

REVIEWS

John Baldock and Margaret May (eds.), *Social Policy Review* 7, Social Policy Association, London, 1995, 316 pp., £7.00 paper for SPA members, £10.00 paper for non-SPA members.

Occasionally it seems as if it might have been more pleasant to have studied Social Policy in, say, the 1950s. From the fluid and turbulent perspective of the 1990s it appears an era of relative tranquillity and certainty: there were fewer books to read, apparently more certainty of both purpose and means (although it is a sign of our times that there is currently a revisionist debate going on about the reality of the so-called 'Butskellite consensus'), and generally *less to know*. It is said that in the thirteenth century Roger Bacon was able to compend all the scientific knowledge of his day in a single work. This has long been impossible even for any single *discipline*, but at least the latest edition of the *Social Policy Review* does give the reader a taste of the range and diversity of issues which now characterises the subject.

The *Review* is sub-divided into three sections which deal in different ways with the challenges and the new agenda of social problems raised by the conjunction of globalisation and the attendant strategy of state welfare retrenchment. The curse of living in 'interesting times' may be fully upon us, but in this discussion of what the editors call the new 'boundary issues of social policy' (p. 1), the contributors offer both a helpful survey of the changes the field is currently undergoing and propose various agendas of response to these. It is especially encouraging that the different sections of the target audience (i.e., both academics and practitioners) are equally represented among the contributors. The continued involvement of those who implement and deliver welfare services is a virtue which Social Policy shares with few other academic social sciences: it testifies to the relevance and potential impact of the discipline, and is an important reminder that, unlike the pretensions of many other subjects, we cannot conceive of learning and knowledge in this field as a simple one-way process. There is much that ought to be of interest for both sections of the audience in this volume.

Unfortunately, the diversity and scope of topics covered in *Social Policy Review* 7 is so great that it raises almost as many problems for any reviewer as it must have for the editors. It is not possible to do full justice to all the issues raised in such a short space, nor assess how far the editors have achieved their ambition to contribute to a cumulative body of *Review* volumes which build up a developing picture of the subject through the years.

Nevertheless, one can still reach an overall impression, which in this case is decidedly favourable. Each chapter offers a well-informed and usually lucid analysis of their respective topics, although several provide a degree of detail which will be of interest only to the more specialist reader. The first section provides five perspectives on different aspects of what are described as 'New Social Policy Discourses'. Donnison's opening chapter offers a careful response to ethical relativism and a basis from which to consider the 'authority' of the social

policy commentator. Mishra's analysis of the prospects of 'Social Policy After Socialism' reaches a down-beat conclusion which merits serious thought but contrasts with the relative optimism of later chapters, for example, those by Erskine and Ungerson and by Cannan. Deacon's study of the supra-national determinants of welfare provision is an interesting survey of an area which will become increasingly important in the future. The chapters by Skillen and by Holmes are among the best exemplars of the confrontation with the 'new boundaries' offered in the *Review*.

The second section contains seven chapters which ably perform the 'traditional' Social Policy task of evaluation and comparison. Cohen's discussion of the inter-relationship between the 'welfare state' and immigration control was particularly interesting, although I was puzzled as to why the editors should consider his identification of trade unions as among the instigators of restrictive British immigration practices to be controversial – such exclusionary practices have been long established and documented.

The final section provides three analyses of current social policy practice, both in teaching and the 'real world' (© M. Thatcher, *et al.*) of service delivery. I imagine that most readers will find the chapter by Erskine and Ungerson on teaching and research to be of particular interest and relevance to their own experiences, but they manage to conclude that not all is bad in academia and – along with Scott's discussion of placements and field-work – they offer some points on good practice and some hope for the future. Finally, Cannan outlines an equally 'Hostile Climate' for social workers, although even here there are some last dregs of optimism salvaged for the future.

The *Social Policy Review* is of particular significance for our profession and discipline: it is given a special authority and prominence by its nature as an SPA publication and by its status as an assessment of the current state of the field. It is an onerous responsibility on the editors to fulfil these demands, but one which has been ably executed in this instance. This is a thoughtful and stimulating collection. Newcomers to our subject may find it an intimidating experience to be confronted with the appraisal of affairs which *SPR7* represents, given the range of topics they are now apparently expected to be informed about. As Erskine and Ungerson point out, however, it is also possible to ensure that they find the experience to be invigorating; this, after all, is evidently a subject which is both lively and dynamic, and still capable of responding to new intellectual challenges (p. 270).

It is unfortunate that the same cannot be said for the social policies of the British government, and our impact on these (and the on-going policy reformulations of 'New Labour') have, so far, been negligible. This is, perhaps, the greatest unfulfilled challenge facing contemporary academic Social Policy, and attempts to reinvigorate the policy relevance of the topic for the public and policy-makers alike must be urged, despite the hostile climate. Still, the foundation of an absorbing and vigorous discipline is at least in place. Perhaps living in interesting times need not be such a curse after all.

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The Commission on the Future of Voluntary Action, *Meeting the Challenge of Change: Voluntary Action Into the 21st Century*, NCVO, London, 1996, 130 pp., £20.00 paper.

Traditionally, when government wants to stall on a difficult but politically pressing issue, it establishes a Royal Commission (a technique little used by the bulldozer governments of the Thatcher era). However, despite the widely acknowledged (albeit with differing emphases) political significance of the voluntary sector, there has been no recent government incursion of this kind into the world of the voluntary sector. The only recent public government commentary has been *The Individual and the Community* which, in 1992, appeared both as part of the Majorite broad push on the Citizen's Charter and a flagging up of his government's desire (during the review of charity law, and the introduction of the community care reforms) to pull the voluntary sector further into the welfare market dominated by the three Es; as Barry Knight has put it, to encompass the 'delivery of state objectives through voluntary means'.

In relation to the voluntary sector, a more appropriate aphorism might be that the government leaves it to the voluntary sector to review itself (perhaps, from the voluntary sector's viewpoint, to get its retaliation in first) – and then moves the goalposts! There has certainly been no shortage of post-war blockbuster reviews of the sector. Beveridge wrote his personal monograph on *Voluntary Action* in 1948; the Aves Committee (established by NISW and others) looked into the glass ball at the end of the 1960s; and the Woolfenden Committee revisited *The Future of Voluntary Organisations* in 1978. In the 1990s, we have had Knight's caustic magnum opus, *Voluntary Action*, sponsored by twenty-three major funders, mostly independent charitable trusts; the NCVO-sponsored and Nathan-chaired report on *Effectiveness in the Voluntary Sector*; and now *Meeting the Challenge of Change*, another NCVO-initiated exploration of the future role and function of the voluntary sector in England (a separate report is being prepared on voluntary action in Scotland which will make for interesting comparisons).

Many of these reports, especially from the 1960s onwards, seem with hindsight to have been overtaken by wider political events, leaving them largely redundant except as historical data sources. One acid test of the Deakin Commission (as it will doubtless come to be known) is thus likely to be (future *JSP* readers, please note!), the extent to which, in a few years time, and after the hubbub of the millennium (one of the triggers for its work) has died down, it is seen as having plotted out a clear path for the voluntary sector and one which, in the changed economic and political circumstances of, say, 2005, still makes sense, at least in broad terms.

It is no criticism to say that much of the analysis and many of the conclusions of the Commission are unsurprising. The scope of the report is comprehensive (and readers must pay tribute to a remarkably solid and speedy piece of work) covering an analysis of the voluntary sector as it stands, its relationships with central and local state and private capital, funding, legal, fiscal and regulatory environments, and some speculative comment about the future environment for voluntary action. A brief review cannot engage with any of this analysis in depth save to recommend it strongly to those with an academic, research, policy or action commitment to the voluntary sector – all of whom will find much to bite on – and to point to some of the key issues which seem of most significance to this reviewer.

First, the strength of the voluntary sector lies still in its *independence* and *diversity*; this is a strong message to those who would distil the voluntary sector down into one model form of organisation, preferably contracted to provide good quality but cheap services on behalf of the state. Secondly (and perhaps more ephemerally), the Lottery should be scrutinised ever more carefully for its (contested) impact on the voluntary sector. Thirdly, charity law should be updated again to incorporate a definition of charity which relates to public benefit; whether this will offer political protection to those charities which have had the levers of charity law used against them remains to be seen. Fourthly, charitable grants should be offered for longer time-scales; this is welcome but limited – why is not the same recommendation put before local government, given the uncertainty which undermines future planning resultant on year-by-year grant support? Fifthly, all funders are encouraged to experiment within the voluntary sector, again a helpful call at a time when much creative development and other ‘marginal’ work has been squeezed by service level agreements. Sixthly, a strong emphasis is placed on the need for an autonomous, active ethnic minority sector, surely a reminder which should not have been necessary and points to the continuing failure of many organisations to address the issue of ‘race’ effectively. Seventhly, voluntary agencies should develop effective procedures for monitoring, evaluation and social audit, the latter to assess the extent of user involvement, equal opportunities and environmental impact.

Knight’s concluding analysis was that ‘much of the voluntary sector has lost its bearings and forfeited [its] right...to be taken seriously as an integral part of the polity’; a jaundiced view which appears moreover to suggest that the political and economic framework within which the sector is located stands still. The 1980s and early 1990s have been as traumatic for voluntary action as for other elements of the body politic; what the Deakin Commission offers is a further strong message that continuing political support for its longstanding values are critical if the voluntary sector is not to become unrecognisable in ten years time. Where it fails most sharply for me is to offer a sense that the sector’s oppositional role can be as significant as its supportive role.

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Vic George and Peter Taylor-Gooby (eds.), *European Welfare Policy: Squaring the Welfare Circle*, Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1996, vi + 224 pp., hard £37.50, paper £11.99.

This book charts the changing and increasing demands for social welfare and the attempts by governments to contain and restructure social expenditures, focusing on seven EU states. These contradictory pressures are encapsulated in the phrase ‘squaring the welfare circle’, which was also the sub-title of an earlier text on the British welfare state from ‘the Kent School’ (George and Miller, 1994). The latter took a notably downbeat view of the social policy future in Britain, arguing that the Conservative reforms since 1979 had set in train a profound transformation from a liberal, collectivist to a residual, neo-liberal model of social welfare. In the new book, the editors maintain this view. Hence in the opening chapter Vic George describes the period 1975–90 as dominated by pessimism about the welfare state in which ‘the new right ideology became

supreme' (p. 2). He sees the post 1980s as a critical moment in welfare reform akin to the immediate post-war years in which we are moving to a 'new ideological welfare paradigm' (p. 23). There is a welcome robustness in the way these points are made and certainly the early/mid-1970s was a turning point for economic and hence social policy globally. New right thinking set the ideological pace in the 1980s in Britain, though to a much lesser extent elsewhere perhaps. But, depending of course on one's definition of the 'new right', it is surely too strong to say it has reigned supreme. Arguably the new right onslaught on the welfare state in Britain has gradually run into the buffers over the 1990s in Britain and is now desperately resorting to Europhobia to save itself.

Also it may be rather early to judge whether a new welfare paradigm is emerging. The evidence in this book on recent policy changes in Western Europe suggests a more familiar muddling through by governments, left and right, characterised by piecemeal, pragmatic restructuring, albeit moving towards welfare pluralism (government regulation and subsidy of 'private' welfare) and away from collectivism (the direct provision of social benefits and services by the state). Indeed this is the conclusion reached by Peter Taylor-Gooby in the final chapter of the book. Having said that, it does seem plausible to argue that we may be witnessing in 1990s Britain the abandonment of collectivist welfare ideology by Labour, a major shift indeed. However this is not an avenue pursued in this book.

