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# BOOKS

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Review  
Section  
edited by Derek Kerr

Peter Gurney

## Co-operative Culture and the Politics of Consumption in England, 1870–1930

Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1996. pp.ix+350.

ISBN 0-7190-4950-4 (hbk) £45.00

Reviewed by Matthew Watson

I have a colleague whose teenage son has recently been looking for a part-time job which will make it possible for him to remain at college to study for 'A' levels. He interviewed for a suitable position with a local employer, only to find that the interviewing committee were almost totally unimpressed with his desire to improve his education and, with it, his life-chances. Instead, the committee's primary concern was with finding out exactly how old he was, so that his prospective pay could be forced down to the minimum which statutory wage law allowed. Admittedly, that employer was a British supermarket, whose collective reputation for 'sharp practices' suggests that we might have expected nothing different. However, this was not just any capitalist conglomerate, but the 'Co-op'.

Times have changed. Certainly, that would have to be the conclusion to draw from Peter Gurney's book, *Co-operative Culture and the Politics of Consumption in England, 1870–1930*. Gurney presents a

noble, principled defence of the co-operative movement which coheres into a highly readable text. The analytical framework adopted there will not necessarily be that which all *Capital & Class* readers would choose for themselves. Nonetheless, it would be difficult, not to say somewhat churlish, to do anything other than recommend this book.

In constructing his text, Gurney sets himself the somewhat heroic task of recapturing the reputation of the co-operative movement from the grip of an historical orthodoxy which tends to paint it in a less than favourable light. Much of that prevailing orthodoxy, as the author is surely correct to point out, is centred on a set of left-wing narratives which, although disparate, nevertheless share a common concern for identifying single moments of revolutionary potential which ultimately turned into missed opportunities. Viewed through such a perspective, the ameliorative tendencies of the co-ops typically are highlighted as

part of the process through which ‘*the moment*’ was allowed to pass. It is precisely this culture of betrayal which Gurney attempts to transcend. His aim is to write a left history of co-operation which shows that the notion of utopian ideals is entirely compatible with the goals and practices of the co-operative movement. This he seeks to do by formulating such a history on the basis of the assumption that “‘*revolution*” must be understood as a deviation from the norm of “‘*reformism*” in capitalist societies and not vice versa’ (p.9).

Whilst such a formulation undoubtedly has its merits in terms of the text which Gurney is trying to construct, his desire to move beyond the frames of reference of orthodox left historiography is by no means above question. After all, reformist capitalism is still capitalism, and the acceptable limits of capitalist practice running alongside co-operative ideals is one issue which remains largely unexplored. Indeed, the ability of the co-operative movement to integrate workers, however unintentionally, into capitalist consumption networks is almost entirely glossed over as the spectre of ‘false consciousness’ is raised only to be dismissed. Co-operatives may well have posed a latent challenge to prevailing capitalist uses of money and credit as an anchor for feasible social relations. At the same time, however, the fact that co-ops declined to operate outside a context which was structured by money and credit *per se* raises doubts about the acceptability of Gurney’s alternative framework for understanding their political history. The limits of co-operative goals were the somewhat restrictive ones of reworking forms of consent to capitalism as against an *a priori* desire to overthrow the capitalist system as a whole. As Gurney himself notes in what is an excellent introductory chapter, ‘taking shares in the

co-op and regularly collecting the dividend gave certain workers a material stake in capitalism and the continuation of capitalist social relations’ (p.6). That the co-operative movement provided for many workers a means of making ends meet that they otherwise would not have enjoyed must surely be beyond question. However, that such a means of distributing rewards was always likely to be susceptible to wholesale disarticulation in the event of a systematic restructuring of capitalist production was probably also somewhat inevitable.

To his credit, Gurney charts the gradual unravelling of co-operative ideals in the inter-war period with great skill. In particular, he points to the internal contradictions of co-ops’ use of wage labour to compete against more traditionally-minded capitalist producers. In circumstances in which external conditions turned against participants in the consumption markets in which co-operatives were positioned, Gurney recounts the rather depressing tendency of attempts to use the wage rates of employers as a source of comparative advantage, and therefore as a means of retaining existing market share (see especially pp.226-38).

This, in many ways, brings us full circle, back to the anecdote with which this review began. Gurney opens his book with a quote from Raymond Williams, in which it is claimed that the historic struggle between capitalism and socialism is to be understood in terms of a competition as to which one could be the most productively efficient. The fact that sixteen-year-old college students can no longer expect to be paid anywhere near £3 per hour for stacking supermarket shelves is evidence that the right remains firmly in control of the dominant political discourse of economic competitiveness. The fact that co-operative ideals withered on

the vine of demands for greater market flexibility as far back as the 1920s implies that the left has long been on the losing side of that particular struggle. Peter Gurney's impressive book is well worth

reading, perhaps not so much for the suggestion of how much things have changed as the twentieth century draws to a close, but for how much they have stayed the same.

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Eileen Drew, Ruth Emerek and Evelyn Mahon (eds.)

## Women, Work and the Family in Europe

Routledge, London and New York, 1998. pp.230

ISBN 0-415-15350-6 (hbk) £50.00

ISBN 0-415-15351-4 (pbk) £14.99

Reviewed by David Camfield

Capitalist crisis and restructuring are gendered processes. Far from being a new phenomenon, the gender-differentiated impact of the reorganization of capitalist social reproduction was noted, however inadequately, by Marx and Engels in the 1840s. Contemporary efforts by employers and governments to overcome the contradictions of accumulation, and the struggles of working people to resist the further subordination of their needs to the imperatives of profitability, are leading to significant changes in the lives of women and men at work and in households and communities. Understanding these changes is an important challenge for Marxist researchers and teachers.

This book is a collection of nineteen chapters covering many aspects of the lives of women, and to a lesser extent men, in relation to families and labour markets in the European Union today. The contributions are organized into three parts, each introduced by an overview chapter. Most of the chapters are studies of a particular topic in a single nation-state, although some draw on comparative research. The seven studies in the first part, 'Reconceptualising families,' deal with state family policies and changes in families as

more women are drawn into paid work at the same time as there is a growing demand for the unwaged and waged caregiving traditionally performed by women. Part two, 'Restructuring labour markets,' looks at part-time employment, homeworking, other aspects of 'flexibility.' It also includes a chapter on family-supportive policies and gender differences in a variety of workplace cultures. The chapters in the final part, 'Reconciling family and working life,' cover aspects of parenting by both mothers and fathers caught between the competing pulls of work and household.

