Due to the popularity here (more imagined than real) of English as a second language, and of America as an "ally," Americans are actively recruited and brought to teach through advertisements like those I've mentioned above. Such comfortable and homely "facts" betray a reality so far from normal expectation and practice as to be criminal if it continues to be maintained in silence. Where in fact is the proper forum for open discussion of hiring practices, responsibilities, academic, civil, and human rights in these wealthy developing nations? Or do such considerations simply disappear when "the money is good?"

This is a country that censors all journals and newspapers, that does not grant tourist visas, that confiscates passports of foreign university employees (and does not release them, except at year's end, without heavy