The book consists of seven specialist chapters respectively devoted to Germany, France, Sweden, UK, Italy, Greece and Spain flanked by three chapters from the editors. Unlike many edited collections, the country studies are structured around the 'squaring the circle' themes identified by the editors, while the three editorial chapters offer substantial cross-national analysis of the issues. This makes for a much more coherent, integrated package in which the editorial chapters stand out particularly. The country studies are largely empirical in approach, perhaps because they were obliged to cover the full range of benefits and services and of welfare needs in a short space. Critical issues around welfare outcomes in terms of 'race', poverty and inequality are only touched on briefly if at all in most chapters, and the presentation of family and gender issues is largely factual. Readers would have found it useful to have had these policy updates put into the context established by recent comparative theorisation. For example, only the chapter by Arthur Gould on Sweden takes up Esping-Andersen's concept of de commodification, concluding definitively that in 1990s Sweden 'the process of de commodification...has been put into reverse' (p. 91). The diversity of welfare structures, politics and traditions in the seven states is very apparent from these studies, and this is brought home particularly by the chapters on Greece, Spain and Italy, which are probably less familiar to British readers. Interestingly the European Union is barely mentioned in the country studies or elsewhere in the book despite its title. This is not an omission, but rather an indication of the marginal impact of European integration on European social policy to date.

Nevertheless there are of course significant convergences. Vic George highlights three processes fuelling welfare expansion across Western Europe, namely 'the rising tide of gerontophobia', 'the disorderly labour market' and 'the arrival of serial monogamy' or perhaps more conventionally the growth of early retire-

ment, unemployment and single motherhood. As the phraseology suggests, this is a lively tour of very topical issues. Peter Taylor-Gooby in the closing chapter outlines considerable convergence in government responses to these pressures, including new managerialism, quasi- and full privatisation, decentralisation, higher charges, cuts in entitlements etc. He identifies the recommodification of labour and the feminisation of poverty as prominent outcomes.

There is one analytical element which is underemphasised in the book, namely the political representation of welfare and anti-welfare demands through pressure and interest groups, social movements, labour movements and pressures from the representatives of industry, commerce and finance. Obviously this is not a political sociology text, but social policy has become a vibrant area of political and social conflict as its 'crisis' has unfolded. The strength of support for the Franco-German corporatist welfare model has been demonstrated recently in the successful popular opposition to the 1995 Juppé plans and Kohl's 1996 retrenchment proposals. The demand for social welfare is transmitted by social movements, at the ballot box and through the media, processes which should be a core element of policy analysis.

This is a readable, well-organised and original contribution to the field of cross national policy studies. It should be widely used by students, and offers much thought-provoking material for policy analysts.

V. George and S. Miller (eds.) (1994), *Social Policy Towards 2000: Squaring the Welfare Circle*, Routledge, London.

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Niels Ploug and Jon Kvist, *Social Security in Europe, Development or Dismantlement?* Kluwer Sovac Series on Social Security 3, The Hague, 1996, 100 pp., hard £27.00.

Niels Ploug and Jon Kvist (eds.), *Recent Trends in Cash Benefits in Europe*. The Danish National Institute of Social Research, Copenhagen, 1994, 152 pp., DKK90 paper.

These volumes from the Danish National Institute of Social Research complete the first phase of a project on social security in Europe, dealing with cash benefits in the Nordic countries, France, Germany, the Netherlands and the UK. Volumes 2–4 of the series (including *Recent Trends in Cash Benefits in Europe*) contain a large amount of the raw material generated by the project, while volume 1, *Social Security in Europe, Development or Dismantlement?*, presents some findings in a relatively digested form.

Development or Dismantlement is a slim volume, but its scope is very wide. Chapter 2 looks at the development of the welfare state across the countries studied, with a particular emphasis on Denmark. Chapter 3 summarises different theories of crisis and examines some responses. While chapter 3 presents some findings about attitudes to welfare which are drawn from *Recent Trends*, these chapters are oriented towards summarising the literature rather than presenting research findings. It is not until chapters 6 and 7 that the fruits of the research project are really apparent, and the reader gets some feel for the scale of the endeavour organised by the National Institute.

In chapter 4 a useful structure for conceptualising forms of financing in terms of the degree of 'socialisation' of insurance is presented, and results from the country studies are reported in terms of this structure. A striking feature is that, when forms of financing are tabulated by benefit and by country, there is more affinity across countries for each type of benefit, than within countries across types of benefit (Table 4.3). This implies that differences between countries' benefit systems are likely to arise because of different weights in the mix of benefits as well as because of different decisions about the structure and financing of any particular benefit. Thus British distinctiveness lies only partly in distinctive features of National Insurance; more important is the (increasing) weight given to means-tested benefits in the overall composition of provision.

One implication of this feature of benefit systems is that most countries have elements of universalism, selectivity based on the contributory principle, and means testing somewhere in their various benefits. It is possible to say that a particular benefit is based on one set of principles without being able to conclude that the country's whole system fits a particular welfare state 'model'. Throughout chapters 5, 6 (on unemployment benefits) and 7 (on old-age pensions), the authors draw on the features of three models (selective, residual and comprehensive) to describe particular benefits, making it clear that every country presents a mixture of features.

This presents an issue about the purpose and usefulness of 'modelling'. The most recognisably 'model-like' contributions to the classification of welfare states draw out connections between benefit structures and levels and (for example) other social provisions, macroeconomic policy and industrial and political structures. Because these different elements are argued to be mutually reinforcing, each model has a certain coherence. If a model is intended to illuminate the interrelationships between different elements in a structure or system, then it is unhelpful to describe a country's system as being a mixture of models.

An alternative approach is that models are treated as classification systems, guiding enquiry into different features of cash benefits and providing a framework for summarising those features. The problem with this approach is that the models lack explanatory power. One is left with the sense that the authors would have been better served by classifications purpose-built for their research questions. The 'forms of financing' analysis in chapter 4 is an example of a purpose-built classification which elucidates distinctions between different degrees of public sector involvement and thereby provides insights into the issues around privatisation of provision.

Recent Trends produces the reports of country respondents summarising the current state of the debate in the eight countries and giving an account of recent reforms to the cash benefit system. Naturally, each piece will date quickly, and the publishers appear to have recognised this by putting the book into print with some haste. The quality of the English has suffered as a result, and some of the text is hard to follow. However, this is a useful sourcebook for material which is not otherwise readily accessible.

Any comparative work on the welfare state will tend to reflect the assumptions and preoccupations of the originating country, but ethnocentrism is less pronounced in these reports than in most. This is partly a reflection of the use of country respondents and the increase in cross-country communication which

projects of this type promote. Perhaps it also reflects Denmark's position in the world of welfare states. Danish social policy thinking seems to have drawn eclectically from Swedish, German and British contributions, arriving at results which are both reflective of outside developments and unique to Denmark.

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Anne Hélène Gauthier, *The State and the Family: A Comparative Analysis of Family Policies in Industrialized Countries*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1996, 232 pp, hard £35.00.

Books on family policy are always welcome for it is the Cinderella of welfare state research. And comparative works on family policy are even more welcome, given that the study of social policy has now turned strongly comparative. Gauthier's comparative aim is daunting: she researches 22 countries over a time span of 100 years. Her goal is to demonstrate the changing nature of the relationship between the family and the state, and the role which demographic developments have played in that relationship. She focuses on four policy fields – cash benefits for families with children, provisions around maternity, child care and birth control – and examines them through a series of indicators which consist largely of the date on which policies were introduced/amended and the generosity (loosely defined to refer to money and duration of the benefit) of the relevant provisions.

What Gauthier attempts is not easy and in my view she does it well. From the outset, she takes care to define and delimit the particular policy fields which interest her. She then proceeds to compare these systematically across time and national frontiers. She also avoids (what I see as) the 'typologising trap'. Throughout the text the author builds up a picture which is nicely balanced between overview and detail and gives equal weight to variation and similarity. Rather than following strictly a quantitative approach, she, rightly in my view, allows herself the freedom to follow in detail the developments or debates in particular countries. The last chapter does a good job of bringing the different strands of the analysis together. Gauthier offers a four-fold classification of policies into pronatalist, traditional, egalitarian and non-interventionist.

There are two main points about Gauthier's approach on which I would be critical. The first concerns her understanding and treatment of the policy-making process. The second pertains to the causal line of analysis and, relatedly, what she makes of the demographic theme.

How political and politicised is family policy? While Gauthier's history and overview of interest groups around the family is valuable, policy making emerges as relatively straightforward. The impression which Gauthier's analysis leaves is more one of policy production than policy making. She attributes a high degree of importance to review bodies, special investigatory commissions and so on. While this draws the reader's attention to the role of experts and of international organisations such as the United Nations and the International Labour Organisation, the overall effect is somehow to de-emphasise the active political character of policy. In my view there is a space or a gap between background conditions, including experts and other actors and resources, and what finally passes into policy. This is a space which is filled by politics broadly

defined. While Gauthier accounts for all of the main actors, she fails to bring their power play to life (as Bahle (1995), for example, manages to do). In this regard the comparative welfare state literature would have helped Gauthier. For whatever its shortcomings, one thing which this literature accomplishes with distinction is to demonstrate that politics matters. So I can't help feeling that it is rather a pity that Gauthier misses the opportunity to locate family policy centrally within welfare state theorising and her own work within the comparative tradition of welfare state analysis.

My second problem is that it is hard to find a causal line of analysis in the text. Events, whether of a policy or general societal nature, tend to be described side by side or sequentially. But, more than this, it is not made fully clear why the family is at some times and in some places an important and particular focus of policy, and not at others. By implication this variation is in some way linked to demographic changes but, as Gauthier herself is very quick to point out, these are only part of the story. But what then are the other parts? Clearly, political interests and 'interest making' is one such other part and, for this reader at any rate, one of the most important questions is how issues around the family become politicised. Ideologies and value systems are another part of the story. Pro-natalism excepted, ideology is to all intents and purposes missing from this analysis. And it is rather astonishing, especially from the part of Europe where I now work, that anyone can write a book about family policy without a real discussion of social Catholicism. This all leads me to wonder how well the demographic focus has served Gauthier, especially in terms of conceptual sophistication and explanatory capacity. I feel the absence of a set of concepts through which the different factors which coalesce around family policy could be drawn together into particular lines of argumentation, to account for within and cross-country variation.

Overall though, as the author herself acknowledges, there is always something of a trade-off between breadth of coverage – and the range of this book is extensive, both temporally and geographically – and conceptual richness. Gauthier manages this trade-off better than most, providing information which is detailed and systematically comparative. At the end of the day, Gauthier gives us a very important source-book on the origins, development and contemporary face of family policy in the developed world. It is a book which should and will prove popular.

Thomas Bahle (1995), *Familienpolitik in Westeuropa: Ursprünge und Wandel im internationalen Vergleich*, Frankfurt/Main Campus.

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Robin Humphrey (ed.), *Families Behind the Headlines*, British Association, Sociology and Social Policy Section/Department of Social Policy Occasional Paper, University of Newcastle, 1996, v + 92 pp., £10.95 paper.

Families Behind the Headlines brings together eight papers presented at one of the annual meetings organised by the British Association for the Advancement of Science. One of the aims of recent meetings has been to present 'fundamentally important scientific material in an intelligible way to wider audiences than the

specialist and narrowly academic'. The papers produced as a result of the 1995 meeting certainly take on board this principle. The result is a publication that manages to cover a wide range of issues connected with the family in a concise, readable but challenging way.

Opening with a whistle-stop tour of data on the family (Peter Selman), the reader's attention is turned to parenting (Erica Haines, Kathy Mason and Cathy Stark); issues facing men (Susan Baines and Jane Wheelock; Norman Dennis); the changing – and sometimes unchanging nature – of the family (Janet Walker); aspects of violence within the families (Ruth Lewis; Laura Goldsack); and marital breakdown (Peter McCarthy).

What I found attractive about the collection of papers was not only the breadth of coverage, but the cohesiveness and readability of the document as a whole, in effect pulling together key, and sometimes apparently disparate, themes featured in the media on 'the family'. In comparing the simplicity of the media claims against the complexities of real life, the reader is encouraged to look forward on family policy rather than backwards into the idealised past.

