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Book Reviews

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Book Reviews

*Evaluating the Swiss Welfare State: A Review Essay**

The Swiss Way of Welfare: Lessons For the Western World. Ralph Segalman. New York: Praeger, 1986, 205 pp., \$39.95.

As the title indicates, this is an ambitious book. First, the author had the huge task of finding his way through the complexity of a relatively decentralized social insurance, welfare and social service delivery system. Presenting "the Swiss way of welfare" to others can turn into a nightmare even for Swiss specialists. Second, he evaluates this "Swiss way of welfare" in order to derive "lessons for the Western world". On both accounts the book fails. It does not live up to its ambitious task. However, the problems posed by the first task are better 'solved' than those by the second. The evaluation of the "Swiss way of welfare" is analytically quite inadequate. The outline (although concise) of the major elements of the Swiss social insurance, welfare and social service delivery system is useful. However, if interested in Switzerland and social policy, both generalists and specialistis alike are better advised to rely on other sources, such as Fehlmann et al. (1987), Fragnière (1985), Sommer (1978; 1987), Staub-Bernasconi et al. (1983) and Wagner (1985). None of these, and virtually all other sources cited here, were incorporated or reported on by Segalman, even though most of them were published before 1986. Unfortunately for the American reader, none of the major books is available in English.

The best chapter is probably that on social insurance, although important sources such as Bandi (1982) are missing. However, Segalman often presents the social insurance system in an overly positive light and with a naiveté that is blind to several ongoing debates. First is the notion that the Swiss social

*The author would like to thank Peter Aebersold for his comments.

insurance system is, unlike that of other welfare states, concerned with positive outcomes in terms of justice, rationality and original intent (p. 70). Second, he believes that the "Swiss social security system seeks to plan for . . . emergent demographic trends by its fiscal and funding policies", and that in this system there is solidarity between the sexes (pp. 72, 74). Third, the uncritical presentation of the newly introduced compulsory occupational retirement scheme—administered by various private insurance firms and non-profit organizations—reflects Segalman's neglect to consult such sources as Rechsteiner (1984) and Wechsler (1984). The same holds for his presentation of the health (private) and accident (state) insurance system where authors such as Koch (1984), Sommer and Leu (1984) and Sommer et al. (1983) should have found entry into the text. Fourth, unlike Segalman's attempt to do so, the family allowance insurance cannot legitimately be compared with and evaluated against the United States' AFDC program, unless one wishes to compare apples with oranges. Their origin, history and social-policy goal is too different.

Last, and most significantly, Segalman's discussion of unemployment compensation and poverty is fully inadequate. Again, important authors such as Ernst (1983) and information on recent unemployment insurance adjustments and regional projects (Kurt et al., 1984; Walti and Weber, 1984) dealing with increased and prolonged unemployment are missing. Instead, the chapter on social insurance closes with the information that "90% of the population receive 70% of the income", and the meaningless statement that "the Swiss are primarily a middle class country" (p. 90). Segalman believes that the "social-insurance systems and the income distribution patterns of Switzerland serve to keep the population productive, employed, and basically self-sufficient. This cannot be claimed for many of the other Western nations" (p. 90). This is an unsubstantiated assertion.

The last mentioned theme emerges as the main theme of the book. Repetitiously, its author claims that in countries other than Switzerland, the welfare state is in financial and other trouble—social insurance systems that are deficit financed, benefit recipients who are too numerous and dependent on the welfare

state, etc. Chapter 2 journalistically lists some basic characteristics, issues and problems of the welfare state in the USA, the U.K., the Netherlands, the Federal Republic of Germany, France, Italy, Denmark, Sweden, Belgium and Ireland. However, the accounts are superficial, unsystematic and sloppy. Thus, they are useless for any serious comparison. Essentially they serve to make the simple point mentioned above. It can be illustrated by the following selected summary statements (repeated in essence with respect to virtually every country analyzed (sic)):

- “Thus, the Dutch welfare state is beset with increasing demands from a less-productive population and organized interest groups at a time when it can depend on less income and considerable economic problems” (p. 25);
- “France has, at great expense, succeeded in seeing to the humane purposes of its welfare system, but in the process, because of its policies and culture (which omit emphasis of employment over welfare dependency), it has endangered its economy and trapped sizable populations in persistent dependency” (p. 33);
- “. . . the Dutch welfare state remains one of the most comprehensive welfare systems in Western Europe without the tax base needed to pay for it” (p. 36).

In comparison, Switzerland is presented as a country with few, if any such problems. Thereby, the author fails to see that also in Switzerland some insurance systems are, technically speaking, operating on a deficit because of government transfer payments. Furthermore, he neglects to mention that some political groups continue to argue for a less costly welfare state. Thus, the author's picture of Switzerland is too rosy and distorted, and the comparisons made with other countries are of little value.

