

## MARXIAN EXPLOITATION AND DOMESTIC COLONIALISM: A REPLY

*By*  
*Donald J. Harris*

**I**n my paper<sup>1</sup> I offered a systematic critique of the idea offered in Tabb's book that the "black ghetto" constitutes an "internal colony" in American society. As is appropriate to the dialectical character of such a critique, my paper operated on two different levels simultaneously. On one level, I sought to show the weakness of Tabb's position, namely that he had failed to provide any analytical basis for the idea which he advocated. On another level, I attempted to point the way out of this situation and therefore to go beyond and to transcend it. In particular, I constructed the broad outline of what I considered to be a useful analytical framework for identifying the economic position of black people in American capitalism.

In his present comment<sup>2</sup> on my paper Tabb claims, as his main point, that I did not provide all the answers and therefore "much remains to be done." Modesty precludes me from disagreeing with the general tenor of this point. After all, I could hardly have been expected to provide in a rather brief paper what Tabb in his book, and a host of other people in as many other books, have so far failed to do.

At the same time, Tabb concedes the validity of my "central criticism" of the position taken in his book. Thus, so far as this side of the matter is concerned, there is nothing more that needs to be said. What is indeed gratifying, however, is that my paper has

encouraged Tabb not only to rethink his own position but to begin to grapple with the elements of the problem along the lines of the formulation which I presented. His discussion otherwise involves only a number of minor quibbles that it would serve no purpose for me to take up here.

What remains to be done is a considerable effort of combined theoretical and historical analysis, rooted in the concrete conditions of capitalist development in America and focussing upon the continuing role of black people in this development. This is a task that can be accomplished only through the labors of many. Therefore, let us now all move forward.

#### References

<sup>1</sup>Donald J. Harris, "The Black Ghetto as 'Internal Colony': A Thoretical Critique and Alternative Formulation," *Review of Black Political Economy*, Summer 1972, pp. 3-33.

<sup>2</sup>William K. Tabb, "Marxian Exploitation and Domestic Colonialism," *Review of Black Political Economy*, Summer 1974.