A timely piece of work given media and political panic over the demise of the family, the authors contest a number of currently held assumptions. For example, in her paper Janet Walker questions a number of stereotypes: the single parent as a new phenomenon; the romantic view of the 'happy-ever-after family'.

Just two queries, rather than criticisms, come to mind. First, using media headlines is a useful tool to demonstrate how lacking in substance the debate sometimes is. However, media coverage warrants analysis in itself. Is coverage consistent across all media? How and why do these headlines appear? What effects do they have? Secondly, presenting information in a way that makes it accessible to a wider audience is one thing; getting them to read it is another!

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Karen Clarke, Gary Craig and Caroline Glendinning, *Small Change: The Impact of the Child Support Act on Lone Mothers and Children*. Family Policy Studies Centre, London, 1996, 47 pp., £9.50 paper.

There has been vociferous criticism of the Child Support Act since it began operation in 1993, but until now this has been conducted by men's groups such as Network against the Child Support Agency, and by the second families of absent parents. This small scale study by Clarke, Craig and Glendinning is a longitudinal evaluation of how the CSA has affected the lives of the lone mothers, and shows that they are equally critical.

This is the third stage of a study of lone mothers living on a range of social security benefits. The first round of interviews took place in March 1993, the second stage a year later, and the findings presented here are the 53 interviews which occurred in March 1995, when the CSA had been in operation for two years. While in the early interviews the mothers attributed the difficulties and delays in assessment times to the CSA's over-ambitious performance targets, the women now felt that the new system was neither more reliable nor efficient; and that the courts, with their sanctions for non-compliance, had been preferable. Assessments had been made in only 21 out of 63 cases (53 mothers, 63 absent parents), and only 1 out of 53 mothers had begun to receive regular mainte-

nance. From the perspective of these mothers, the Act had failed in all of its objectives: they were not encouraged back to work because of the loss of benefits and extra cash in coming off Income Support. They were strongly critical of the lack of criteria and guidance surrounding the provision of 'harm or undue distress'; each case was assessed on an individual basis. Some women became worse off through the loss of informal finances from their former partners. Some children lost out through reduced contact following the CSA intervention. Most importantly, there was no disregard of Child Support paid, so that mothers did not have any cash gains from the work of the Agency in collecting maintenance.

What this study lacks, in terms of standardised questions and large data sets, is made up for by the insight into the impact of the CSA on these women's lives over a two-year period.

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Anne Digby and John Stewart (eds.), *Gender, Health and Welfare*, Routledge, London, 1996, 239 pp., hard £40.00.

This is an edited collection of papers which originated in a conference of the same title in 1993. The editors provide an opening chapter outlining the major themes and approach of the book, and there follow a further eight chapters from a range of contributors. In their opening chapter the editors write that the volume is concerned with the 'exploration of a number of themes, including the gendered allocation of welfare resources in society and the role of family and state in influencing this division; the effect of gender in the creation and adoption of policies concerning health and welfare by pressure groups, political parties, and government at both local and national levels; and the extent to which the balance of voluntary and statutory bodies alters the nature of welfare, not least because of the differential involvement of men and women' (p. 1).

The chapters following on from this introduction vary in terms of focus and their ability to meet this claim. Johansson's chapter on excess female mortality in Meiji Japan and Victorian England speculates on the extent to which this excess relates not only to family structure, and the position of women, but also to the impact of governmental pro-family policy which reinforces a particular structure and, implicitly at least, places women at risk.

The other chapters are clearly located within Britain in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Two of these focus on particular women – Octavia Hill and Louisa Twining – highlighting the role of social networks in the philanthropic works of these women. Two chapters focus on organised labour movements – the work of the Workers' Birth Control Group, and the Labour Party – and three have a broader focus, with similar titles: focusing on 'poverty, health and the politics of gender in Britain 1870–1948' (Anne Digby); 'gender, welfare and old age in Britain, 1870s–1940s' (Pat Thane); and 'gender and welfare in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries' (Jane Lewis).

In reviewing an edited collection there seem to be two questions which have to be addressed. The first is whether the collection has a coherence which means that the sum of the parts is greater than the whole, that is, that when read together (as the reviewer must, but perhaps as readers mostly do not) the differ-

ent chapters collectively highlight new questions, illuminate new areas for analysis, or provide a new line of thought on an old issue. The second question is that of the quality of the chapters themselves, and the internal coherence of each contribution. This latter question may indeed be of greater relevance for a book destined, presumably, to be purchased by libraries rather than individuals, and read selectively by readers with different interests.

The chapters here are in themselves interesting. There is a wealth of engaging detail in these accounts of Victorian women philanthropists, the struggles and campaigns of the Workers' Birth Control Group, the Labour Party's concern with child welfare during the inter-war years in Britain. The chapter on excess female mortality in Meiji Japan and the relevance of mid-Victorian England as 'the model for how to manage women during development' (p. 52) is particularly interesting and raises a number of new questions concerning the relationship between gender, development and state policy making, as well as giving some intriguing insights into women's lives during this period in Japan's history.

Taken together, however, the collection does not really meet the promise made for it by Digby and Stewart in the opening pages – in particular, in the argument that comparative analysis is crucial, and the suggestion that the volume centres 'on Britain within a wider international setting' (p. 1). More contributions which actually picked up this comparative theme would have significantly contributed to the editors' claim that a gendered analysis within this international context is dispensable to the study of welfare. The particular strength of Johansson's chapter on female mortality in Meiji Japan and Victorian England is the perspective enabled by this comparative focus and the extent to which themes, once transferred across national boundaries, offer much greater potential for understanding the role of gender alongside other factors in the development of policy. Despite this, this is an interesting collection of papers which deserves to be used selectively for the detailed insight it offers into particular aspects of welfare history.

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David Marsland, *Welfare or Welfare State? Contradictions and Dilemmas in Social Policy*, Macmillan, Hampshire and London, 1996, ix + 262 pp., £45 hard, £14.99 paper.

Lady Thatcher welcomes this book enthusiastically as a telling exposé of the failings of state welfare and the damage it has done to the British people; she is slightly more cautious about endorsing the whole of David Marsland's package of 'reforms', amounting to a total demolition of the welfare state. Lady Thatcher's approval suggests that this book lays bare much of the implicit and often unacknowledged ideology which has co-ordinated so many attacks on welfare provision since 1979. The book should be read attentively, for it betrays what many influential politicians really think.

Even sympathetic readers will be put off by David Marsland's overblown rhetoric and swashbuckling style of argumentation. The welfare state, he says, is 'a lethal threat to our freedom'. It has 'made the British people a nation of greedy wastrels', and 'an ungovernable mob, bereft of values and scornful of rules'. It is

itself 'among the primary causes of unemployment'. It damages the economy, Marsland argues, creates an underclass, fails to help the needy, and destroys the dynamism necessary for a healthy and prosperous society. The rhetoric climaxes in a splendid mixed metaphor: 'It is time to call the immune systems of the free societies into action, and stop the cancer of state welfare in its tracks.'

This is all good, knock-about stuff, which would be fun in a school debating society. But the debate about welfare concerns people and their needs, human flourishing, and pain and powerlessness. The issues are too serious for flippancy. Marsland is deadly serious. We must believe that he really means it when he blames the British welfare state for virtually everything that is wrong with our society. We don't need it, we can't afford it, it doesn't work, and it 'inflicts damaging levels of moral and psychological harm, on its supposed beneficiaries' (p. 21). It is 'an enemy of society' (p. 108).

So what is Marsland's solution? Roll back the state, break monopolies and encourage 'real markets' where competing agencies ensure consumer sovereignty. The language is familiar, and authorities such as Herbert Spencer are deployed to support a return to the Dickensian age. Although the market will enable the vast majority of people to be self-supporting, a small number (perhaps 5–8 per cent) will require some strictly temporary assistance. The tacky Victorian distinction between 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor is here rehabilitated and deployed afresh, while Marsland calls for a reversal of 'the decay of shame as a mechanism of social control and positive motivation' (pp. 206–7).

State provision beyond regulation of standards and direct assistance to a tiny minority is deplored, and the operations of the market are regarded as uniformly benign. Marsland shows no serious interest in democratic accountability, or in local government, voluntary agencies or community organisations as suppliers of welfare. The market will provide all, for in the market the consumer is sovereign. The fact that American marketised healthcare is very much more expensive than the NHS is for Marsland an indication that in a free society people put more money into looking after their health. The fact that general standards of health are inferior in the US is not mentioned, nor is the fact that millions of the poor are effectively excluded.

Professor Marsland understands himself as a David taking on the Goliath of the Establishment. 'Radicals', he suggests, are responsible for decanting helpless people from institutions onto the street. The 'hysterical' report, *Faith in the City*, was the fruit of a 'theologically implausible alliance between religious leaders parading their delicate consciences and left-wing pressure groups'. Most 'social affairs experts', are 'implacable enemies of the family, of competition and of traditional British concepts of respectability, pride and shame, and right and wrong' (p. 120). Social workers as such are suspect; in the new system they are not to be used at all, as a matter of principle.

'An incoherent farrago of error, falsehood and fantasy' – thus Marsland sums up his critique of Oakley and Williams's *The Politics of the Welfare State* (1994). It would be tempting to apply these words to Marsland's own book. But it should not be dismissed out of hand. For many influential people actually think that way, and use evidence as Marsland does. It would be good if they were more in touch with the real world of pain and want and powerlessness, of despair and of hope, of care and of community, and less inclined to speak of 'the arguments of

the enemy', as if welfare policy were a battleground where the needs of the poor and marginalised are forgotten in the clangour of ideological warfare.

DUNCAN B. FORRESTER

University of Edinburgh

Theda Skocpol, *Social Policy in the United States: Future Possibilities in Historical Perspective*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1995, 326 pp., hard £25.00.

This book is a collection of essays most of which have been published elsewhere but are now conveniently assembled in one volume. The range of the themes, the methodology of analysis and the style and scrupulous scholarship exhibited in this volume give plenty of evidence to confirm Skocpol's achievement as the doyenne of social policy writers in the United States.

The range is very broad from themes such as state formation and social policy in the United States to a fascinating chapter on gender and the origins of modern social policies in Britain and the United States. There is also a chapter which is a distillation of her work on pensions for Civil War veterans and another on targeting within universalism: politically viable policies to combat poverty in the United States. The last part of the book focuses on the big issue of health insurance and health security and seeks to unravel the exceptional complexities of the vexed question of collective responsibility for health care in a society ostensibly committed to individualism.

As she explains in the introduction, the two groups Skocpol particularly feels need a broader education in social policy are the moralists and the technocrats. For moralists policy debates may be construed as clashes between big government versus the market or as combat between those who want to aid the needy and those who wish to reform their behaviour. For technocrats, social policy making is construed as a matter of undertaking objective research on the extent of social problems in order to devise optimal cost-efficient solutions.

Although moralists and technocrats view social policy in very different ways Skocpol considers they have an almost total lack of historical and political sensibility. Both moralists and technocrats tend to look at policy formation outside the context of America's historically changing government institution and without reference to broader political tendencies and alliances. Thus moralists are unable to understand why their version of the 'good' triumphs or fails to triumph over 'evil' at any given moment. Technocrats on the other hand feel no responsibility to consider matters of government feasibility or to take responsibility when the efficient solutions they propose are not accepted or lead to unwanted or unintended outcomes. Skocpol also considers that the lack of historical and political sensibility of both moralists and technocrats allows the moralists to retreat into shrill absolute cries when presented with political failure and the technocrats to retreat into the world of academia or think tanks when confronted with similar political failure.

The great intellectual achievement of this book is the inter-disciplinarity of the arguments, the crucial relevance of historical explanations and the ways in which Skocpol relates visionary goals in social policy to politically expedient realities.