The book reviewed here criticizes “the negative effects of welfare-state dynamics on the population of the United States and other Western nations” and glorifies “the conditions in Switzerland that have achieved the human goals of welfare state without negative effects on the population” (p. 186). The author concludes:

“In a sense, as the population accepting the programs of income redistribution grows, this creates a culture of its own, making not

learning, not training and not working an acceptable way of life. By not providing rewards for learned helplessness and by enforcing social control against such behavior, Switzerland provides an antiwelfarization example that is replicable in other countries." (p. 192)

In order to substantiate his argument, Segalman also looks at welfare departments in Swiss cities like Zurich, Bern, Geneva, Basel and Aarau, all of which operate under different cantonal welfare stipulations. Potentially, this can be of interest. Since welfare is primarily a cantonal and communal matter, the differential treatment of welfare cases and the level of support for welfare clients could have been studied. This was recently done by Mäder and Neff (1987) for about a dozen large and small cities and towns including the Italian speaking area. Segalman, however, largely fails to 'cash in' on such opportunities and mostly summarizes what he believes to be the important elements commonly shared by them. Thereby, he overemphasizes the formal level, overlooking daily administrative practices that have emerged. For example, he observes that monetary support can be reclaimed from relatives, family members or from the client at a later point in time, and that clients are requested to work whenever possible. But this is not universally true, since there are differences both in cantonal law and communal administrative practices. He further observes that clients can be sanctioned if they do not meet the administrator's expectations for rehabilitation (p. 110), and he falsely asserts that clients usually cannot appeal in courts.

The author claims that, due to the small scale and local embeddedness of Swiss public welfare agencies.

"the client knows his or her worker and the worker knows his or her client. This is very much unlike the condition in other Western nations, where the client is likely to see a different worker at every agency contact." (p. 119)

There are no studies to verify this claim and Segalman does not provide any empirical evidence either. From what this reviewer has been able to learn about case load size per worker in cities such as those studied by Segalman, it is impossible to

agree with the above statement except for welfare departments in small cities and villages.

According to Segalman, "Swiss welfare personnel, unlike their counterparts in other developed countries, tend to individualize interpretations of why a particular client is in need" (p. 112). Furthermore, "Swiss administrators . . . tend to view their world as a place where individuals have a choice; and they feel that if some are in need, it is because they have made a wrong choice or because they have been unfortunate in their circumstances or because of a combination of these factors" (p. 112). As a result, the welfare administrator and the agency are "a type of parent figure, in that the agency provides the resources for rehabilitation" (p. 118). Therefore, the Swiss welfare worker is also in a helping role, choosing an intervention and rehabilitation path and enabling the client to quickly become self-sufficient again. This help and intervention may include monetary support, finding a job or housing, mobilizing family resources, placing children into foster homes or institutions, solving debt problems, etc. In all this,

"confidentiality is particularly important in Switzerland because of the issue of stigma . . . In Switzerland, where most of the population is middle class and where public welfare dependency has a general air of stigma . . . stigma serves to promote self-sufficiency and client cooperation toward that end" (p. 111).

In sum, "the focus of Swiss welfare is primarily on rehabilitation, while the focus of other Western welfare is limited to eligibility and grant disbursement only" (p. 127).

No comparative studies exist in support of the above claim about the quality of Swiss welfare work. Segalman's conclusion, too, is only based on 'impressions'. As mentioned before, the case load per welfare worker usually is very large or even overwhelming (particularly in cities). As a consequence, the helping role and the quality of intervention imputed to Swiss welfare by Segalman is overestimated. In addition, Segalman conceals the well known fact that welfare workers and administrators rarely are trained social workers, psychologists, family counsellors,

clinical sociologists, etc.; and in small town settings they most often are politicians or political appointees. They have moved into that line of work from other, usually unrelated fields. Most professionally trained social workers are reluctant to seek employment as welfare workers in settings described by Segalman. They believe that the high workload and the bureaucratized work environment prevents them from assuming a more extended helper role, and places them too much into an administering and sanctioning one. Therefore, based on caseload, welfare work claimed by Segalman to exist in Switzerland must be seriously questioned.