For the most part, the studies in this collection employ conventional sociological methods and liberal feminist theoretical approaches. Most of the chapters are brief and quite narrowly focused. The studies generally rely on 'snapshots' from various kinds of survey research and lack any meaningful historical appreciation of the larger social processes from which the data emerges. These social processes are rarely made visible by the description and analysis offered. Drew and Emerek's claim that 'The major impetus for labour market change has been the shift from agricultural- and/or manufacturing-

based economies to service-based economies' (p.89) typifies the sophistication of the analysis of capitalism and class present. Capital's strategies and the actions of unions and women's movements receive next to no attention. In general, the individual and, even more so, collective agency of the working-class women who are the objects of most of the studies is ignored. Lesbians and their families are invisible throughout.

The notable exception is the chapter by Sheila Rowbotham and Jean Tate, 'Homeworking: new approaches to an old problem.' Here the authors draw on information gathered through women's networks. In assessing the growing significance of homework to capitalist production, they recognise that it is 'oversimple to interpret homework in terms of theories of one over-arching system of organising production such as post-Fordism simply replacing a "Fordist" model. Capital's search for means of cutting costs is capable of taking

on manifold aspects' (p.114). Their conclusion outlines the beginnings of the international response underway and includes examples of women's self-organisation in Western Europe and Asia.

For readers interested in developing feminist Marxist analyses of women, work and families today, this book is a disappointment. Although it contains some useful empirical material on work, family life and related social policies in a number of European states, and a number of insights about the gendered processes of change underway, the theoretical weaknesses of the studies leaves a host of fascinating questions not even posed, let alone answered. Considering that gender is still not often adequately integrated into Marxist scholarship and that contemporary feminism almost never builds on the foundations of Marx's critique of capitalism, much theoretical development and applied research remains to be done.

**Klaus Nürnberger**

## **Beyond Marx and Market**

Zed Books Ltd., London and New York, 1998, pp.iii+274.

ISBN 1-85649-647-3 (hbk) £45.00

ISBN 1-85649-648-1 (pbk) £14.95

**Reviewed by Lewis Higgins**

This is a textbook written by a professional theologian for students of politics and related disciplines. Beyond the market? In the UK the Thatcherite love affair with the market has waned considerably, even though it now goes under the name New Labour. The basic principles of the political philosophy of market liberalism are explained and found wanting. However, the author relies

heavily on broad generalisation and anecdote, as for example the alleged social motivation provided by the market: 'Tenants do not look after gardens, owners do.' There is also the tendentious use of the words 'moderate' to describe his favoured approach and 'extreme' (without quotation marks) to describe those who are fully in favour of Marx or the market. But wherever we look across

the world we see the market results in gross inequality, mass poverty, lack of effective democracy and environmental destruction to name but a few of its faults. That much is not new; even the most ardent defender of the free market will concede the point but argue that There Is No Alternative.

Beyond Marx? Well, here we need to tread carefully. In this book Marx himself is dealt with briefly but with some realisation of the differences with later Marxists and Marxist-Leninist regimes. Marx's theory of value is summarily dismissed in favour of marginal utility, where the value of goods is determined solely by market demand: 'Whether a tree has been uprooted by a storm or chopped down by workers makes no difference to the value of the timber.' Really? Try telling that to the capitalist who has had to pay wages for the trees to be cut down. For Marx and Engels the overthrow of capitalism is said to involve the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat 'under the leadership of the communist party', creating a transitional society called 'socialism' in which production and consumption is governed by the motto: 'from all according to their capabilities and to all according to their contribution.' The author is not alone in repeating these claims, but they are not what Marx actually said or meant. As the exhaustive studies by Hal Draper and others show, the various statements on the dictatorship of the proletariat by Marx and Engels mean nothing more than working class capture of political power, with political organisation, but never under the leadership of a party, communist or otherwise. For them the emancipation of the working class necessarily had to be the self activity of the working class itself. Furthermore, Marx did not say that socialism was a transitional society between capitalism and communism,

rather using socialism and communism interchangeably to refer to post-capitalist society.

Attempts to go beyond the market are considered, with emphasis on the Third World and in particular Taiwan's policy of capitalist export-orientation and the attempt to build a new society based on traditional social patterns, the *Ujamaa* in Tanzania. Taiwan managed to combine economic growth with some semblance of equality, but with an authoritarian one-party state. The Tanzanian experiment failed for a number of reasons: bureaucratic corruption, lack of freedom, faulty allocation of resources and 'deficient capital formation'. In the latter case he is surely correct, though the author does not address how an attempt to transcend the market is hampered by a lack of capital accumulation.

Towards the end of the book it becomes evident that the real agenda is a Bible-based programme of salvation. At that point the impression gained is that everything preceding is a straw man set up for that purpose. Beyond Marx and the market the future should be guided by pragmatism, not ideology. We should take care of the natural world, provide material sufficiency for all and ensure social equality. A 'tamed' market still has a role to play after all. We should all shun the class struggle and embrace compromise: Arthur Scargill and the NUM are cited as an example of holding the public to ransom. Capitalism is criticised because it is the outcome of the application of mistaken or inappropriate moral values. By applying the correct morals we can go beyond Marx and the Market to the land of peace and plenty. The latter is a parody, of course, but only slightly. By now you should have some idea of the dreadful moralising which pervades this superficial book.

Kevin R. Cox (ed.)

## Spaces of Globalisation: Reasserting the Power of the Local

The Guilford Press, London and New York, 1997. pp.292.

ISBN 1-57230-196-1 (hbk)

ISBN 1-57230-199-6 (pbk) £17.95

Reviewed by Derek Kerr

This edited collection constitutes a critique of those writers that fetishise globalisation, that conceive the local as mere epiphenomenon and that dissolve place into the space of flows. While recognising the tendency towards globalisation and de-territorialisation, the contributors insist that there persists tendencies towards territorialisation and reterritorialisation of economic and political life. This is not simply a case of replacing globalisation with some form of global local dualism. As Cox puts it, 'that scale in contemporary economic and political geography can be so reduced is clearly problematic' (p.5). By subjecting globalisation to critique and by problematising the global-local dualism, this book seeks to develop a more nuanced account of the changing dynamics of contemporary society. The book comprises nine chapters plus an introduction.

Chapter one by Michael Storper emphasises that the globalisation of the economic form is not simply a place-less process but one that entails territorialisation. Territorialised economic development refers to development that is dependent on resources that are territorially specific or place-dependent. This notion of territorialisation is made more specific in chapter two by Meric Gertler who suggests that advanced industrial machinery has a place-specific utility. He draws on an empirical investigation of difficulties experienced by Canadian users of advanced industrial machinery in employing the products of

German machine tool firms. The problem is one of differences in worker aptitudes, workplace norms, and attitudes about the worker technology relation. Advanced industrial machinery tends to be produced in a particular national context so when the machinery is exported, it may be to a situation in which there is a poor fit between machinery and user. This theme is extended in the next chapter by Andrew Mair who examines the globalising experiences of one multinational corporation, Honda. Mair finds a pattern of what he calls 'strategic localisation'. National-specific practice remains significant. Some aspects of production have been globalised, others less so, emphasising Storper's notion of deterritorialisation-territorialisation.