GEOFFREY COOK

University College Dublin

Sue Goss and Chris Kent, *Health and Housing: Working Together? A Review of the Extent of Inter-agency Working*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, York/Policy Press, Bristol, 1995, iv + 57 pp., £11.50 paper.

Judith Hudson, Lynn Watson and Graham Allan, *Moving Obstacles: Housing Choices and Community Care*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, York/Policy Press, Bristol, 1996, iv + 43 pp., £11.95 paper.

Patricia Day, Rudolf Klein and Sharon Redmayne, *Why Regulate? Regulating Residential Care for Elderly People*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, York/Policy Press, Bristol, 1996, iv + 51 pp., £11.95 paper.

The published output of research projects funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation has grown considerably in recent years. The research and innovative development reports are aimed principally at policy makers and practitioners, but the academic readership must be substantial. The reports are characterised by sound research presented in an easily accessible form. These three publications do not depart from this well-established formula.

I seem to have been reading about co-ordination, integration and inter-agency collaboration for more than thirty years: it was the almost automatic response to perceived shortcomings in planning, in children's services, in health services and in the personal social services. Since the beginning of the 1990s, and specifically since the NHS and Community Care Act (1990), there have been reports, guidelines and circulars encouraging inter-agency approaches to service planning and provision. Most of this activity has been concerned with working relationships between social services departments and health authorities; much less attention has been paid to the need for closer relationships between health services and housing. This is surprising in view of the known connection between poor housing and health. *Health and Housing: Working Together?* attempts to fill the gap. Building on earlier work by the Office for Public Management, the authors interviewed eleven health authorities and, as far as boundary problems permitted, the corresponding housing authorities.

The paper gives a useful summary of the main policy and structural changes in health and housing, it examines the current inter-agency working (illustrated by case studies), it makes recommendations for action and it highlights examples of good practice. An 'Executive Summary' identifies the key issues and lists factors likely to promote inter-agency working and those likely to hinder it. Although the authors recognise that limited progress has been made, development has been very uneven and much remains to be done. The study found examples in which there was joint working at one level and not at others, and the difficulties were exacerbated by the much greater fragmentation resulting from policy and structural change. Frequently there was a lack of common understanding, and different systems for assessing need. Establishing effective inter-agency links took time and resources – both scarce commodities. Most of the specific recommendations for action stem not from this study but from one published three years earlier (Powell, 1992). These apart, there is much reliance on exhortation. Attempts to develop meaningful strategies had been hampered during the past decade by serious underfunding of social housing.

Moving Obstacles: Housing Choices and Community Care also points to the persistent shortage of suitable and affordable rented housing for people with physical impairment, mental health problems or learning disability. This study looks

at the housing preferences of 77 people, the majority of whom were selected on the basis of current housing need and a smaller number of people who had recently moved. The research is organised into four key themes: communication with 'the system'; housing expectations and options; negotiating a move; stability and long-term support. This use of themes, coupled with some well-chosen case studies, gives the study a coherence it might otherwise have lacked.

The overwhelming preference of the 57 people who wished to move was for self-contained housing. A much smaller number opted for shared supported housing, and a smaller number still expressed a preference for a residential care home. Only one person wanted placement in a private household. The influences on the respondents' housing choices are identified. The study examines the major sources of advice and assistance available to those planning a move, and emphasises the lack of comprehensive written information about housing options and local support services. There is an interesting discussion of the obstacles facing people attempting to change their accommodation, and the factors which contribute to a successful outcome are identified. The length and complexity of the process of securing appropriate housing means that persistence on the part of applicants is the chief requirement for success. Help from an informed and committed professional also eases the process. The policy conclusions are arranged according to the same four themes identified earlier and there are some suggestions for service developments.

Why Regulate? Regulating Residential Care for Elderly People is cogently argued with a balanced approach to what is a complex and sometimes controversial subject. It starts from the position that regulation has become a key issue in social care, and aims to provide a context for the DOH's review of the regulatory system. The arguments for regulation are rehearsed and three regulatory systems are identified. In all systems of regulation a balance has to be struck between policing, rules and stringency, on the one hand, and consultancy, discretion and accommodation, on the other. Regulation is a form of social control, but trust is always an essential element. The authors see no viable alternative to some form of public regulation; accreditation schemes and self-regulation should be regarded as complementary to a public system. The main criticisms made of the current system are variations in the standards that are applied and in their interpretation; there are also variations in the quality of inspections and inspection units. These variations lead to arguments for national standards, but it is essential to maintain a balance between the desire for greater uniformity and the need to retain a degree of flexibility.

These three studies vary in style and approach, but they share a number of valuable characteristics: they are short and pithy, they are clearly written and, while they are not cheap, they are reasonably priced. They are fairly specialised in nature and will appeal to a professional audience. For undergraduates and postgraduate they should provide useful adjuncts to more general books on housing and residential accommodation.

Powell M. (1992), *Health Alliances: Report to the Second Health Gain Standing Conference 1992*, London Office for Public Management.

NORMAN JOHNSON

University of Portsmouth

Janie Percy-Smith (ed.), *Needs Assessments in Public Policy*, Open University Press, Buckingham, 1996, vii + 149 pp., £40.00 hard, £12.99 paper.

In recent years 'needs assessment' has become an overused phrase, joining terms such as 'community care' in having such a proliferation of meanings and uses as to be meaningless when used without explanation and qualification. It can be used at the policy level to inform resource allocation decisions; in commissioning and planning to guide service development; and to allocate service to individuals. The first two levels are often interlinked.

This collection of papers, all but one by members of the Policy Research Institute of Leeds Metropolitan University, 'is intended to be of practical assistance to those practitioners and policy makers who are grappling with the difficult task of undertaking needs assessment in an environment in which there is little shared understanding of what constitutes social need or guidance on how to undertake needs assessment' (p. 9). The focus is upon needs assessment at the population or group level, including geographical and shared interest communities.

Three chapters introduce the theoretical, contextual and methodological issues. Six chapters then cover practical examples from community care, health, community needs, housing, legal services and labour market/training needs. Most include an introduction to the policy context and why needs assessment has become relevant, a description and examples of the main methods employed in needs assessment and a discussion of pertinent issues. A brief conclusion summarises the main issues. The book is generally clearly written and well presented. Despite a number of ideological flourishes, it is well rooted in the reality of using needs assessment as a practical tool to improve public services. The variety of examples is a particular strength.

The examples show, perhaps unintentionally, the extent to which 'needs assessment' is a generic term for a wide range of activities. One chapter emphasises the importance of using community needs assessments to empower people; another shows the extent to which housing needs assessments are professional led. In a book on population needs assessment, the chapter on community care devotes three pages to individual assessment and two pages to population assessment! There are two serious issues here. First, whether social care commissioning agencies are sufficiently attuned to the 'population' perspective that their new role – no longer providers – requires. Secondly, what the link is, or should be, between individual and population needs assessment.

The focus of health needs assessment on disease and the medical model is criticised and a more social model, with a community and multi-agency focus, advocated. A combined approach, as the author acknowledges, is the ideal and health agencies have some way to go to achieve that. In particular, much lip service is paid to 'consumer views'. However, we also need to distinguish between health needs assessments that are concerned with promoting and maintaining health and preventing ill health, for which the social model provides the most appropriate framework, and health *care* needs assessments which are concerned with the clinical management and treatment of ill health and disease.

There are omissions. The book does not really get to grips with the apparent contradiction between the desire to use needs assessment in a way that empowers the populations whose needs are being assessed and the fact that needs assessment often involves the specialist interpretation of complex information.

Likewise, decentralisation implies a *central* resource allocating mechanism which takes into account local variation in needs. But the health service has had limited success in developing robust allocation formulae that can take account of the randomness of health events in small areas.

Needs Assessments in Public Policy touches onto wide policy issues but its strength is in its linking of these to the practical use of needs assessment as a tool for the improvement of public services. 'Needs assessments are of no benefit in and of themselves ...' (p. 145).

DAVID S. GORDON

Lanarkshire Health Board

Tom Begg, *Housing Policy in Scotland*, John Donald Publishers, Scotland, 1996, 239 pp., £16.00 paper.

In Scotland, where the traditional house form was (like other European countries) the tenement flat, housing has continued to develop in a different way from the rest of Britain. Since the First World War a higher proportion of public sector housing was built and a lower proportion of Scots have moved into owner occupation. This book has both a historical and a contemporary focus. It examines not only the development of Scottish housing throughout the twentieth century but also recent housing policy, particularly the situation since 1979 when the Thatcher government came to power.

Although the book provides much interesting and useful information, it is marred by a strong political bias and a somewhat limited historical focus. In the foreword, the Secretary of State for Scotland, Michael Forsyth, claims that the work is an attempt to provide an explanation for the development in Scotland of proportionately the largest state housing system of any non-communist country and an assessment of how much has been achieved in retrieving this situation as a result of the policies pursued by the Conservative government since 1979. A key claim is that municipal housing and planning policies since the Second World War have been the cause of the economic and social problems inherent in modern Scotland.

This does not make for a balanced history of Scottish housing development, which would need to address in more depth reasons for the differences and similarities between Scotland and the rest of Britain. In this book, as in most literature on Scottish housing, there is a concentration on Glasgow and the West of Scotland, with an inadequate analysis of variations within Scotland and between Scottish cities. Another fault is the inclusion of rather too much material on the development of the Scottish Special Housing Association, which became part of Scottish Homes in 1988. The author has served on the management boards of both these bodies since 1980 and published a book on the history of the SSHA in 1987. Although the SSHA was important in the development of housing in Scotland, the role of other agencies (for example, that of the various local authorities) in contributing to the different housing development within Scotland was more important and this is not given adequate coverage. The definitive analysis of the development of housing throughout Scotland in the twentieth century remains to be written.

ANNETTE O'CARROLL

Heriot-Watt University

Steve Leach, Howard Davis and Associates, *Enabling or Disabling Local Government*, Open University Press, Buckingham, 1996, vii + 184 pp., £45.00 hard, £15.00 paper.

This book is a welcome addition to the series Public Policy and Management, which should be familiar to social policy specialists. It seeks to 'make sense of the unprecedented amount of change in ... the world of local government' and provide 'an overview of where local government as an institution is going'. At first it seems an impossible quest as the principal change-driver, the central government, operates by a process of 'policy drift, opportunism and inconsistency'. And yet within the twists and turns of government policy, it is possible to discern a number of rational visions or strategic roles for local government which may (perhaps unconsciously) inform official and others' thinking about local government. It is these various perceptions about the role and purpose of local government which are the essential focus of this book (though the analysis does not go so far as to consider the neo-Marxist models of local government).

The book is in two parts. In Part 1 different authors provide chapters on general aspects of local government: recent policies, the contract culture, reorganisation, the revival of local community concept; and above all is a chapter by Leach which provides the analytical framework which underpins the whole work. Part 2 follows a similar format, but here contributors focus on individual local service areas: education, housing, social services for older people, police and urban regeneration. Much of this material will be familiar to social policy specialists, but the chapters are useful in themselves for up-dating and they are useful in general for their application and exemplification of some of the analytical elements from Part 1, especially Leach's chapter 3. This chapter, for many readers (including councillors, to whom the book is dedicated) is the least straightforward and at the same time, it is the most important since it spells out both the problem being addressed and the solution. The problem is the inconsistency of government policy and its lack of a conception of the fundamental purpose and role of local government. Leach (building on earlier collaborative work for the Rowntree Foundation) outlines a set of principles which provide a conceptual framework: a framework of strategic choices for local authorities and a set of criteria to judge government policy. Thus, among the alternatives, local authorities may be predominantly service providers (with or without a commercial orientation), or they may embrace an 'enabling' role, or perhaps seek a wider community governmental or leadership role etc. What is not clear is who is to exercise these 'choices for the future'. If local government, that would make sense. Equally, if central government, this could provide welcome shape and consistency to government policy. But it carries the risk that the government could adopt a very narrow ('disabling') concept of local government, leaving it with a merely residual role.