Segalman goes further. He maintains that Switzerland has few welfare cases, and even fewer long term and transgenerational dependents because the insurance system and welfare work in particular are rehabilitation oriented. Numerically, he probably is correct about the rate of long term dependents. Hauser (1980, p. 34) does conclude, however, that a large majority of welfare recipients in the canton of Zurich had received welfare before. In addition, Segalman's comparison between Los Angeles County and Zurich is poorly chosen and should at least have been presented in more detail to account for socio-economic and demographic differences. Segalman suggests that other countries adopt the Swiss way of handling welfare and social insurance. Welfare, he suggests, should be decentralized, brought back to the community and again become case, rehabilitation, and self-sufficiency oriented. To quote:

"The centralization of *gemeinschaft*-type services by federal authority is as faulty as the reverse, the decentralizing of *gesellschaft*-type services. Thus, it is suggested that the local and federal separation of services be reestablished for the better fulfillment of each, as has been proved in practice in Switzerland . . . Clients not being answerable to their community because of their being served on a centralized, *gesellschaft* basis can become inured to continued benefits unless they are provided with the kind of relationship and supervision available only on a responsible local level . . . The Swiss lesson is apparently that when local communities and local people are given their appropriate responsibilities and the authority to carry them out, they rise to the assignment" (pp. 190-191).

It may very well be that a Swiss-type welfare administration would produce fewer long term dependents in other countries. We do not really know. Segalman (Chapter 6) also admits that certain characteristics of Swiss society are particularly conducive to keeping the number of welfare cases and long term dependents down.

For instance:

- the relatively low divorce rate
- the relatively few illegitimate children
- the strong social control in neighborhoods and at home
- the parents' efforts in preparing children for being self-sufficient
- the general family stability in terms of employment and fertility
- the general public policy concern for support to families
- the early socialization towards personal responsibility
- the social integration in the military, clubs and associations and its enhancement of cooperation, consensus and self-sufficiency
- the relative lack of 'self-fulfillment ideologies'
- the alleged absence of no-fault divorce and the low possibility of evading child support and alimony obligations
- the relatively low rate in psychiatric institutionalization

Throughout, however, Segalman relies more on impressions than on data. It is inexcusable that he neglects to consider at least some of the literature and studies on juvenile delinquency, youth culture and protest. Had he examined such sources as Blancpain (1983; 1974), Buchmann (1983), Kriesi (1984), Kriesi et al. (1981), and Wallimann and Zito (1984) quite a different picture than his would have emerged.

Despite his 'concession' that Swiss society and culture is more 'intact'—thus aiding the effort in keeping the number of welfare dependents down—Segalman's strongest emphasis remains not on culture but on welfare administration. He continues to imply that other countries, if they were to strive towards the Swiss way of dealing with welfare recipients, would certainly succeed in drastically reducing the number of long term dependents. This position is complemented by his view that poverty, if it results in welfare dependency, is a multi-dimensional problem involving social and individual 'disorganization' and 'pathology' on different levels. Therefore, a welfare worker's first task—just as Segalman claims to be true for Switzerland—

must be to intervene in the case with a view towards a speedy rehabilitation and resumed self-sufficiency. Others would argue that social and individual 'disorganization' and 'pathology' tend to primarily result from economic or other macro-social events. For Segalman, long term welfare dependency is primarily caused by the inadequate treatment of individuals or families who have (for whatever reason) become individually or socially 'disorganized' or 'pathological' in various ways.

The individual pathology model—not new in the history of social policy and social work—can only be 'tested' by looking at macro-social events or developments. Among them, unemployment may be the most salient determinant of welfare cases, long term dependency and social and individual 'disorganization'. Such processes, however, remain undiscussed by Segalman, although the international literature on this topic is quite large.

Despite his occasional concession that unemployment may be related to long term welfare dependency, he continues to insist that other welfare states—with six to twelve or more times the one percent unemployment rate than Switzerland—could drastically reduce long term welfare dependency if only they adopted the Swiss way of dealing with welfare clients. Lacking in empirical evidence, as is the case with Segalman's book, such argumentation is inadmissible and can only be regarded as a 'blind assertion'.

That Switzerland has had an extremely low unemployment rate for the last 40 years is well known. For instance, while the official U. S. unemployment rate has for long periods maintained twice the four percent level of the late sixties, that of Switzerland has rarely and only slightly exceeded one percent for the last twenty years. This looks like a fantastic economic record, also if compared with other European welfare states. However, there is nothing miraculous about the Swiss economy, nor do its "'managers' possess particular insights or magical powers inaccessible to others. The reason for this phenomenon lies solely in Switzerland's export of unemployment, especially during the critical years 1975/76. Had Swiss authorities refrained from exporting some 200,000 foreign workers during that period, the official unemployment rate would have risen to 7-8 percent. The

job total lost during that recession was between 11-12 percent (Wallimann, 1984). As a result, the Swiss unemployment rate would have been comparable to (or even higher than) that of many other European countries at the time. Instead, the national average only rose to about one percent, and thus threatening the stability and bringing about a revision of the unemployment fund. At no time does Segalman contemplate what a retention of the exported foreign workers would have done to the 'quaint' (sic) Swiss welfare system, the client-worker relationship, and the long term welfare dependency rate. Had 200,000 workers not been exported in 1975/76, today's unemployment rate would not be one, but some six to eight percent. How would long term welfare dependency have developed in Switzerland since 1975/76 under such a scenario? We can only speculate. This reviewer speculates that Segalman's thesis would have been shattered like glass dropped on a marble floor. The following table briefly illustrates the major dynamics involved:

Table 1

Population Growth, Swiss and Foreign Worker Employment

Year	Total Employment	Swiss Employed	Foreigners Employed	Size of Swiss Population	Swiss Popul. Age 20-64
1970					3,638,167
1973	3,202,900	2,367,500	835,400	6,431,000	
1976	3,024,000	2,378,400	645,600		
1977	3,035,600	2,413,300	622,300		
1985	3,170,900	2,463,700	707,200	6,533,300	3,908,500*

Source: *Statistisches Jahrbuch der Schweiz*, 1981 (pp. 17, 26, 364-365) and 1986 (pp. 37, 338-339). *estimate

Segalman blithely justifies the expulsion of workers, and the entire Swiss foreign worker policy on the grounds of economic necessity (chapter 4 and elsewhere). This is an ethic not shared by the present reviewer. Arguing on the level of ethics, Segalman misses the important question, namely whether or not the Swiss long-term welfare dependency rate would still be drastically lower (compared with the 'Western world') if Swiss authorities had not exported unemployment.

While justifying temporary foreign worker imports (primarily for the lowest levels of the occupational hierarchy), he does not discuss the ways in which foreign workers are subsequently exported on a case by case basis should they become 'too great' a burden on the local welfare agency and the community. Because of their precarious position in the economy and the workplace, foreign workers become eligible for welfare with greater frequency for a number of well known reasons (unless they are more reluctant or fear to claim eligibility). Since those with commuter, seasonal or yearly permits (about 10% of the entire labor force) can be refused reentry with great ease, it is logical to expect that, in addition to the 'bulk export' of unemployment at times of crisis, this policy would produce artificially low long term Swiss welfare dependency rates. Although he had access to several large Swiss welfare agencies, Segalman failed to probe into this important question.

There is yet another way by which Segalman fails to subject his speculative assertions to empirical test. Unemployment in certain regions has been recorded not at the national one percent but at 2-2.5 percent levels. These are, for instance, the watch manufacturing areas which are subject to significant structural unemployment. Segalman does not report on the development of welfare cases and long term welfare dependency in these regions, and none of the welfare agencies he selected falls into this geographic area. Such a sampling error should not have occurred, since these regional problems have frequently been discussed in various media nationwide. One such study, involving the city of Biel (Büschi et al. 1986), concludes that the number of welfare cases have increased significantly due to the region's high unemployment, and Hauser (1980: 36) shows that the majority of clients receive welfare for economic or health reasons and not because of deviant behavior.

This reviewer must conclude that *The Swiss Way of Welfare: Lessons for the Western World* is a severely flawed work. Its intellectual value, and its scholarly quality and reliability are inferior. Therefore, it is impossible to view this book as a contribution to sociology, social policy or social work. Finally, it must be said that this book violates all standards of publishing

quality, due to Praeger's and Segalman's horrible editorial job. For instance, the proper statistical sources are missing from statistical graphs. Bibliographical citations contain numerous orthographical distortions. Authors and nouns are misspelled, at least one publication date is inaccurate; one footnote is not indicated in the text; one citation is not included in the bibliography, and the publisher is missing from one citation.

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Vieillesse: Situations, Itinéraires et Modes de Vie des Personnes Agees Aujourd'hui. Christian Lalive d'Épinay (Ed.). Saint Saphorin, Switzerland: Edition Georgi, 1983.

Because there are so very few pieces on the Swiss social services for the elderly and on the circumstances of the Swiss elderly population, this book on the conditions of the aged in French-speaking areas of Switzerland and on the services available to them is a welcome addition to the literature. Lalive d'Épinay and his chapter authors are members of the Geneva University Group for Interdisciplinary Research concerning Elderly People, a professional association including doctors, sociologists, and demographers. Their purpose has been to conduct research on the process of aging from both psychosomatic and socio-cultural perspectives. They envision the advancement of age as an ongoing process with unlimited parameters. The social and economic considerations, familial and extra-familial supports, health services and health conditions of the aged are taken into account. These researchers studied the degree of isolation versus integration into the community of their respondents, and their "morbidity" levels. They were especially interested in the isolation of widows, and in general, the problems of the old-old, including the limitations that accompany the advancing years, as related to health status and activity level. The writers looked at the problems in relation to existence of a nuclear, versus extended family, and the rural versus urban setting.