The literature that tends to emphasise deterritorialisation, more than any other, is that which focuses on the globalisation of money. Not only is money extremely mobile. But also, developments within telecommunications provide for a uniform availability of information both between and within markets. Consequently, no one place is any better than any other as a market for financial products. It is therefore suggested that geography no longer matters, that we are witnessing the 'end of geography'. Gordon Clark and Kevin O'Connor in their chapter seek to counter this line of argument. For them, there is a variability in the informational content of different financial products and this variability has geographical

manifestations. They distinguish between 'transparent', 'translucent' and 'opaque' financial products. Transparent products tend to escape the constraints of geography as their properties are well known (or easily available) to those interested in acquiring them. At the other extreme, opaque products are ones for which the information on which they are based is the exclusive property of the firm designing them. Often this means that local knowledge is very important in assessing these products; hence they are geographically delimited. Through this conceptualisation, Clark and O'Connor then illustrate how the structure and informational content of financial products have shaped the geography of the world's finance markets. They argue 'that the current pattern of activity is not a seamless global system; rather, it remains organised in a spatially differentiated manner—the product of the informational content of products and the role of information in the production of these products' (p.100).

To counter the hyper-mobility of capital argument within some of the literature on globalisation, Kevin Cox (chapter 5) argues that this literature underestimates the character of capitalist development as a social learning process. This is facilitated by processes of spatial convergence, whether within- or between-plant, which are difficult to replicate or reconstitute elsewhere. In addition, just as capital is not nearly as mobile as suggested in the literature on globalisation, neither is labour as immobile as suggested. These two conditions, Cox believes, create a bargaining space for labour, a space for compromise, which the literature on globalisation fails to capture. This notion of freeing a space for labour is returned to by Andrew Herod (chapter 7). Rather than labour being a simple victim of globalisation, Herod argues that labour, through

its representative organisations, has been, to some degree at least, instrumental in the construction of more globalised economic relations. He accounts how, for most of this century, the US labour movement has been active in creating conditions conducive to the expansion of US corporations overseas.

In his chapter, Kevin Cox also makes the important point that there has been a tendency in the globalisation literature towards the 'overspatialisation of social relations' (p.132). That is there is a tendency to misspecify the contingent nature of at least some spatial relations as necessary aspects of the social relations with which they are correlative. But as Cox argues, while space is a necessary aspect of social relations, it does not dictate particular strategies, either for labour or for business. This issue is furthered by Erik Swyngedouw (chapter 6) in his critique of the reification of scale. Instead of being considered finished, self-sufficient objects, scales should be understood as socially constructed through processes of struggle. 'The theoretical and political priority, therefore, never resides in a particular geographical scale, but rather in the process through which particular scales become (re)constituted' (p.141). He develops this argument through an engagement with regulation theory; that is, the scales of Fordism and the construction of those new scales through which Fordism was undone. The rescaling of regulatory practices leads Swyngedouw to introduce the notion of 'glocalisation': a contested reconstruction of scales that are more global than the national on the one hand and more local on the other.

In sum, the *Spaces of Globalisation* is an interesting collection that makes us question the difference that space makes in understanding society. Furthermore, it does so in a manner that, by in large, is sensitive to the dangers of fetishisation.

Kalbir Shukra

## The Changing Pattern of Black Politics in Britain

Pluto Press, London, 1998. pp.144.

ISBN 0-7453-1465-1 (hbk) £35.00

ISBN 0-7453-1460-0 (pbk) £11.99

Reviewed by Angus Bancroft

There is much to be written about black self organisation and resistance to racism in Britain and Kalbir Shukra's book is to be welcomed as contributing to what is often a hidden history. At a time when both Labour and Conservative Parties are keen to proclaim their friendliness towards ethnic minorities it is illuminating to cast an eye over the history of Black and Asian engagements with the British political system, examining what has succeeded and what has failed. Shukra examines post-war Black political organisation in Britain, criticising the extent to which anti-racists have pinned their hopes on the Labour Party. What she describes is a history of co-option and the failure of attempts to organise outwith or in opposition to established political structures.

Unfortunately the book has a number of weaknesses, both in its somewhat narrow scope and its political standpoint, which limit the conclusions which can be drawn about Black politics. It contains a number of largely unexamined assumptions. The opening statement that in terms of the hostility they faced 'the experience of "black" migrants to Britain after 1945 was unique' is historically blinkered. An examination of the history of migration to this country shows the opposite. The experience of Black and Asian victims of British racism would be familiar to the Irish in the 19th Century and East European Jews at the turn of the century. Indeed agitation against the latter by an

alliance of right-wing politicians and trades unions led to the first Aliens Act of 1905, which first restricted migration into Britain. In the words of one Conservative MP speaking in favour of further restrictions in 1925, 'it is our duty as Britons to keep our race pure'. The objects of his ire were 'white' immigrants from Eastern Europe. It is not the uniqueness of each group's experience but the similarity which is striking.

Shukra adopts the position that race should be examined structurally as 'an ideological construct which militates against class unity'. Many Marxist influenced scholars take this to be the case and tend to leave it at that. Certainly racism is a social construct, and it has a class aspect, but there is no evidence that the working class would have been more unified without the existence of racism. It is simply assumed that because racism has at times in the past benefited the ruling class then that is its *raison d'être*.

Despite the stated focus on structural factors what is missing from the whole book is a sense of social change, although massive upheavals in society and state occurred during the period studied. Something absent in her brief discussion of the exclusion of Black and Asian people from the idea of 'Britishness' is the upheaval wrought in British identity by, among other things, the rise of nationalism in Scotland and Wales. At the end of the 1980s Norman Tebbit formulated an offensive 'cricket test', by which the

Britishness of ethnic minorities was to have been calculated according to the degree of their support for the England cricket team. He was in apparent ignorance of the irony that Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish Britons would automatically fail it. Ethnic minorities from those parts of Britain tend to share the local tendency to support whichever team is playing England at the time. Members of the Scottish National Party affiliated group 'Asians for Independence' which is not given a mention here, might feel that both Shukra and Tebbit fail to take on board the changes in British society that made the cricket test irrelevant and ludicrous even at the time it was proposed.