This book addresses an issue at the heart of local government and does so in a positive way. The changes facing local authorities are not all threatening: some are helpful, others positively liberating (see, e.g., p. 160). On the other hand, it does forecast a diminishing provider role for local authorities, and, a further round of reorganisation. Two caveats to conclude: while there is considerable (even excessive) treatment of structure and reorganisation, the experiences of Wales and Scotland are virtually ignored; and there are a number of typograph-

ical errors (pp. 4, 35, 39) including a reference to Compulsive Competitive Tendering!

TONY BYRNE

Somerset College of Arts and Technology

Jane Kelsey, *Economic Fundamentalism*, Pluto Press, London, 1996, vi + 407 pp., £14.99 paper.

The book's subtitle – *The New Zealand experiment – a world model for structural adjustment?* is more revealing of its contents than the title. The New Zealand experiment was a rapid and radical liberalisation of the economy incorporating: substantial freeing-up of financial, labour, external trade and foreign exchange markets, large reductions in the direct government intervention in every economic and social sphere, all combined with general fiscal and monetary restraint. Specific elements have included: substantial cuts in nominal levels of welfare benefits; removal of trade protections and subsidies; an Employment Contracts Act which emasculated the unions and thence collective bargaining; privatisation of most state enterprises (including all the utilities, railways, forestry and the HMSO-equivalent government publisher); corporatisation of hospitals and government research organisations; and statutory independence for the central bank (which was legislated to focus thereafter on inflation control only). So in just a decade New Zealand, one of the original homes of the welfare state, went from having a more regulated and subsidised economy than Britain, to being more like a stereotypical USA of the South Pacific. What may also surprise JSP readers is that the programme was initiated by a Labour government (1984–90). The National, traditionally Tory government (1990–present) did however significantly accelerate the process.

Has the experiment worked? In part the debate is about whether short-term pain will be outweighed by long-term gains. It is clear that many of the consequences so far have not been good at all. For example, average GDP growth has remained below the OECD average, and unemployment (and welfare benefit receipt) has remained stubbornly high (particularly so for the non-white population). Income inequality grew faster than in virtually all OECD countries, and poverty increased significantly, with charitable food banks becoming widespread. Against this, inflation has remained below the OECD during the 1990s, and some groups have enjoyed significant real income growth. The strong growth of the economy and decline in unemployment in the last two years provide some new support for the long-term payoff view, but it remains to be seen whether the trends will be sustained or be a business-cycle blip.

Many disputes about the successes of the experiment are distributional in essence. One side emphasises the real gains made by a significant majority, and the other side points to the failure to (attempt to) secure gains for everyone, and to growing social cleavages with adverse long-term consequences. The issues are very similar to those concerning assessments of the changes in Britain during the 1980s, though the extent and speed of change and relative number of losers has been much larger in New Zealand.

The value of this book is not so much Kelsey's considered verdict on the experiment (resoundingly negative) but the comprehensive and detailed documentation of what, who and how. It should be widely read by supporters and

opponents of neo-liberal structural adjustment programmes – there are lessons for both sides. Academic readers will also find the book a fascinating study of policy making, well set in its economic, social and political contexts. All readers will probably be struck by how a small coalition of like minds can seize the initiative, and then maintain it amidst continuing controversy. Elements of the story will be familiar to British readers, but their impact is magnified in New Zealand's much smaller society. There is, for example, greater concentration of power in the executive (assisted by having a unicameral legislature), much closer co-operation between the agents of change in the government, the Treasury and the corporate elites, greater control over information, and a less developed critical tradition.

Kelsey observes that many of the policies are now inherently entrenched and irreversible – privatisation and deregulation of financial and foreign exchange markets are largely one-way tickets. And this has perhaps stymied development of detailed manifestos of alternative policies. Nonetheless, perhaps Kelsey's next book will explore in greater detail why New Zealand's neighbour, Australia, chose a more social democratic, corporatist, strategy in the face of similar pressures, with apparently greater success, and consider what lessons may be drawn from it for New Zealand's future. It will also be interesting to find out whether the change to a proportional representation electoral system from first-past-the-post – the first election under the new system is due late 1996 – will bring significant changes.

STEPHEN JENKINS

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Ken Blakemore and Robert Drake, *Understanding Equal Opportunity Policies*, Prentice Hall/Harvester Wheatsheaf, Hemel Hempstead, 1996, ix + 242 pp., £11.95 paper.

As publication number two in a series of introductory student texts entitled 'Contemporary Social Policy', this volume might come as something of a surprise. Set alongside housing, health, education and today's inevitable themes of the mixed economy of welfare and community care, surely the title 'Understanding Equal Opportunities' is a cuckoo in the nest? Just what is it that a course on social policy needs to do with the theme of equal opportunities (employment opportunities, not service delivery opportunities) and how does it fit within the intellectual frameworks of the field?

Blakemore and Drake provoke 'hard questions' of this sort, but whether they address them satisfactorily and indeed whether anyone could reasonably be expected to do so in the compass of a short student text, is another matter.

The structure of the book and its overall organisation are admirably clear. The key question is whether and how equal opportunities policies make a difference. After a context-setting introduction, there is a review of the concepts and models of equal opportunity and a series of chapters dealing with equal opportunities in relation to gender, 'race' disability and age. A chapter on implementing equal opportunity policies in the workplace, commenting on the now fashionable theme of managing diversity, and a concluding evaluation complete the volume. We might want to lift an eyebrow at the claim that the research base on sexual orientation, religious affiliation and social class is too underdeveloped to

merit full chapter treatment (p. 5), but it is a real achievement, given the way that academic specialisation has worked, to bring these different discrimination literatures together and to begin to tease out the lessons that juxtaposition might offer.

Interestingly, the authors do go a little further. We get a glimpse of Northern Ireland's legislation on religious discrimination and a rare acknowledgement of the strategic importance it could have in understanding the possibilities and the pitfalls of strategies in some ways stronger than those in the rest of the UK. But the way that this is handled gives no hint of the academic literature that is now available to cast practical light on some of the issues set out more abstractly in the concepts chapter.

Among the substantive chapters, those on race and disability work will work particularly well for a student audience, who will also be informed by the cross national comparisons, and pick up lessons on evaluating contrasting arguments en route. The chapter on age discrimination clearly had to have a different format, since age has not been given public acknowledgement as a basis of employment discrimination in the same way. It contains some thought-provoking discussion of what the goals of an equal opportunity policy, if they are not only proportionality, might be with respect to age (p. 176). The gender chapter might have made a neat bridge – stressing similar legislative provisions to the earlier two, yet raising questions about ultimate goals in the way of the age chapter. Instead it elects to spend much time documenting the position of women in the labour market, particularly in a Europe-wide context. It is almost as though the two Equal Opportunities Commissions did not exist, and, equal pay apart, the legislative debates and tribunal cases, the dilemmas of which are described in parallel chapters, did not happen.

I would be selective about what else will help students in this text. The chapter on concepts is not the last word, but in a short time it covers more and does it better than most of the alternatives available. It is a pity that the authors did not make their conceptual frameworks work more for them in the substantive chapters and return to consolidate them instead of adding an implementation chapter. Specialists will be likely to object to omissions. For me, a striking one was Cynthia Cockburn (1991), whose work not only brings the debate on equal opportunities to life in real settings, but discusses the 'long and short agendas' in a way that potentially avoids some of the pitfalls of other conceptual distinctions on offer.

Finally, that nagging question about equal opportunity and social policy remains. Social policy, say the authors, has neglected connections between the employment market, public policy and human welfare. They suggest that work is a form of welfare, and that we should consider the transformation of work in social welfare terms. Because I would so wholeheartedly agree, I am left dissatisfied. This is undoubtedly a useful text, but it is not the book that takes that particular claim further forward.

Cynthia Cockburn (1991), *In the Way of Women: Men's Resistance to Sex Equality in Organisations*, Macmillan, London.

CELIA DAVIES

Open University

Michael Sullivan, *The Development of the British Welfare State*, Harvester Wheatsheaf, Hemel Hempstead, 1996, xi + 284 pp., £12.50 paper.

With the title *The Development of the British Welfare State* readers might be surprised to learn that this history essentially begins in 1945. The book is a political and social history of the welfare state since the 1940s with one chapter devoted to the early-twentieth-century ideologies which led to the idea of a welfare state. The first part of the book chronicles the politics and history of the successive administrations. Part II has chapters on the welfare state services while there is a short concluding section which looks at current trends and prospects for the future in which Sullivan discusses the implications of markets and consumerism for the welfare state idea.

One wishes that Sullivan had justified his decision to start the book in the 1940s. Although the book is clearly aimed at the introductory student market the first chapter 'Before the Welfare State' is too short to deal adequately with New Liberalism, Ethical Socialism and other turn of the century ideologies which were so important in preparing the way for state welfare. Part of the justification for the starting point of 1945 might have included a section on the nature of welfare states. I feel that the detailed policy chapters would have been improved by a longer historical sweep so that the Poor Law and other important influences on post-war social policy were encompassed. The best chapters in *The Development of the British Welfare State* are those on education where Sullivan is able to draw with good effect on work he has done on educational politics and history.

Most of the student readers will not have a clue as to who the personalities Sullivan quotes and refers to were. Biographical notes should have been provided on Attlee, Bevan, Crosland, Crossman, Dalton, Macleod and all the other characters in this 'Welfare State Saga'. They will look in vain in the index where Beveridge is the only personality to get a mention. But then a 1-page index for a book of nearly 300 pages is completely inadequate.

Each chapter opens with a chronology table which would have been very useful if only the dates were correct. In the first table, at the beginning of chapter 1, the wrong date is given for the formation of the Fabian Society while the date of the first Labour government is brought forward three years to 1921. Similarly in chapter 2 the date of the formation of the wartime coalition government is advanced a year to 1939. The chronology in the Personal Social Services chapter has the Seebohm departments opening in 1972, not 1971, while the housing chapter informs us that the late 1940s saw 'the birth of council housing' ignoring the inter-war council housing legislation and fact that in the late 1930s 11 per cent of all housing was provided by the public sector (Johnson, 1994). Chapter 10 has the date of the National Assistance Act as 1946 not 1948. All these errors are in bold at the beginning of chapters. The text itself contains errors on the detail of policy. To select a few: the Black Report on health inequalities was not commissioned by the Thatcher government but by David Ennals when he was Secretary of State for Health (p. 193), the Barclay Report was published in 1982 not 1980 and Sir Peter Barclay is a solicitor not a banker (p. 201).

In the 'time squeezed' 1990s it is obviously a temptation for academics to recycle material and Sullivan repeats here a number of short passages which

have appeared in his previous books. For example, sections of the chapter on Personal Social Services, pages 205–8 are largely the same as pages 118–21 and pages 128–9 of his *Sociology and Social Welfare* (Sullivan, 1987). More striking is the fact that the author and the publisher give no acknowledgement that pages 63–87 of chapter 3 are virtually identical to pages 71–99 of his book *The Politics of Social Policy* (Sullivan, 1992).

Over the last four years several books have appeared which offer authoritative accounts of the post-war welfare state. Rodney Lowe's was the first account to draw on primary sources (Lowe, 1993). Nicholas Deakin has revised his *The Politics of Welfare*, Nicholas Timmins has produced an elegant and definitive history while Howard Glennerster has produced a stimulating re-assessment of the period (Deakin, 1994, Timmins, 1995; Glennerster, 1995). Given these publications one has to ask what is the point of this book? In the acknowledgements Michael Sullivan writes that it was produced in some haste in order to count in the 1996 Research Assessment Exercise. Noel Malcom has criticised the RAE for producing 'unoriginal interpretative rehashes of what is already known' and sadly much of this book fits this description.