The research was carried out in two Swiss regions: urban Geneva and the semi-rural mountainous Central Valais. The authors interviewed 1600 elderly people, out of which 150 agreed to in-depth interviews concerning their daily activities. The authors also analysed the medical-social institutions for the elderly. The interviews of the subsample of 150 respondents were the backbone of the research, including reminiscences and oral histories. Many of the anecdotes are included, and liven up the book. Tables on responses of the larger sample are also given, along with the questionnaire. The researchers, in concentrating on the old-old, made a major effort to interview those 85 and older and gained 75 such interviews.

The book's chapter headings give some idea of its contents.

They include, "different types of old age", "the older people and their health", "isolation and integration: family and social relations", "activities and participation"; "daily life and events: higher class and intellectual bourgeois", "daily life: popular and middle classes"; and a separate section on "institutions and their clients: medical-social needs, and problems of daily life". The authors found that of those aged persons in institutions, most were in need of medical attention for serious illnesses, and most were of advanced old age. They report that survival of a spouse was a safeguard against institutionalization. The other service, besides the institution, that the researchers described in detail was the home care service. This is an extensive, well-developed service for Swiss old people.

The authors' major conclusion from all this research was that, "there is no unique and average condition of elderly people, but multiple situations". They say that, contrary to the stereotype, their findings show the actuality of diversity among older people. They point out that, "this new phase of existence as lived by men and women is a result of the interaction of the constraints they encounter and the prior and present daily activities they undertake, in keeping with their potential (in terms of) their economic, social, and health situation". They add, importantly, that it is also effected by the aged person's values and ideals.

The authors are especially interested in the crises the elderly experience, such as the fear and anguish a woman suffers in experiencing widowhood. They give such quotes as, "I live with my memories"; "one must adapt to this new life". They also look at the crisis of retirement among working class men, and compare it with the experience of those from upper class backgrounds. On the psychological side, they look at "morbidity" depression, and on the health side, the aged person's use of preventive and curative medical help.

While all through their report these writers stress the significance of the Swiss family structure and the social fabric of friends and of community participation—all shown to be strong in the Swiss rural area—they remain pessimistic about the chances for a good old age. This period of old-old age, as they say, "le vieillesse", is a time of inherent problems for this "vul-

nerable" population because of their economic inadequacies and their situation of surviving within a reality of physical distress and irreparable dependence.

These authors describe a social service system that is supportive of those in the old-old group. First, there is the very adequate, localized home aid. Then there are the high quality institutions, with their high ratio of staff to patient, whether in a religious or other non profit setting.

This book's usefulness to an American research gerontologist lies not only in its overview of Swiss services but also its comprehensive coverage of the many variables that determine how the old-old live. The researchers make distinctions between those of different class backgrounds, rural versus urban setting, and different health levels. Because they have gathered their data by means of in-depth interviews, not only by survey methods, they provide a more interesting report. While such a variety of coverage is useful, there are times when this means the book's content does not always run smoothly.

For the American reader the book's news is likely to be "no news", that is, growing older in Switzerland is similar, and perhaps no easier than to grow old in America. Yet, in Switzerland there do seem to be strong family and communal ties, especially in rural areas. Most definitely they have higher quality institutions for the medically impaired than most of our for-profit nursing homes.

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Wohlfahrtsstaat Schweiz (The Swiss Welfare State). Antonin Wagner, Bern, Paul Haupt, 1985, 248 pp. S.F. 32.

This overview of Swiss social welfare was prepared under the auspices of the Association of Swiss Schools of Social Work. Its intended use is both as a text for social work students and as an introduction for the interested (but educated) non-specialist. American readers, especially those whose primary inter-

est lies in the teaching of policy to social work students, will be dismayed, yet probably not surprised to learn that in Switzerland there has been a tendency similar to ours, to psychologize social problems and to emphasize clinical over social/political interventions. Wagner hopes that his book will make a contribution towards righting this imbalance.

Wohlfahrtsstaat Schweiz is to be recommended to the American and Canadian reader on two separate, but interconnected grounds. First, it serves, as expected, as a comprehensive, up-to-date descriptive survey of the Swiss system of social welfare, its policies and programs. Second, and for this reviewer at least equally important, it projects an expansive understanding of the concept of social welfare, and a philosophic orientation which is both refreshing and politically inspiring.

One of the uniquenesses of the English language is the fact that it distinguishes between the words "policy" and "politics". Linguistically, and thus cognitively, we tend to perpetuate a notion that policy can be objective, rational, scientific, if not politically neutral. In the German language there is no such verbal and conceptual distinction. Social welfare policy is immediately apprehended as social welfare politics. Moreover, for Wagner a full understanding of social welfare politics (*Sozialpolitik*) must quickly give way to broader concern with societal politics (*Gesellschaftspolitik*). He suggests that the study of the modern welfare state is not to be limited to the descriptive study of programs and services offered within the context of a particular nation/state. Rather, a broader view is required, one which takes into account cultural and ethical variables, family values, educational ideals, views of health (not only illness), and of human wellbeing. The broader view sets as its goal not only the aid and protection of those who are weak and disadvantaged, but the integration of all into the society as a whole. Here again, an important difference from the dominant North American perspective is to be noted. The Swiss ideal is not expressed in terms of the maximization of autonomy and of individual self-fulfillment.