She quotes the police's failure to find Stephen Lawrence's killer as confirming black people's lack of confidence in the police. Yet the significance of the Lawrence killing and its aftermath, in particular the Macpherson Report (Macpherson, 1999) which found the police guilty of institutional racism, seems to say as much about what has changed as about what has stayed the same. Compare the Macpherson Report to the Scarman Report (Scarman, 1982) on the Brixton riots of 1981, which explicitly refuted the suggestion that the police were institutionally racist. The position of Britain's ethnic minorities has changed in ways that leave Shukra's conceptual framework looking a little out of date. It seems to be mired in the debates which dominated left politics during the early 1980s, although to be fair this criticism could be applied to a lot of left wing commentary.

The book should have been fleshed out with some experiential material, which could have transmitted some sense of the changes affecting ethnic minorities in Britain and the complexities involved. It is a disappointing omission. There is no sense of what it was like to participate in

these struggles, no reports from the frontline, and no Black voices aside from a few 'big names' in left wing anti-racist politics. It makes the book feel a little cold and dry, which is unfortunate considering the importance of the issues involved.

The focus is too narrow, which contributes to a feeling that it is somewhat limited, concentrating almost exclusively on London based left wing organisations. It is a perspective which fails to do justice to the richness and variety of Black and Asian political organisation. For instance, there is no consideration of the Muslim Parliament and only passing mention of the Nation of Islam. Although their politics may not be to her liking they still deserve examination as an example of relatively successful black political organisations which would claim to be anti-racist. Something unsaid is the extent to which Muslim activism has had scored some significant successes recently, such as winning state funding for Islamic schools. Again, this may not be the type of development that progressives would like, but it is still important to consider how and why these campaigns have had more success than those which are considered politically acceptable. Since Shukra's stated aim is to build a Black movement independent of the mainstream then lessons might have to be drawn from the few groups which have had some success in doing so.

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Jane Wheelock and Åge Mariussen (eds.)

## Households, Work and Economic Change: A Comparative Institutional Perspective

Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht, 1997

ISBN 0-79239-930-0 (hbk) £67.50

Reviewed by Andrew McCulloch

The editors of this book have set themselves some very difficult tasks. Firstly, their aim is to persuade those economists who might read it that institutional economics is superior to mainstream neo-classical economics for the analysis of work, household and economic change. Another aim is that, within this theoretical framework, there is a compelling case to be made for usefully comparing a small area of Norway on the Arctic Circle, Mo-i-Rana, with that of the Tyne and Wear Metropolitan Area in Northern England. A third aim has to be to weld the chapters collected together into a coherent, meaningful whole. It is with regret that I have had to conclude that the book fails on all three counts.

The opening chapter, by the editors, argues, using a tiresome and entirely inappropriate metaphor based on divorce and marriage, that the intellectual division of labour which split classical political economy into sociology and neo-classical economics meant that the household as an object of study all but disappeared. Marx is not discussed in this account and indeed it is actually very difficult to make a case, particularly, say, for Marx, that the household was a major concept within classical political economy. Fortunately, the editors do not even try, although to make their case even half-way convincing they perhaps ought to have done. As a sociologist, however, it was when the work of Max Weber (1864-1920), to which they constantly refer, was introduced, that I

began to tear at my sparse hair. I quote:

An early attempt at a remarriage between economics and sociology which throws light on the relationship between household and economy comes from Max Weber. The relation between households and the rest of the economy is central to Weber's economic theory. His point of departure was the concept of use value, itself a crucial concept for the classical school of political economists. (p.17).

I cannot imagine a more complete misreading of Weber's work. Weber himself writes about economic theory, referring to marginalist economics, that its 'theoretical insights ... provide *the basis* for the sociology of economic action' (Weber, 1978: 68) (my emphasis). It strikes me therefore as absolutely false to argue that Weber himself had an economic theory or that he was trying to return in some sense to classical political economy. His self-appointed task was to *reconcile* marginalist economics and sociology. I am therefore baffled by their claim about the centrality of the relationships of household and economy in Weber's work. It is a self-interested Talcott Parsons, the editor and translator, who, in his notes, nudges the reader, on very slim evidence, in that direction. Parsons was hoping no doubt to create a market for his ideas on social differentiation. Moreover, to be frank, there are several areas, and the passages on household budgeting are certainly one of

them, where Weber's writing in *Economy and Society* is soporific and merely superficially clever. Weber's argument, in any case, is principally directed in these passages to attacking the rational allocation of goods in non-market (i.e. socialist) societies. It is equally difficult to comprehend the basis of the interpretation offered in the book under review of Weber's *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, or again, the reference to 'the problem of order' as conceived in sociology.

An eclectic Chapter Two ('Behind the lace curtains') was an attempt to 'develop an institutionalist economics of the household, to help in understanding responses to economic change at the household level' (p.52). Unfortunately, it did not help me. In the conclusion of the book, I came across the following:

Throughout we have argued that the household is a flexible institution. Inside the household, tasks are handled by teams. People respond to change by establishing new teams to handle old tasks, and by changing the tasks they take upon themselves, for as some new tasks are accepted, old tasks may be rejected or lost (p.195).

Had I struggled to understand the meandering argument in Chapter Two to end at a point such as this? Gender and power were mentioned in Chapter Two but always the tendency was to end in vague generalities. And, if there is a point in the teams analogy, would it not be that in this unequal and oppressive world someone in authority, with power, usually picks them? I longed for some specifics about households which recognised or engaged with the idea that households might be of vastly different kinds. I yearned for some explanation, say, of the rising headship rate, of the power relationships in households, of class

differences in households, anything to get my teeth into.

The contributors strive to persuade that comparing an area with a population of 20,000 with one of 240,000 set within completely different landscapes, with different political structures (post-Thatcher versus Scandinavian corporatist), once dependent on resource-based industries but Mo-i-Rana was once a one industry town, etc., is a useful exercise. The two areas are similar because they each constitute a local labour market and they each cover an area commutable by car. The point of a comparison should be to throw into relief something problematic that needs explanation. Mill's method of differences this is not, for I never learned the focus of this particular comparison.

There are polished performances here: For instance, the Professors M. Hill and I. Stone each turn in well-crafted, if unoriginal essays, on, respectively, the social security systems of the two countries (and a pained lament for the decline of Britain's) and the 'market-led' restructuring of Tyne and Wear. Neither particularly relate to the intended theoretical themes of the book. Much of the research reported in the body of the book, some of it neatly done but based, incidentally, on rather small samples, appears to have been already published elsewhere, even if not in English. However, Robert Holland's contribution is an extreme example of this: 80 per cent of his brief essay had appeared word for word in a previous publication (Hollands, 1995). (Those interested in the minutiae of his intellectual biography can even find a newer, improved version in the *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*.) There are interesting snippets of research reported here, and the book is much better for them, but it feels like research to find them, despite the guide that the editors supply for readers in their introduction.