N. Deakin (1994), *The Politics of Welfare*, Harvester Wheatsheaf, Hemel Hempstead.

H. Glennerster (1995), *British Social Policy since 1945*, Blackwells, Oxford.

P. Johnson (ed.) (1994), *Twentieth Century Britain: Economic, Social and Cultural Change*. Longman, London.

R. Lowe (1993), *The Welfare State in Britain since 1945*, Macmillan, London.

N. Malcom (1996), 'The word mountain', *Prospect*, August/September.

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Neil Lunt and Douglas Coyle (eds.), *Welfare and Policy: Research Agendas and Issues*, Taylor and Francis, London, 1996, vii + 209 pp., £39 hard, £13.95 paper.

Based on contributions to the Conference of the Institute for Research in the Social Services at York in 1994, this volume provides commentaries on the influence and effectiveness of recent policy measures and seeks to illuminate future agendas for policy and research. It is divided into two sections. Under the unprepossessing title of 'Old Agendas', the first covers the progress of internal market reforms in the NHS; the effectiveness of policies on alcohol taxation, and of measures for dealing with homelessness and drug abuse; an international overview of means testing for social assistance; and the financing and philosophical underpinnings of community care. The second section, on 'New Issues', contains discussions of market testing in social security; accountability in the public services; ethnicity and community care; future prospects for social policy in the EU; and a 'critical agenda' for future welfare debates. These thus form a rather motley set of papers, linked mainly through their origins in work undertaken at IRSS. Apart from inevitable variations in the calibre and interest of individual contributions, the collection is marred by occasional but irritating grammatical errors which should have been picked up at the (sub-)editorial stage.

The volume starts with an engaging discussion by David Mayston of the problems created for the NHS by the imposition of inadequately tested internal market proposals. Arguing that the reforms represented a triumph of conviction over knowledge, Mayston suggests that the behaviour of such key elements in the internal market as GP fundholders and NHS Trusts has proved more complex than their creators had anticipated. The internal market operates differently from the 'perfect' market assumptions of standard economic theory and we are still struggling to understand its nature. Mayston's strictures are perhaps best summed up by his suggestion that we have moved from an NHS where doctors were responsible for bringing about benefits to patients, managers for getting the work done, and finance directors for ensuring expenditure remained within budget, to one where doctors tend to regard it as unethical to be cost-conscious, managers assume that 'more must mean better' and finance directors have no precise notion of the relationship between costs and clinical activities.

Elsewhere in Section I, McLaverty, Rhodes and Third provide a sobering analysis of the likely outcome of current proposals to use the private rented sector to house homeless families. Pointing out that many private landlords are dissatisfied with the rents they can charge at present, the authors conclude that any reductions in rent levels resulting from changes to the housing benefit system may, rather than encouraging new landlords to enter the market, force existing landlords to leave the private sector. Eardley's use of comparative data to set UK policy on means testing within an international context also raises interesting speculations, although his analysis ultimately seems rather limited, particularly in its failure to develop the material beyond a mainly descriptive level. The remaining chapters provide thorough, though rather mechanical, overviews of literature or recent legislation which add little that is new to our understanding of policies on alcohol, drugs and community care.

In Section II, Sainsbury and Kennedy's analysis of market testing in social security suggests benefits occur where the 'customer' is another branch of DSS; but points also to problems in applying market testing to other aspects of the service, where an emphasis on financial performance may for example lead to a deterioration in activities that are less amenable to measurement. Market testing will only succeed if 'quality' is accorded the same importance as economy and there is little evidence this is happening. Lightfoot provides an interesting and theoretically informed discussion of the notion of accountability in the public sector, highlighting the tensions inherent in the differing perspectives of professionals and managers. Atkin's broadside against social policy's 'neglect of race' makes some shrewd though at times also slightly hackneyed points about the way in which the discipline's development has led to a failure to recognise the needs of different social groups; and outlines ways in which the restructuring of community care may lead to difficulties for ethnic minorities in their receipt of services.

Ditch offers an elegant overview of the place of social policy in the process of European integration, its development to date and its prospects for the future, affirming the need for a strong social dimension within a single European market and maintaining an intriguingly ambiguous stance on social policy convergence. Small's concluding presentation of a 'critical welfare agenda' manages to forge an unlikely set of reflections on neoconservative ascendancy, competing

social policy paradigms, postmodernism, multidisciplinary, and the organisation of research into a stimulating overview of possible future directions for social policy investigation and analysis.

Overall, this emerges as a somewhat unfocused though mainly worthwhile collection, with most of the best papers to be found in Section II.

ALEX ROBERTSON

University of Edinburgh.

Sheying Chen, *Social Policy of the Economic State and Community Care in Chinese Culture*, Avebury, Aldershot, 1996, v + 335 pp., £39.95 Hard

'Community Care for the Elderly in Urban China: Myth or Reality' was the title suggested originally for this book. It should have been chosen, as it would have provided a more accurate reflection of the book's contents. The focus is very much on urban China and there is no attempt to discuss issues of 'Chinese culture' in the wider context of Hong Kong, Taiwan, the ethnic Chinese communities of South East Asia, or indeed those of London, Sydney or Vancouver.

In the People's Republic of China the *Danwai* or work unit has been a key mechanism for integrating the economic and social systems and meeting the welfare needs of the urban population. This is quite unlike Titmuss' classic analysis which identified occupational welfare, in capitalist societies, as accruing primarily to those placed most advantageously in the job market. It is also the reason why the economic reforms which have been gathering momentum since October 1984, when the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party announced its intention to push forward with urban reform based on its rural reform achievements, have had such profound implications for community-based services in China. The author points out that in urban China an independent welfare system has begun to develop even though there exists no tradition of voluntary non-governmental organisations or professional services as in western countries.

Amongst the change factors influencing current developments in China's welfare system the author identifies the aging population, urbanisation, a restructuring of family life as the country's infamous 'One Child' policy gives rise to the so-called '4-2-1' urban family structure (i.e. four grandparents, two parents, and one child), and changing social norms concerning the status of women. Perhaps most significantly of all, there is the impact of changing values as the country moves rapidly to embrace the norms of a full-fledged market economy. One consequence of these changes on the occupation-based welfare system of the 'iron rice bowl' and 'eating out of the common big pot' has been the development of community care with 'Chinese characteristics'. This, the author describes, is an approach which, unlike the West, has not been a part of a process of de-institutionalisation and has emphasised the tradition of Chinese familism. It has restricted the state's role to that of supporting statutory, occupation-based income provision for the retired and social relief for the childless elderly, and a close liaison between the organs of local government and neighbourhood populations.

Despite presenting some interesting ideas this book is not an easy read. The organisation of material is often poor, with, for example, an extensive examination of the term 'community care' occurring in the book's final section. There is

an unnecessary repetition of material and the discussion tends to lose its focus occasionally. Chapter 1 on 'Community Care in the West' is not really about the West at all, but is almost exclusively descriptive material about the United Kingdom and therefore will not be of much interest to anyone already familiar with the UK welfare system.

The lack of an index undermines the book's usefulness as a reference work. Although, in Appendix 1, there is an outline of research about ageing in China which is arranged according to topics such as health care, modernisation and ageing, the 'One Child' policy, and the care of childless and single elderly. This will be a useful reference for anyone not familiar with the literature on Chinese social policy who would like to undertake further study into a particular area of ageing in China.

BRIAN BREWER

City University of Hong Kong

Sarah Jarvis and Stephen P. Jenkins, *Do the Poor Stay Poor? New Evidence about Income Dynamics from the British Household Panel Survey*, ESRC Research Centre on Micro-social Change, University of Essex, 1995, 40 pp. £10.00 paper.

The fourth dimension – time – has only recently come on to the agenda in Britain in the study of low income and poverty. Yet as Robert Walker states, 'without taking time into account...it is impossible to develop policies that successfully tackle the multiple causes of [poverty]' (Walker, 1994). In the US studies specifically looking at 'welfare dynamics' – following 'welfare' recipients in and out of benefit – have a much longer history dating back to the early 1980s (Bane and Ellwood, 1983). Tracking those on low income over time requires access to longitudinal studies which contain appropriate income data. In the US, the Panel Study on Income Dynamics (PSID), in particular, goes back to the 1960s. In Britain there was no comparable survey generating longitudinal data until the advent of the British Household Panel Survey with a first wave in 1991.

Following the availability of data from the BHPS and the emergence of longitudinal administrative data, studies are beginning to emerge which look at the dynamics of poverty. Some, like many of the studies in the US, have focused on 'dependency' on means tested benefits (Ashworth, Walker and Trinder, 1995; Noble, Cheung and Smith, 1996). This booklet by Jarvis and Jenkins takes a wider approach looking at two waves of the BHPS (1991 and 1992) and examining people on low income as a whole rather than concentrating on benefit recipients. In particular they look at the extent to which those on a low income in 1991 remain in the same predicament a year later and the extent to which there is upward and downward mobility. Their declared aim is to provide 'a longitudinal complement to the cross-section income distribution' provided by the DSS's *Households Below Average Income Series*. The authors take important steps towards achieving this aim. Thus much care is taken to develop income variables for this study which are comparable to those used in the HBAI methodology and these are then exhaustively validated.

Moreover, even over the short time frame of their analysis, important substantive findings emerge. There is, for example, substantial short-range income mobility over the year – more indeed than in comparable studies in the US.

Because of mobility the experience of low income at either one or both time points is greater than cross-sectional data would suggest. Yet we are left wanting more. Although the authors begin to outline those at risk of being low income 'stayers' (e.g., lone parents or elderly people) and those likely to be 'escapers' (married couple families or those already in work), I would have welcomed something more detailed perhaps including some multivariate analysis. The authors are, however, well aware of the work to be done and we can expect much work in this area in the near future.

K. Ashworth, R. Walker and P. Trinder (1995), *Benefit Dynamics in Britain: Routes On and Off Income Support*, CRSP 253 Loughborough University Centre for Research in Social Policy.

M. J. Bane, and D. Ellwood (1983), *The Dynamics of Dependence*, Urban Systems Research and Engineering Inc., Cambridge, MA.

M. Noble, S. Y. Cheung, and T. Smith (1996), *Origins and Destinations: Social Security Benefit Dynamics*, Departmental Working Paper University of Oxford Department of Applied Social Studies and Social Research.

R. Walker, with K. Ashworth (1994), *Poverty Dynamics: Issues and Examples*, Avebury, Aldershot.

MICHAEL NOBLE

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John Hills (ed.), *New Inequalities: The Changing Distribution of Income and Wealth in the United Kingdom*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996, xxv + 394 pp., £50.00 hard, £16.95 paper.

One of the most striking changes in British society in recent years has been the dramatic increase in income inequality, which is unprecedented by comparison with contemporary international experience or recent domestic history. During the 1980s the number of people living in poverty doubled as the real living standards of those at the bottom of the income distribution stagnated whereas those closer to the top experienced very substantial increases. Public awareness of these developments was heightened by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's *Inquiry into Income and Wealth* (see *JSP* review, 24:3, pp. 443–6). This book now provides more detailed coverage of many of the key research projects that were supported by the Foundation to investigate trends in the distribution of income and wealth.

Atkinson sets the tone for the book with an ambitious essay about the economic theory of income distribution. One of his conclusions is that the failure to incorporate sufficient knowledge about the behaviour of economic actors places severe constraints on the confidence one can have about any future policy options that might be considered. This is followed by a much more detailed empirical picture of what has been happening to income inequality in Britain by Cowell *et al.* In particular, they highlight the so-called 'disappearing middle class' phenomenon that distinguishes between affluent households with access to work and increasingly poverty-stricken ones on the margins of the labour market.

The next two chapters examine the degree to which fluctuations in price levels have differential consequences. Crawford outlines 'the extent and pattern of differences in the cost-of-living for subgroups of the population' (p. 100), whereas Borooah *et al.* ask whether some regions of the UK are less expensive than others in the sense that 'a given basket of commodities can be bought in them for a smaller outlay of money' (p. 103). Both contributions make it clear that the impact of inflation is not uniform across income groups and regions.