Wagner discusses the Swiss welfare state primarily in terms of what he calls the, "economics paradigm." This perspective

has the dual advantage of readily lending itself to quantification and of being able to draw upon available governmental data. The central issue is that of wealth redistribution horizontally (from those who have more to those who have less) and vertically (along the life course). Economic analysis is not limited, however, to what Americans know as the social welfare and the social insurance system. Rather, this study includes a multiplicity of other programs and policies that have an effect upon income distribution, e.g., labor law, minimum wage policy, employment/unemployment policy, education, public health, housing and consumer protection. The total picture is complex, reassuring from an American perspective, but certainly not without problems.

The Swiss welfare system needs to be understood as one which has evolved within a society that has for hundreds of years successfully avoided warfare and most of its associated financial and human costs. Wagner provides data which indicate that in Switzerland personal wealth is more evenly distributed than in other Western industrial societies, with the exception of Norway and Sweden. (The United States is close to the bottom of the list.) There has been only minimal unemployment over the past many decades but, as discussed in the accompanying review by Wallimann, this end has been achieved largely as a result of restrictive, and morally questionable migration and immigration policies.

In his introductory, conceptual chapter, Wagner suggests what he considers an alterantive, or supplementary perspective for the study of societal politics (*Gesellschaftspolitik*). His proposed, "ecological paradigm" is not limited in its focus on the distribution of monetized goods and services, but also considers the distribution of e.g., boredom, hard, demanding work, dependence/independence, opportunities for advancement, and the like. The distribution of these benefits and disbenefits in society, while partially linked to monetary income, is equally importantly related to social/structural, political, and moral/cultural variables, to differences in social understanding, beliefs, and the capacity to articulate and initiate action.

These are important ideas. It is unfortunate that Wagner, by

his own admission, only partially takes this second paradigm into account in his study of the Swiss welfare state. In essence, he is saying that social welfare is more than economic welfare. We agree. Now tell us, Professor Wagner; give us some more suggestions as to how we can best study a social welfare state in the light of your second paradigm.

In all fairness to Wagner, it should be added that it appears that he has published something close to what we are here requesting, as a chapter in another volume, one that was not available to this reviewer.¹ Too bad that it was not reprinted as a part of the present book.

One of the important virtues of this study of the Swiss welfare state is that it reminds us that, fundamentally, it is the basic social, economic, political, and moral condition of a people that determines their welfare. Supportive and remedial services focussed on the disadvantaged and disabled are an essential supplement to, but not the essence of a caring society. In the future, Switzerland, as Wagner sees it, requires additional moves in the direction of democratization. In this connection, greater public access to power and decision making, the enhancement of self-help, and a parallel deprofessionalization of helping relationships constitute important next steps.

This publication would have been enhanced had it included an author/subject index. Also, a list of tables would have been helpful. We wish someone would hurry up and translate it into English. We, in North America, know so little and have so much to learn from more elaborate welfare systems than our own. It is rarely possible to transfer isolated ideas or programs from one society to another, but reading about others we gain important practical and theoretical insight into our own system and its possibilities.

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1. Wagner, Antonin. Paradigmawechsel in der Sozialpolitik, in *Gesunde Soziale Umwelt*. Begrenz, Arge Alp. 1984.

The Mean Season: The Attack on the Welfare State. Fred Block, Richard A. Cloward, Barbara Ehrenreich, Frances Fox Piven. New York: Pantheon Books, 1987, 205 pp. \$8.95.

Conservatives, especially those of the New Right, want to dismantle or continue to cut back spending on the welfare state in the U.S. The authors identify and critique the conservative arguments that are being used to justify such measures, describe the historical continuities with past conservative and business arguments, analyze why the influence and appeal of the New Right spread in the 1970s and 1980s, and allude to some of the effects. The main purposes of the book are to provide those on the left with an intellectual framework for understanding the interrelated New Right and business offensives against the welfare state and to familiarize them with some of the evidence and counter-arguments that will allow them to refute the views of these conservative and powerful groups. The authors do not attempt to present a comprehensive and systematic program of reforms, but they do point to some of the elements that would make up such a program.