Ian Stone reports, in passing, the following about the period 1972 to date. 'In Wearside, the rise in part-time working among Wearside women (+56 per cent), barely outweighs the fall which has occurred in full-time employment among females alone...' and he concludes, on the basis that two part-time jobs may equal one full-time, that 'there is no case for arguing that female employment has increased at all. (A similar point might be made regarding aggregate income from employment, given the generally lower

levels of pay associated with female and part-time work.)' (p.80). I thought this information was stunning but I could not find anything in this book to help me understand it.

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John Holloway and Eloína Peláez (eds.)

## Zapatista! Reinventing Revolution in Mexico

Pluto Press, London, 1998, pp.229.

ISBN 0-7453-1178-4 (hbk) £40.00

ISBN 0-7453-1177-6 (pbk) £13.99

Reviewed by Massimo De Angelis

The studies collected in this book are a welcome and timely contribution to a debate that, at least in this country, does not exist. Pity, because the key themes surrounding the Zapatista's phenomenon are of extreme importance for those interested in any emancipatory project. The missing debate, or at least its confinement to small circles of activists, is perhaps due to the hard core set of values of many on the left for whom 'socialism' (or any other -ism) is a state of affair, and the way to 'get there' is a process of 'raising consciousness'. The Zapatistas don't identify with any of the '-isms' of the left (although they are partially inspired by them) and they don't believe in the role of a vanguard (whether reformist or revolutionary) leading the way to a future social organisation.

This book provides information on the struggles of the Zapatistas and the

indigenous communities in Chiapas to those who have not yet been exposed to it (the introduction by John Holloway and Eloína Peláez may be of great help in this matter). It also serves as material for reflection for both enthusiast and critic of the Zapatista's struggle. Often enough, to the enthusiast, the Zapatista's uprising is one of the many national liberation struggles that follow the tradition of the many Latin American guerrilla movements in the last half a century. To the critics, it is one of the many revolts of a peasant population necessarily backward and not holding adequate 'class consciousness' or an objective social position, able to challenge the power of capital. The common themes running through the different articles of this book reveal how different the Zapatista's experience is and how difficult it is to classify it with the traditional stereotypes of the left.

The Zapatista's break with the traditional themes of the left has several coordinates, many of which are discussed at length in the essays of this book. For example, in the chapter by Patricia King and Francisco Javier Villanueva and the chapter by John Holloway, instead of the party, the emphasis is on the community; instead of 'efficient' democratic centralism or majority vote, the emphasis is on community's constitutive forms of direct democracy and consultation processes; instead of the political organisation doing the talking, its role is to do the listening; instead of 'unity is strength', unity is what allows difference to exist; instead of being locked into the dead polarity of revolution vs reform, human dignity is put at the centre of political practice.

In the chapter by Margara Millan, instead of the subordination of women to the task 'ahead', emphasis is on women's struggles within indigenous communities and the Zapatistas themselves. In the chapter by Luis Lorenzano, instead of the traditional question of the seizure of power, the political issue becomes the *exercise* of popular power; rather than an abstractly defined 'working class' as *the* social force of transformation, emphasis is on the processes of social transformation and the questions raised by the ongoing recomposition of labour in a condition of almost globally universal relation to capital.

To those who think that Chiapas is an insignificant region for global capital, the chapter by Ana Esther Cecena and Andres Barrera can provide a good antidote as it shows that this extremely poor region of Latin America, is at the centre of two contradictory strategies of global capital, one linked to the petroleum industry and the other linked to the modern biotechnology industry.

For the many pure objectivists of the left, a useful read would be the chapter by

Enrique Rajchenberg and Catherine Heau-Lambert. They provide a good account of the meaning of symbolism through the history of the Zapatista's movement, and illustrate the powerful role played by symbols in shaping social forces of transformation and collective identities and imagination.

Finally, the chapter by Harry Cleaver on how the Zapatista's struggle moved from the jungle on to the internet, thus gaining in strength and impact and therefore becoming not only of national but also global relevance, serves as an antidote for both those who think that the internet is pure communism and those who think that the internet is irrelevant for processes of social transformation. The cyber-war aspects of the Zapatista's struggle shows that the internet is a site of struggle.

All in all, Holloway and Pelez have produced a book which touches a range of themes of crucial importance, and steps far beyond the arid categorisation generally too easily used to judge struggles. It goes without saying that no single book can provide answers to all the questions that a movement such as the Zapatistas raises or, more generally, to the problems posed by today's urgent need to set 'humanity as a project' against neoliberal 'barbarism'. But this book goes a long way to filling an empty space in the political debate of this country. After reading this book we may not only know more about the Zapatistas struggle and its meaning, but also start asking questions about our link with the Zapatistas and to what extent our human condition and our aspirations on this side of the world echoes that of the indigenous people in struggle in Chiapas. If this book makes us ask questions, then it will have done its job, because as the Zapatistas say, 'by asking we walk'.

Ray Kiely

## Industrialization and Development. A Comparative Analysis

UCL Press, London, 1998, pp.196.

ISBN 1-85728-545-X (pbk) £12.95

Reviewed by Scott MacWilliam

This is an ambitious book, directed at three questions: the relationship between industrialization and development, the agents that promote industrialization, and the relationship between late industrialization and the global economy. It is typical of the crisp, direct manner in which Kiely has constructed the argument that these objects of enquiry are set out with precision in the opening paragraph of the first chapter. The rest of a neatly argued thesis follows in a book which should make a useful introductory text to particular arguments about the three questions.

Kiely deals with these and related matters through the prism of Gavin Kitching's 1982 proposition that 'if you want to develop, you must industrialize'. Once this 'old, growth-led orthodoxy' (p.9) is subject to a brief logical scrutiny, the bulk of the book is concerned with what Kiely terms a case study consideration. Through a succinct examination of so-called 'historical models' of capitalist (Britain, Japan and other 'later industrializations') and socialist (Soviet and Chinese) countries, Kiely formulates a binary model of *laissez faire*, non-developmental industrialization and socialist industrialization. The latter made advances, in particular propelling the growth of the productive forces but did not end exploitation or inequality. While rejecting the convergence thesis, that all industrial societies are inevitably hierarchical and technologically-driven toward growing similarity, Kiely concludes that socialist industrialization was effected 'at the cost of any real commitment to genuine emancipation' (p.54).

The essential problem for late industrializing nation-states then becomes how to industrialize and emancipate, or bring 'real development', growth without exploitation, simultaneously. The task is made more difficult by the fact of lateness and a global hierarchy of nations. In short, Kiely remains wedded to the intellectual tradition of dependency thought, in which there is a First World and a Third World, while giving it a contemporary gloss. Although there 'has been some (limited and low value) industrialization in the periphery based on the inducement of low labour costs' (p.78), the major advantages still lie with early industrializers 'based on successive waves of technological innovation' (p.77). It is at this point that the matter of agency arises for Kiely, when the question becomes how can the periphery overcome its heritage.