Many analyses of income inequality rely on one or more indicators of equivalised household disposable income. However, this is essentially an abstract concept derived from information about earnings, investments, benefits and household composition. The next five chapters, therefore, investigate various components of income. Gosling *et al.* document the growing gap between the wages of skilled versus unskilled men since the late 1970s and show that although this can be partly explained in terms of an increasing labour market premium on knowledge and skills there are other as yet barely discernible factors at work. In contrast, Harkness *et al.* focus on assessing the implications of the 'sharp rise in the labour force participation of women' (p. 158), and report that now women's earnings form a larger share of total family incomes they make a significant contribution to reducing poverty and inequality. Gregg and Wadsworth explore in greater detail one of the most striking characteristics of the increase in income inequality – the concentration of work in fewer households – while Meager *et al.* focus on the rapid growth of self-employment income, which may in part be itself a consequence of the growing polarisation between work-rich and work-poor families. Finally, Evans looks in detail at the effects of the 1986 social security changes on family incomes.

The next two chapters investigate the impact of income inequality at a local level, Green focuses on the changing geography of poverty and wealth during the 1980s. She confirms the very considerable degree of continuity in spatial patterns of poverty, but also draws attention to the very significant increase in the 'degree, extent and intensity of poverty in inner London and the largest metropolitan centres outside the capital' (p. 289). Noble and Smith take this perspective even closer to the ground in their micro-study of the two contrasting areas of Oldham and Oxford.

The final two chapters examine some important features of the distribution of wealth. Banks *et al.* begin by explaining the difficulties of obtaining a reliable picture of the distribution of assets. However, they are able to paint an illuminating picture of the ways in which financial assets and liabilities are more unequally distributed than wealth in the form of housing or pensions. Hamnett and Seavers then look more closely at changes in home ownership and their implications for the distribution of wealth. They are able to tease out many of the complexities associated with variations in housing equity and show that there is no simple relationship with income.

Many of the findings contained in this book have been presented in various ways in other publications but that does not detract from its value. Unusually for an edited volume of this type the quality is uniformly high and its value as a resource for both teaching and research will be considerable. The rapid growth of social inequality in the UK is now widely recognised, but the diversity and complexity of factors associated with changes in the distribution of income are less well understood. This book therefore makes an important contribution. Not least because it succeeds in achieving its aim, which is to shed light on the key determinants of increased inequality in the distribution of income and wealth in the belief that this represents 'a crucial step on the way to designing policies which could begin to cope with their effects' (p. 15).

KEN JUDGE

Tony Eardley and Anne Corden, *Low Income Self Employment*, Avebury, Aldershot, 1996.

Until relatively recently, the self-employed have been something of a Cinderella group in public policy. They are excluded from various parts of the benefit system and even the official poverty figures show some results excluding the self-employed on the basis that no-one quite knows what the living standards of the low-income self-employed actually are. It is against this background that this book seeks to broaden our understanding of the low-income self-employed.

The first sections describe the characteristics of the self-employed, and explain why it is hard to gauge their living standards on the basis of existing survey evidence. Problems mentioned include the widely held belief that self-employment incomes are 'under-reported' in some way. This latter point is particularly important, since a significant part of the growth in inequality in the UK over the 1980s is attributable to a growth in low-income self-employment. If in fact these individuals are not 'poor' but simply their incomes are incompletely measured, then this growth may have been significantly overstated.

However, the authors are doubtful about this view. In particular they are critical of the assumptions underlying studies based on the spending patterns of the self-employed (which are rather easier to measure on a comparable basis with other groups) and which have concluded that many of the low-income self-employed are not poor.

The next section describes the results of a new statistical analysis of Family Credit administrative data. It is already well known that the self-employed receive on average much larger amounts of Family Credit than employed workers. The authors test a variety of possible explanations for this (such as differences in family composition etc.) but conclude that this is simply because the self-employed have lower earnings.

A substantial qualitative section follows, based on around 70 interviews with a variety of low-income families. One aim is to look at a range of indicators of living standards and to see how far a reported income figure would be a good guide. A key conclusion is that the longer an individual has been on that income, the better guide it is to their standard of living. This is the sort of finding which seems obvious once you have been told it, but is nonetheless an important contribution. The qualitative material throws up some memorable quotes:— for example, the hard-pressed self-employed person who talks about 'receiving food parcels from pensioners' (i.e., her parents), and those who regard Family Credit as 'a Godsend'.

This latter quote highlights perhaps one of the most interesting policy issues raised by this book. It is quite common to hear means testing condemned across the board, and to argue that any policy which expands dependence on such benefits must be flawed. Yet here is a group of people who regard Family Credit as a vital lifeline, with one in five receiving more than £3,000 a year from this source — far more than could conceivably be paid out even with a significant increase in universal Child Benefit. Perhaps one of the lessons of this book is that a benefit which was first introduced as a temporary expedient a quarter of a century ago may now have a permanent and rightful place in the UK social security system?

STEVE WEBB

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Lorraine Greaves, *Smoke Screen. Women's Smoking and Social Control*, Fernwood Publishing, Halifax, Canada, 1996, £9.99 paper.

This book makes a number of interesting points. Historically, Greaves shows how, throughout the twentieth century, cigarette smoking has moved in and out of phase with liberationist imagery, variously associated with the feminine ideal and defiant assertiveness. She does not spare the tobacco industry in their unconcern for women's health: her most valuable point is that the gathering assault on Third World markets, especially in Asia, is only just starting to reproduce on a larger scale the damage left in the West by the post-war smoking epidemic.

Greaves rightly attacks the 'medical model' of smoking as unhelpful and, in the case of women's smoking, actually damaging. A high proportion of advice and encouragement to quit that has been directed to women in the past has had the effect of victimising women smokers. It may be medically true that women who smoke risk bereaving their families, poison their unborn and even undernourish their children in meeting the high expense that smoking – and tobacco taxation – imposes, but it is unhelpful if the common response is to make them feel even more anxious, guilty and discouraged. Less still if it provokes the defiance so often recorded by researchers meeting the more deprived women smokers: 'This is the only thing I do for myself' (Graham, 1992).

Modern research also finds that people give up smoking for positive, optimistic reasons. Greaves pleads for a 'woman-positive approach' that abandons 'sexist, victim-blaming' campaigns, however tricky it may be to devalue and reject the habit without devaluing and rejecting the smoker. The problem at the moment is that a good deal of tobacco control policy is drifting towards a more dirigiste approach: ranging from higher and higher taxes that impact disproportionately on poor women, who smoke most, to the most extreme measures that hold mothers who smoke culpable of child abuse and at a legal disadvantage in custody contests.

A large part of the book is spent assembling a theory of women's smoking that arises from women's need to resolve the paradoxes of life in a male-dominated existence. Though calling on a number of helpful insights – some provided by survey respondents more than usually articulate – some of Greaves' conclusions are difficult to accept. She says, for example, that 'Women's smoking is a mediator of reality' and 'Each cigarette serves as a temporary answer to these women's search for meaning' though not a very satisfying or enduring answer.

The rather deep feminist focus Greaves achieves in her analysis of smoking is due in part to her choice to confine her qualitative interview survey to Canadian and Australian women (some of them First National women) who were either active political feminists or women residing in refuges. Certainly she must be right in saying that abused women used cigarettes as a buffer against the pain they suffered. Some even use smoking literally as a 'screen' to distract mounting anger in their partners that might otherwise lead to a beating. The feminists too were clear about the role of smoking in trying, and often failing, to resolve contradictions of guilt and independence. The work does ignore, however, how successful women have been in giving up smoking. Earlier, Bobbie Jacobson, whom Greaves often quotes approvingly, based a feminist critique of smoking (*The Ladykillers*) on women's apparent handicap in quitting caused by their experi-

ence of inequality and dual responsibility as workers and mothers. It turned out, however, that other things being equal, women were just as good as men at quitting cigarettes, as they are with anything else.

Smoking does not have to be complicated to be a problem. The rise and fall of discomfort and well-being that smokers associate with the daily rhythm of smoking is almost certainly played back into the variations of negative effect experienced by many disadvantaged and abused women. It tends then to be over-interpreted as a part of the meaning of the injustice that discourages and depresses women. Greater economic inequality is strengthening this link. As smoking becomes increasingly concentrated amongst poor women, so it will become more and more associated with their sole link to an anodyne state, however temporary, unsatisfactory, costly and ultimately life-threatening it is. As one British lone parent put it, 'I can't afford to smoke. I can't bear not to'.

H. Graham (1992), *Smoking Among Working Class Mothers with Children*, Unpublished Report, Department of Health.

B. Johnson (1991), *The Ladykillers: why smoking is a feminist issue*, London: Pluto Press.

ALAN MARSH

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Julia Brannen and Margaret O'Brien (eds.), *Children in Families. Research and Policy*, Falmer Press, London, 1996, xiii + 224 pp., £36.00 hard, £13.95 paper.

Hartley Dean (ed.), *Parents' Duties, Children's Debts: The Limits of Policy Intervention*, Arena, Aldershot, 1996, iv + 188 pp., £29.50 hard.

The social and economic status of children and the social construction of childhood have become subjects of increasing interest over the past decade. *Children in Families* provides a rich collection of essays on children and childhood from a variety of perspectives. The first few papers address some important theoretical issues. Chris Jenks discusses the social construction of childhood in post-modern society and the way in which childhood has come to represent security and stability in a world where adult life and relationships are increasingly insecure and unstable. He argues that the social response to child abuse is an attempt to preserve childhood and parent-child relations as a last remaining symbol of stability. One consequence of the 'discovery' of child abuse, is that children's interests can no longer be regarded as adequately represented by those who have responsibility for caring for them. Jeremy Roche explores some difficulties with a rights approach to giving children greater social and legal recognition, and examines whether a universal notion of children's interests and rights is compatible with the cultural diversity of contexts and experiences of childhood. But more needs to be known about this diversity, from children's own accounts. Allison Prout and Alan James argue that an adequate sociology of childhood requires the study of children as agents in a variety of social environments, of which the family is only one, albeit an important one. Anne Solberg discusses some methodological difficulties which face adult researchers trying to hear what children have to say about their lives and experiences, the need to set aside what we already know and to step outside the habitual adult roles of parent or educator. Her description of her work with children working as line-baiters on Norwegian fishing boats is a beautiful illustration of Prout and James' point about the social identities of children in different social contexts.

The middle section of the book presents some fascinating empirical studies of children's and young people's experiences of family life, which also clearly illustrate how much more there is to know. Lynda Clarke uses the GHS and birth statistics to illustrate the diversity of family contexts in which children find themselves. Her essay also shows the incompleteness of cross-sectional data, and the lack of longitudinal data which would make it possible to chart children's experience of family life over the period of their childhood. Margaret O'Brien, Pam Alldred and Deborah Jones provide a very interesting account, both methodologically and substantively, of children's concepts of family. Miri Song examines children's work within family enterprises in the Chinese community in Britain. Julia Brannen and Pat Allatt examine the transition in status from child to adult, the different ways in which this is 'managed' by parents and the features of parental roles which remain constant across this transition.

The final chapters examine children in families as the objects/subjects of social policy. Steven Kennedy, Peter Whiteford and Jonathan Bradshaw illustrate the varied economic positions of households with children, within and between different countries. They raise important methodological questions about how to include services as well as income in considering the resources available. Theodore Papadopoulos shows how the absence of welfare provision for families is combined with the ideological centrality of the family in Greek society, leading to the reproduction of a highly patriarchal family structure. Hilary Land analyses the way in which state support in Britain for the transition from childhood to adulthood has decreased in recent years, so that young people are increasingly dependent on their family well into adulthood, while the capacity of some families to support their adult children has simultaneously been eroded. Peter Selman and Caroline Glendinning examine the effects of welfare policies on teenage pregnancies.