The book is divided into five parts. The Introduction is collectively written by the four authors and identifies many of the central themes of the book and reveals the underlying logic. While the introductory chapter provides some coherence for the authors' contributions, and while it is clear that the authors share many views, there is nonetheless some inconsistency or ambiguity on a few key points; for example, on whether in fact there is an economic crisis and on the extent to which working class Americans endorse the conservative views on welfare. The next two chapters are co-authored by Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward and focus on the historical sources and the contemporary aspects of the "relief debate." Fred Block is responsible for a chapter on the "Political Economy of the Welfare State," in which he challenges the economic arguments of the Right. In the final chapter, Barbara Ehrenreich critically analyzes and challenges the New Right's explanation of the causes of the alleged "moral breakdown" in the society and tries to understand the appeal of many aspects of the New Right's message.

The logic of the analyses presented by the authors goes something like this. The welfare state grew out of class conflict, particularly in the 1930s and 1960s, and represents the efforts and political victories of past mobilizations of poor and ordinary working people. But business interests have opposed the creation and expansion of welfare programs and, even in periods of economic crisis, have had the power to shape their administrative, eligibility, and benefit characteristics. However inadequate, the programs are nonetheless necessary to the well-being of most Americans. The opposition of the capitalist owners and managers to the welfare state is grounded in their desire to have access to a cheap and "disciplined" workforce and is based on the assumption that these goals are undermined when workers have options to employment in the market or when workers are unionized. Government programs that, for example, provide disability and unemployment insurance for workers and income maintenance for the impoverished, serve to undermine the incentive of workers to give employers a decent day's work or even to seek work.

In the post WWII period, many segments of the business community softened their attitudes toward the welfare state, because in this period of unprecedented economic growth business could afford to be generous. Hence, rising wages and state expenditures on social welfare programs co-existed with rising profit margins. This period of accommodation ended in the 1970s and 1980s, as government estimates of economic growth, investment, productivity, and profits all indicated a slowing down of the economy. The business and New Right attack on the non-military government spending, especially on government welfare programs, and on unions grew out of and was reinforced by these economic conditions. Business blames the drop in profits and the alleged fall in investment and productivity on the growth of government spending and taxation (and unions). From the business viewpoint, there are at least two alleged negative effects of big government. Taxes reduce the availability of investment capital. And social welfare programs give workers an option to employment in the market and thereby undermine discipline on the job, help to create a tight labor market, and, as a consequence lead to high wages and low productivity. These

developments, in turn, contribute to the falling rates of investment and profits. Fred Block argues that government measures of investment and productivity underestimate the real levels of these economic activities and suggests that the problem of slowed economic growth is not as bad as government measures make it appear. Block argues that if there was a problem it is the result of managements' poor investment decisions, their short-term profit orientation, and the authoritarian organization of work. Business has had capital to invest, he contends, but it has invested available capital in unproductive ways (e.g. shopping malls, mergers).

The New Right grew out of and represents a reaction to the protest movements of the 1960s and the social legislation and social trends emerging in that decade and that continue up to the present (e.g. divorce, abortion). Barbara Ehrenreich points out that the New Right differs from the old conservatism in that while it remains "elitist" on economic issues and in its anti-unionism it has a populist appeal and emphasizes "social issues." The role of the intellectual and political wings of the New Right in the attacks against the welfare state is that it has generated studies and arguments in corporate-funded think tanks to legitimate the business position. And it has been successful in many ways. It has helped to make "liberal" a label to be avoided and has put liberals on the defensive. It has helped to elect a conservative President who has introduced policies that have abetted the increase in poverty, inequality, and the shrinking of the middle class. It has legitimated the continuing offensive against the unions. It has insisted that the welfare state along with the "new class" are the sources of a massive moral breakdown and of all the economic and social problems that beset the society. And it has deflected attention away from the corporations and misbegotten government policies (e.g. defense) that are among the basic causes of the economic difficulties of the U.S.

Ehrenreich argues that the New Right's influence among blue-collar workers is overstated and misrepresented, but she goes on to suggest middle America, still including many blue-collar workers, is influenced by the corporate-induced consumer culture of the society. The self-indulgence and inability to defer

gratification that the consumer culture cultivates and reinforces has turned many Americans into consumer addicts who are as "dependent" in their own way as the poor who are "dependent" on welfare. In a provocative, but speculative, leap, Ehrenreich suggests that many consumer-addicted middle Americans *project* their dependency onto the poor and relieve their feelings of guilt by decrying "the hedonism of the new class 'welfare statist' and the foolish dependency of their beneficiaries among the poor" (188). The implication of Ehrenreich's speculations is that those who would defend the welfare state are up against not only the powerful business and conservative forces of the society but also many ordinary Americans who are all too glad to identify a scapegoat in the form of the welfare state and its supporters and beneficiaries rather than see their own consumption-oriented life styles or particular social programs effected.