Chapters Six, Seven and Eight respond to this question by examining, again via case studies of particular countries, the various strategies taken at the periphery to overcome the handicap of lateness. Brazil and India are taken as the models of import substitution industrialization (ISI), and the 'four tigers' of Hong Kong, South Korea and Taiwan as well as the special economic zones of China for the consequences of pursuing export oriented industrialization (EOI). Kiely concludes from these instances that 'all of the industrialization processes have had their "dark side"' (p.142), an assessment unlikely to have been modified had the book been written after the current economic collapse began to throw millions on to the scrap-

heap of unemployment in so much of the world. Agency, for Kiely, is how to reduce 'the awfulness' of development.

Through a consideration of various arguments about late industrialization ('disorganised capitalism', 'flexible accumulation' and 'post-Fordism'), Kiely eschews universalist solutions for the 'Third World'. Instead much is left to happenstance for determining just how awful industrialization does become. While this sense of industrialization correctly grasps the extent to which it has been and remains the effect of capitalism as a spontaneous process, not the consequence of constructivist intent, Kiely misses just how much intent or agency already has become central to the modern idea of development. This is surprising, for he refers to Mike Cowen and Bob Shenton's *Doctrines of Development* (Routledge, London: 1996), the seminal account of the formation of this idea, but does not confront or incorporate its main thesis.

Their conclusion is that the modern idea of development is the unity of two

processes, one spontaneous, as in capitalist development, the other intentional. The intentional or constructivist process was designed to ameliorate or negate the destructive or negative of capitalism.

It is not sufficient to say, as does Kiely, that 'the very *process* of industrialization... is ultimately socially determined' (p.17), without dealing with the combined unity of spontaneity and intent which constitutes the social determination of the process of capitalist industrialization. Furthermore, it should be recognised that there is nothing new in saying that development should be more than growth through industrialization, with all its awfulness. For the idea of development which was framed in the nineteenth century at the metropolitan centre of Europe as well as in the peripheral colonies, had this object at its centre from the outset. The problem is to frame a new idea of development which tries to move beyond, negate and then provide a synthesis against the development which merely ameliorates. The rub is in development at least as much as in industrialization.

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Edward Reiss

## Marx: A Clear Guide

Pluto Press, London, 1997, pp.192.

ISBN 0-7453-1015-X (hbk) £35.00

ISBN 0-7453-1014-1 (pbk) £10.99

Reviewed by David Watts

*'Reiss's work sets out to be a clear guide, but ends up as one more likely to confuse and mislead.'* Discuss.

Part of the problem with *Marx: A Clear Guide* is that Reiss has adopted a kind of balanced BBC approach, as if this is a subject where 'objectivity' is desirable, never mind possible. At times, as with his suggested

essay titles, it's a policy that at least raises a smile—"Marx forgets that the rich have often worked hard and deserve their success." Discuss.' And when you've finished that one, 'Are Marx's ideas about revolution and socialism anything more than wishful thinking dressed up as serious theory?'

But as with the BBC, the whole idea of even-handedness hides more than it reveals.

Take the transition from feudalism to capitalism for example. It's one thing to point out the well documented inaccuracies and flaws in Marx's general sweep across history. It's quite another to suggest that Marx's account is outdated because 'modern historians argue that the enclosures actually created more work than they destroyed.' The enclosures can only be understood as one part of a long process of economic and political violence which resulted in the enforced transfer of millions of peasants into industrial wage-labour over the course of a few generations. Or to put it more simply, the enclosures created work because that is precisely what they were designed to do.

Reiss is just as disingenuous when discussing the inadequacies of the labour theory of value. Here he points to the 'more plausible theory of exploitation' developed by John Roemer and quotes approvingly from a resume of Roemer's book: 'Roemer

sets out to solve the mystery of how there can be exploitation in a system without anyone being forced to work... Class and exploitation emerge from free choice in a system where assets are unequally distributed.' Of course the 'theory' that the labour market is free of compulsion—that no-one is 'forced to work'—is probably quite attractive to someone who can imagine the enclosures as primarily part of a vast job creation scheme...

In his defence, Reiss would probably argue that these are subtleties way beyond the reach of his target audience, the school and college student. But it's hard to see what even they could gain from such glib comments as 'Marx's approach was intrinsically flawed. The seeds of negativity were buried deep within it. Marxism was therefore doomed to failure and had to resort to terror to prop itself up.' Simplistic, patronising and wilfully misleading, *Marx: A Clear Guide* has nothing to recommend it.

Richard Evans

## Regenerating Town Centres

Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1997, pp.174.

ISBN 0-7190-4718-8 (hbk) £30.00

Reviewed by Rob Atkinson

Since the mid-1970s the role and future of urban areas in contemporary Britain has received considerable attention. However, less attention has been given to the plight of 'town centres' which, historically speaking, have been at the hub of social and commercial life in urban areas. Richard Evans' timely book, drawing upon original research and a wide range of literature, raises fundamental questions about the position and role of town centres today and in the future. What emerges is a confirmation of the experiences which I suspect

many of us have of town centres—a mixture of decline, constant restructuring, 'placelessness' and crass consumerism. Increasingly town centres have ceased to be multifunctional spaces of the 'public realm' and become monofunctional spaces which are abandoned once shops and offices close. The majority of this book is concerned with how this situation came about.

Part of the problem with studying town centres is how does one define them? Rather like attempts to define the 'urban' the definition of what is a town centre

remains 'slippery', as soon as one thinks a definition is within ones grasp it slips between ones fingers. Evans' discussion of 'what is a town centre' is no exception, in the end we are offered an historical morphology—town centres are historically constituted centres of civic life where people work, shop, and associate, which may be further disaggregated according to their size and dominant function(s).

The core of the book is concerned with identifying and discussing the forces which have shaped the evolution of town centres over the last forty years and which will continue to shape them in the future. In particular Evans highlights the role of four forces—retailing, commercial office use, the property industry and the motor car, whilst acknowledging that government policy has played a key role in structuring and facilitating developments.

Changes in retailing since the 1960s have transformed most centres, initially through large scale redevelopment which turned many into soulless concrete wastelands. Later these centres were challenged by the growth of hypermarkets on the edge of town in the 1970s, then by the growth of retail parks in the 1980s and finally by the emergence of regional shopping centres in the late 1980s. Until the mid-1980s many town centres appeared to have retained a key role as locations for offices. However, this was to change as escalating land prices, changes in information technology and down-sizing led many firms (and local government) to either close down or to decentralise backroom services to cheaper out of town locations, retaining only the higher managerial functions within cities. Moreover, the dominance of town centres by offices led directly to their abandonment after work, undermining any notion of centres as spaces of the public realm.