Childhood is something actively shaped by children as well as by parents and social institutions. Understanding both children and families requires that children's own accounts be heard. This book is a valuable contribution to this growing area of research and a stimulus to thinking further about theoretical, methodological, empirical and policy issues which need to be addressed.

Parents' Duties, Children's Debts is a collection of papers examining assumptions about family roles implicit or explicit in recent legislation affecting parent-child relations. It addresses important issues and synthesises a wide range of recent literature in the areas covered, although I was not always entirely clear about who is the intended audience.

An introductory chapter by Hartley Dean identifies the problems addressed: the nature and origin of family obligations; the relationship between dependency and exploitation; and the role of public policy in defining and enforcing mutual responsibilities of parents and children. Subsequent chapters examine notions of parental responsibility contained in the Child Support Act (Hartley Dean), the Children Act (David Berridge) and recent criminal justice legislation (Brynna Kroll and David Barrett). Rah Fitches discusses the problem of how to accommodate and respond appropriately to ethnic and cultural differences in child-rearing practices in ways which both serve the best interests of children and respond sensitively to difference. Kathryn Ellis, Di Thompson and Richard Common examine different aspects of community care policy. Ellis charts the

development of community care as a policy and the shift during the 1980s, through rationing resources for care, to increased expectations of care being provided by the family. In practice, this means women, and Thompson examines the notion of caring obligations implicit in recent community care policy. She argues that women's increased role in the labour force and the negotiated nature of kinship obligations is at odds with the assumptions underlying current policies. Common examines some implications of the marketisation of community care and the privatisation of service provision. Hartley Dean draws together some of the common themes running through the collection in his concluding chapter, returning to the issues raised in his introductory chapter.

KAREN CLARKE

University of Manchester

Janet Allbeson, *Failing the Test: CAB Clients' Experience of the Habitual Residence Test in Social Security*, National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, London, 1996, ii + 67 pp., £7.00 paper.

There was a time, not so very long ago, when policies could be understood as instrumental attempts, influenced no doubt by ideology, at practical problem solving. Recently, however, it has frequently been more to the point to see policies as expressions of ideology which create as many (if not more) problems than they solve. The habitual residence test, which restricts eligibility for income support, housing benefit and council tax benefit to those who are deemed to be 'habitually resident' in the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland, the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man, is a case in point not least because it embodies no less than three components of Conservative Party ideology: scepticism towards Europe, disdain for the so-called 'dependency culture' and enthusiasm for further public expenditure cuts.

Janet Allbeson's very sober and well-documented report makes depressing reading. It gives a good, albeit brief, account of the background to the test and uses a variety of sources, including detailed evidence from 201 Citizens Advice Bureaux, to describe the circumstances of those who have been subjected to the test, assess the quality of adjudication and monitor the way in which the test has been administered. In October 1993, in his annual address to the Conservative Party Conference, the Secretary of State for Social Security launched his celebrated attack on European 'benefit tourists' and promised to introduce measures to halt this 'abuse' of social security. However, it soon became apparent that EU law requires member states to treat European 'workers' on the same basis as their own citizens. Thus, the proposed restrictions could only apply to European 'job seekers' and, as a result of intense political pressure, job seekers from Ireland were exempted from the test. The government was also advised that EU laws require that any restrictions imposed on European nationals would have to be applied equally to UK citizens returning to this country after spending time abroad and, for good measure, they were applied to non-Europeans as well. Thus, what was originally envisaged as a measure which aimed to crack down on Europeans claiming benefit 'at the UK taxpayer expense' turned into a measure directed at some, but not all, European migrants and at a much larger number of UK citizens and non-European nationals as well.

The NACAB report shows that the test has been applied to far more people than the government estimated at the outset. The report suggests that it was applied to about 100,000 people in the first year of its operation (from August 1994 to July 1995). As a result, the administrative costs were considerably higher than anticipated. Of course, the benefit savings (estimated at £28m per annum) were correspondingly higher too but, as the report makes clear, these have been achieved at the cost of depriving more than 25,000 people of benefit altogether and subjecting many others to uncertainty, delay and hardship.

Perhaps the greatest merits of the report are the numerous examples it contains of the unfairness of the test and the hardship it has caused. It documents the impact of the test, first on European job seekers and then on UK citizens and non-European nationals, many of whom have lived here for long periods of time and have strong ties to this country. It is argued that these problems are intrinsic to the test, which does not offer a definition of habitual residence but leaves this to officials to determine and, in so doing, creates opportunities for prejudices to flourish. One consequence of this is that ethnic minorities appear to have been disproportionately affected. Many of the decisions cited in the report appear to be irrational and perverse and it is thus not surprising that such a large proportion of appealed decisions are eventually overturned.

The report argues that any potential abuse could have been very effectively dealt with through the existing control mechanism, and concludes that the test is expensive, unfair and unworkable, that it has no place in a sensible and humane social security system, and that it should be withdrawn. On the evidence presented, it is hard to draw any other conclusions. However, in case this is insufficiently depressing, it is important to point out that the situation has worsened since the evidence for the report was gathered. The 25 per cent cut in the administration costs can only lead to poorer decision making and longer delays, while the removal of entitlement to benefit from asylum seekers, who had been specifically exempted from the habitual residence test, has caused untold additional hardship.

If the government were at all interested in alleviating hardship or in finding solutions to problems, it would undoubtedly act on the recommendations of this report. However, having introduced the test in the first place and then moved against asylum seekers, in both cases against the explicit advice of the Social Security Advisory Committee, it is most unlikely that it will now abandon it. In the circumstances, the best that can be hoped for is that the opposition parties will take the report seriously and commit themselves now to abolishing the test.

MICHAEL ADLER

University of Birmingham

Catherine Hakim, *Key Issues in Women's Work: Female Heterogeneity and the Polarisation of Women's Employment*, London: Athlone Press, 1996, ix + 257 pp., £14.95.

In terms of form and subject content, this is a finely organised, carefully balanced, and well-presented book. The eight chapters vary from 11 to 55 pages in length – reflecting, presumably, both the author's estimate of a topic's relative value and the quality of information on it that was known to her. Each chapter, too, is carefully sub-divided into up to twelve sub-sections. There is an excellent bibliography (over 400 items). Though the subject index could have been more detailed in a book with so much internal density as this, it passes muster. If there is any economically literate guide to research and debate on trends in patterns of paid employment amongst women that is more clearly written than this, it could hardly offer more condensed yet comprehensive coverage than that offered here. As a populariser, Dr Hakim has formidable skills, which she perhaps undervalues. However, this is a guide and think-piece for fellow professionals, not for the undergraduate readership duly invoked in accompanying publicity material.

Overall organisation is logical. A brief, businesslike introductory chapter contrasts theoretical perspectives about women's subordination in the sphere of paid work, going on to argue that Britain offers two advantages for examining historical trends common to industrial society: survey data is especially rich, and the labour market is less regulated than in other European countries. This is followed by a lengthy chapter scrutinising, and largely dismissing, claims that women make a massive, but unrecognised and unrecorded, contribution to economic life, as often unpaid participants in family businesses, as workers in the black economy and in the household: Dr Hakim will have none of this, even writing off much housework performed by some full-time women homemakers as self-imposed make-work. The third chapter offers what some readers will find an infuriating rebuttal of the notion that the British work-force has become increasingly feminised over the last hundred or so years: the data Hakim deploys throw doubt on this. (Paradoxically, there has been such feminisation in the last fifty, following a late Victorian 'de-feminisation'.) There is striking long-term stability in Hakim's trend data in the proportion of full-time jobs held by women. Next comes an excursion into the everyday culture and attitudes which interact with strategic decisions about labour-market participation by women, and their experience of employment itself, with Hakim suggesting that far fewer women feel personally diminished by failing to follow a career than is usually supposed by feminists. Another long, economically technical, chapter deals with pay inequalities and their source, and concludes – rather more cautiously than all others in this outspoken book – with a statement that manifest inequalities (notably the failure of professional/managerial women to shatter the glass ceiling) require further research. A short review of the (real, but undramatic) effects of equal employment legislation at national and Euro level comes just before the concluding chapter, where the main conclusions are summarised – and morals drawn.

No one, perhaps, has a greater overall knowledge of her source material than Dr Hakim, and very few would be able to use it so adeptly. She is, after all, the author of a book on the secondary analysis of published data, and her former

role in employment administration no doubt provided her with pressures to make sense of such material which are absent from the professional lives of many who have made contributions to the huge international debate on gender and employment. The author is tough, too, on those contributors who have relied on narrowly chosen evidence, often of a case-study kind. Quite right too. There are close parallels here with the 1970s debate on de-skilling in the workplace, when case-study after case-study 'proved', to the evident satisfaction of the investigator concerned, the prevalence of skill-loss at a time when a steady overall gain in skills was in progress, thanks to automation. Indeed, the issues of skill and employment intersect closely with those tackled in this book.

Dr Hakim's central point is that women choose to follow life-courses determined either by an employment role approximating increasingly to 'male' labour-market patterns, or by a home-maker role, associated with feeble commitment to work and low-skilled, part-time occupations. In this view of things, possession of skill (and by implication, its acquisition) reflects a prior orientation to the labour-market. Yet insistence upon such processes underplays economic pressures, resulting from marriage failure, the collapse of some male blue-collar occupations, etc., on many women to seek employment. Constraint, not values, determines labour-market behaviour for many women. Dr Hakim cites much research (including this reviewer's) on levels of work commitment among men and women as supporting evidence for her case. In fact, this reviewer's research shows the over-riding importance of skill and qualifications as determinants of commitment to work and a readiness to view work in a career perspective: gender effects per se were shown to be of marginal importance.

Dr Hakim is least convincing in handling material on work orientations, values and ideologies. When dealing with quantifiable trends she is formidable. Her second chapter (on marginal work and women) is especially clear and convincing, and her sixth (on pay gaps and occupational segregation) provides a sure-footed guide over very difficult terrain – though it may well exasperate some labour economists. These chapters deal with topics on which the case-studies despised by Dr Hakim are of least use of all, and hard comparative data indispensable. Case-studies have, however, enriched and complemented many surveys on work attitudes and values; and survey experience that includes close involvement in fieldwork can markedly enhance understanding of raw findings. Dr Hakim's lack of such contact with the people behind her statistics leaves the feeling that her own intuitions about attitudes and behaviour have not filled a serious gap.

Two further features of this book require comment. Firstly, as noted, Dr Hakim is quite a one for drawing morals. This tendency gave the present reviewer the impression that a second book – one openly polemical and in the style perhaps of Camille Paglia – was trying hard to get itself written before she finished the first one. While the greater part of this text is a very detailed and painstakingly documented analysis and critique, deploying often quite original supporting evidence, the *tone* of the writing is frequently contentious, and sometimes it is openly combative. From time to time there is even something that could be taken for a snarl. The vehemence spoils a good case. Much of Dr Hakim's evidence is good enough to speak for itself. The data show that she is often right, and that some of her theoretical adversaries *are* often wrong. She

could have left it at that. Why rub the salt in? Secondly, the publisher sees this book as a potential undergraduate text. As such it is probably too close-grained and technically advanced. Most of the evidence, and the numerous points discussing the quality of secondary data and other statistical material, would challenge most research students.

Two final thoughts: does Hakim systematically overstate the 'male' drive to have gainful employment? As Mark Twain remarked, if Work was so wonderful the Rich would have hogged it all for themselves, long ago. And, Dr Hakim, having a normal 'male' level of testosterone does not make this man want to 'fuck everyone and fight everything' (p. 206). There are a few too many statements like this in the book. I could not work out whether Dr Hakim was trying to be funny or displaying a disconcerting inclination to go for the jugular. It would be better to have kept them for that second, exclusively controversial book.

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