Much of the book is devoted to subjecting the New Right's "evidence" to a critical analysis and demonstrating that it is weak, misleading, contradictory, and self-serving just as conservative arguments about the effects of government spending on the economy and the poor have always been. Piven and Cloward do a particularly good job in summarizing the evidence that counters conservative views of the effects of welfare on the poor. Among the many points they make are, for example, the following:

- 1) Conservatives argue that public assistance demoralizes the poor because it conflicts with widely accepted American values such as the value of self-reliance. Piven and Cloward reply that it is demoralizing because of the low benefits available under public assistance programs and because of the degrading procedures to which poor people must submit in the process of getting and hold onto benefits.

- 2) Conservatives charge that welfare programs have caused the breakdown of the family as reflected in the dramatic increase in female-headed families and illegitimacy. Piven and Cloward retort that the trend of increasing female-headed families and illegitimacy predated the expansion of government welfare expenditures and reflects a number of factors, including: (a) the urbanization of the black population; (b) high subemployment rates, particularly in cities; (c) a rise in the proportion of young

people; (d) a falling fertility rate among the married; (e) a falling rate of marriage; and (f) the decision by the U. S. Census to start counting young mothers living at home as independent households. They also point out that changes in illegitimacy rates among black Americans have not paralleled the rise in welfare spending; for example, while spending was rising in the 1970s, the illegitimacy rate was falling.

3) Conservatives maintain that participation in the AFDC program leads to the atrophy of work habits. Piven and Cloward counter by referring to evidence which shows that (a) most recipients are not continuously on the rolls; (b) most children of long-term recipients do not go on welfare; (c) many of the women eliminated from the rolls as a result of Reagan's 1981 "welfare reforms" continued to work rather than to return to the AFDC program.

The greatest strength of the book is that a large body of rather technical articles are incorporated into understandable language and incisive analyses that provide the careful reader with the ammunition to combat the views of the business and conservative attacks on the welfare state. But the authors also have suggestive, but less persuasive, ideas on what it would take for the economy to become productive and competitive again, on the need to expand public services in a postindustrial society as a way to increase worker productivity and to reduce costs to individual firms, and on the need to begin to think about how to share work in a society that does not need so many people working fulltime schedules.

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Shared Responsibility: Families and Social Policy. Robert M. Moroney. Hawthorne, N.Y.: Aldine Publishing Co., 1986. \$31.95 cloth, \$14.94 paper.

Moroney presents a refreshing perspective on the old but currently intensified public debate over the relationship between government and the family. There are many who currently view

the family as a social institution in a state of deterioration and perhaps even in danger of disintegration. The solution, it is felt, is to restore the family to its earlier position based on the assumption that the family of the past was more self sufficient and therefore stronger.

Using primarily existing data and professional literature Moroney examines these and other assumptions through an analysis of such key issues as; what is the role of the family and the State; when is State intervention appropriate; and how can it be done without undermining the family. The author makes what could be an unwieldy study of the family, its past and present status, and its relationship to the social welfare system and the professionals providing it services, more manageable. He focuses on families who are caring for dependent members, in particular those caring for frail elderly parents and those caring for severely mentally retarded children. The focus on these two types of families represents an astute choice as there is little controversy over the legitimacy of dependency among the frail elderly and severely mentally retarded. The State has already committed itself to providing services for these populations, and the growing numbers of these "at risk" persons has serious implications for the allocation of future resources. In describing these two sets of families the author notes that most families are willingly caring for their dependent members. This is in contrast to the growing belief that care for dependent members is increasingly being handed over to the State. He also notes that measures taken by the State to help these handicapped people and prevent their becoming "dependent" have not been targeted toward families but toward individuals.

Moroney presents his study within the context of his belief that both family and State have a responsibility for the care of dependent members and that this *shared* responsibility should be characterized by a relationship of reciprocity—a mutual interchange between equals. It is his intention that policies and programs be designed to strengthen families in such a way that (a) make recipients feel they are equals to the giver; (b) give support to nondependent families in care of dependent members; and (c) assist with care, not substitute for it. Respite care and constant attendant allowances are examples of such programs.

This book defines what appears to be a good concept through which to improve the relationship between families and the State. The author recognizes the need for additional research given the identified limitations of his study. He also discusses some of the obstacles, such as limited funding, to implementation of suggested programs. Although the author gives examples of services which might help to accomplish a goal of offering support to families rather than substituting for them, he does not answer the question of how to implement the needed reorientation of public and professional thinking. While the author writes in the context of current debate, including references to Reagan and the Moral Majority, much of the data used are from the 1970's.

Those who are concerned about the status of the family particularly as providers of social services and caregivers, and who are interested in social and family policy and change, will find this book refreshingly informative in the light of current pessimism, and easy to read. Hopefully they will also be challenged to consider ways to initiate the implementation of the concept of shared responsibilities.

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