The property industry has been central to these developments. Rising land prices

in the 1980s saw a boom in speculative office building which forced many traditional users out of town centres further undermining their multifunctional character. The subsequent slump in the property market during the early 1990s, and the presence of a large quantity of 'used' office space, led to a major oversupply of office space undermining rental values and thus investments. During the same period many developers were also promoting out of town sites which drew retailers away from centres, thus further undermining many town centres.

Easy and cheap access to town centres has always been crucial to their viability. With transport policy increasingly favouring the private car over all other forms of transport towns were redesigned to reflect this dominance. At the same time subsidies to public transport were progressively reduced, culminating in the Conservative's policies of the 1980s which effectively made it too expensive and/or inconvenient for many people to travel to the centre of town. Ironically this policy of giving absolute priority to the car led to increased congestion which persuaded more retailers and offices to move out of town.

The combination of these forces undermined many previously vibrant town centres. Those that survived were desperate to attract new investment and councils became increasingly willing to allow large retailers to (re-)develop sites in any way they saw fit. Large retailers were thus able to appropriate formerly public spaces and to control them as if they were private spaces, regulating the flow of shoppers and excluding those deemed undesirable. In this context '...investors, property owners and shoppers see town centres primarily as places of investment, profit or consumption' (p.79), further undermining any notion of town centres as part of the public realm. However, as Evans

points out, retailers (and councils) have belatedly begun to realise that their survival depends upon finding a balance between these contending notions of use. As a result there has been a move to employ Town Centre Managers (TCMs) to take a more strategic view of how a town centre should function, although very few TCMs have been appointed and their powers and budgets remain relatively modest.

Evans recognises that town centres reflect wider societal developments and that the fragmentation and social polarisation characteristic of Britain in the 1990s cannot be expected to pass them by. In particular I would have liked Evans to investigate these issues in greater depth to bring out the complex linkages, and contradictions, between the forces affecting

town centres. Central to Evans' suggestions for the future of town centres is the idea of a public realm in which a sense of community is engendered by greater public participation. Whether retailers, property speculators, etc, are willing to countenance such involvement, particularly if it affects profits, is doubtful. The search for a compromise amongst the different, and often conflicting, interests in town centres is likely to remain elusive and the appointment of TCMs is unlikely to produce any fundamental change in the situation. This is especially so given that the wider forces which produced the decline of many town centres seem unlikely to abate in the future and thus it is hard to envisage any widespread revival in their fortunes.

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Anthony Bogues

## Caliban's Freedom: The Early Political Thought of C.L.R. James

Pluto Press, London, 1998, pp.xii +199.

ISBN 0-7453-0613-6 (hbk) £40.00

ISBN 0-7453-0614-4 (pbk) £13.99

Reviewed by David Harvie

C.L.R. James is one of the twentieth century's most important revolutionaries and political thinkers. Sadly, his work has been neglected by far too many people. Bogues' book, in attempting to draw attention to James and his ideas, must therefore be welcomed. (Anna Grimshaw, editor of several collections of James's writings, should also be praised.)

A decade on from the collapse of the Soviet Union, the revolutionary movement, at least in the UK, is in crisis. Obviously the orthodox Communist Parties, so connected with Moscow, have struggled and mostly folded. But most Trotskyist parties also defined themselves in relation to the USSR, often differentiating themselves

on the basis of their political position on this state. And as they flounder, this has been transmitted to the (class struggle) anarchist movement, which for much of the century has defined itself in opposition to the Trots. Coupled to the fact that, despite capital's offensive of the past 20 years, the 'revolutionary' parties and groups remain minuscule, it is high time major questions were asked.

Of course, crisis is also a time of opportunity. There is surely potential for those who are struggling *against* various aspects to capitalism, and *for* their own happiness, to regroup. There is potential for some sort of realignment of the revolutionary movement, and even for an explosion of

resistance. Still, it is time for some serious political thinking and reassessment.

In our search for ideas and inspiration, we could do a lot worse than looking to the work of C.L.R. James.

C.L.R. James is known for many things: novelist, playwright, political theorist, literary critic, cricket commentator, revolutionary. He was born in Trinidad in 1901, moving to England in 1932. He travelled to the United States in 1938, remaining there until he was deported in 1953. He then lived in Britain and travelled in both Africa and the Caribbean, also spending a further ten years in the U.S. He died in London in 1989.

James was, for much of his first stay in the United States, an important figure in the American Trotskyist movement, first in the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP), then in the breakaway Workers' Party, then for a second time in the SWP. But from the very beginning of his 'career' as a Trotskyist he had doubts. As co-founder (with Raya Dunayevskaya or 'Freddie Forest') of the so-called Johnson-Forest Tendency, James ('J.R. Johnson') struck off in a new theoretical direction, developing alternative positions to orthodox Trotskyism on, for example, the nature of the Soviet Union and the relationship between the black liberation movement and the struggle for socialism. The Johnson-Forest Tendency broke completely with Trotskyism in 1951, becoming 'Correspondence'. When Dunayevskaya, who is credited with being the founder of 'Marxist-Humanism', left in 1956 to set up '*News and Letters*', James, along with remaining collaborators Grace Lee and Martin Glaberman, formed 'Facing Reality'; this finally dissolved in the 1970s.

Central planks of James' political thought were the centrality both of work and alienation (thus his and the Tendency's characterisation of the USSR as state capitalist), and of the self-activity of the working class. These planks together led to

the standpoint that the proletariat's 'revolt is not against politics and the distribution of the surplus value; *the revolt is against value production itself* (from *The Invading Socialist Society*, by James, Forest and Ria Stone [Detroit: Bewick Editions, 1972]; cited by Bogues; emphasis in original). Also central to the Tendency's political thinking was the importance it attached to the independent struggle of sectors of the population, in particular the black liberation movement.

*Caliban's Freedom* covers James' life from his childhood and early adulthood in Trinidad until his expulsion from the U.S. in 1953. Bogues discusses the influences upon James, his political activity and most of his major publications during this period. The book is straightforward. This is no criticism—I like it, —more a reflection of the content of James' own writing. James himself wrote so lucidly and widely in scope, and with such apparent awareness of his own situation, that it difficult for anyone else producing a sympathetic study, as is this book, to add a great deal. *Caliban's Freedom* is written largely chronologically, with main chapters on James' early life, his first relatively brief time in England and then his 15-year stay in the United States. There are then dedicated chapters on 'James and the Race Question' and the development of the independent Marxism of James and his collaborators during this period. A second volume, covering the latter period of James' life, is planned and I look forward to its publication.

This book is succinct and clear. So much of James' work is nothing short of brilliant and very inspiring. Bogues has managed to convey this extremely well. He also includes many lengthy James quotations, which I like. As such *Caliban's Freedom* serves as an excellent primer for one of the century's outstanding revolutionary thinkers. C.L.R. James should be read. If you are unfamiliar with his work Bogues' book is as good a place to start as any.

Mike Noon and Paul Blyton

## The Realities of Work

Macmillan, Houndmills, Basingstoke, 1997. pp.235.

ISBN 0-333-63640-6 (hbk)

ISBN 0-333-63641-4 (pbk) £14.99

Reviewed by Martin Spence

Workplace management is about controlling labour on behalf of capital. This is the bottom line, common to all the competing schools of management technique and theory, from the brutal cynicism of Taylor to the newspeak of 'human capital' and 'human resources'. And the corollary of this is that any independent workers' interests, running counter to those of capital, must be denounced, denied, or rendered invisible.

Noon and Blyton's book is based on the proposition that workers do indeed have interests of their own, such as avoiding fatigue, maximising income, having fun, gaining a sense of control over their work, and so on. Their approach is essentially anthropological and descriptive, focussing on the experience of paid work in modern Britain, so that while their book is not a Marxist text, it is a text of interest to Marxists.

The authors take great pains to define their approach in terms of ontological pluralism: that is to say, they believe that there are many equally real worlds—the 'world' of the worker is every bit as real as the 'world' of management—but for each such world there is in principle only one comprehensive and valid theory. Noon and Blyton are however anxious that this position should not be confused with the open-ended relativism of the post-modernists, to whom they are implacably hostile.

Having absorbed this theoretical stance, I have to admit that I was hard put to see just how it informed the rest of the book—or have things got so bad that the

very act of discussing workers' experience is in itself an assertion of ontological pluralism?

The book deals effectively with certain themes: workers' motivation, skill, gender, and 'survival tactics'. It is much less satisfactory when it tackles unfair discrimination, and when it suddenly broadens its definition of work to take in unpaid activities such as housework and informal/illegal activities such as drug-dealing, prostitution or moonlighting.

There is of course a common assumption that most people work primarily to earn money. But the Social Change and Economic Life Initiative (SCELI) study found 26% of workers declaring that they worked primarily for other reasons, such as enjoyment of the job or a sense of achievement. And 67% said they would continue working even if they suddenly found themselves with enough money to meet all their needs. Noon and Blyton attribute to Marx the view that workers in capitalist society are necessarily motivated simply by the need to earn money, and they argue that SCELI demonstrates the inadequacy of this view. In this they are both wrong and right: wrong to simplify Marx's position in this way; but right to take seriously the SCELI findings, which demonstrate workers' subjective need to rationalise and humanise daily working life.

We should also note in passing that in another international survey, on the 'Meaning of Working', British workers emerge as frustrated utopians—deeply

dissatisfied with their current employment, but also wedded in principle to the idea of work as a source of satisfaction and fulfilment.

In their discussion on skill, the authors take Braverman's deskilling thesis as a central reference point. They present a good summary of it, and of various responses to and critiques of it, including the upskilling thesis of 'human capital' theory, which underpins New Labour's industrial and training policies. Noon and Blyton themselves give most house room to those approaches which emphasise skill polarisation: for instance, the 'compensatory' theory, which proposes that technological change is tending to deskill direct productive tasks, while increasing skill levels required in the ancillary tasks of installation, maintenance, and programming.

Definitions of skill are replete with assumptions about identity and gender, to the point where some researchers claim that 'Skilled work is work that women don't do' (Phillips and Taylor, quoted on p.95). The flip side of this masculine definition of skill is 'emotion work'. This refers to jobs where the emotional style of offering the service is part of the service itself, and it is overwhelmingly done by women, because many employers see it as

requiring a set of attitudes which are an extension of women's presumed 'natural propensity' to care for others. Emotion work is seen in a whole range of personal services, from retail and catering to airline cabin crews. The authors argue that in these sectors the affective or emotional quality of service has become an important factor in influencing customer choice.

But the brutal truth is that emotion work is highly stressful. The need to maintain an unwavering demeanour of care and goodwill, or even to project a subtle but sustained aura of sexual interest or affirmation as part of one's job, can and does take a real emotional toll. Noon and Blyton present a nice little anecdote which makes the point (and which I paraphrase):

On an airline flight, a businessman complains to a flight attendant that she isn't smiling. She looks him in the eye and says 'OK, you smile at me and I'll smile at you.' He smiles. Then she says, 'Now freeze and keep on smiling for the next 15 hours.'

Alongside the new forms of stress associated with emotion work, old forms are coming back associated with long and unsocial working hours. This isn't just a

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matter of working long hours from Monday to Friday: only a third of employees now work a conventional Monday-to-Friday week. It is also a matter of bizarre and unpredictable work patterns as employers seek to increase their returns on fixed assets, or to respond to fluctuating demand, by introducing a range of employment contracts: daily, weekly, 'seasonal hours', 'annualised hours', 'zero hours', and so on.

Longer working hours, and/or increased intensity of work during those hours, increase the incentive for workers to devise survival strategies. Noon and Blyton present a fascinating review of the literature on this area, full of devices for slowing work down and thus keeping it manageable; or speeding it up and thus winning some rest time; or avoiding it altogether by 'taking a sickie'; or making time pass through workplace games and rituals; or subtly challenging authority through jokes and banter; and so on. The anecdotes are endlessly fascinating, but what do these survival strategies mean?

Burawoy sees them ultimately as conservative, a recuperative process whereby workers mark out the boundaries of their consent to be managed. Noon and Blyton disagree, emphasising instead the constant tension between consent and resistance.

The chapters on motivation, skill, and survival, work well. However the discussion on unfair discrimination, and informal work, are disappointing and seem almost to belong to a different book. The successful chapters work because they have a clear focus on workers' experience in paid employment. But the chapter on unfair discrimination downplays workers' experience to concentrate instead on legislation, policy-making and formal procedures; and the chapter on informal work is largely concerned with defining the 'informal sector'.

It is a pity about these weak chapters towards the end, because overall this is an interesting survey of the literature on the experience of paid work in Britain today. It's well worth a read.

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**Tom Burden**

## **Social Policy and Welfare: A Clear Guide**

Pluto Press, London, 1998, pp.288.

ISBN 0-7453-0965-8 (hbk) £40.00

ISBN 0-7453-0966-6 (pbk) £13.99

**Reviewed by Allan Cochrane**

This is not a book to be read through in linear fashion from beginning to end. It is—as the sub-title makes clear—a guide to the debates and literature of social policy and welfare. It is likely to be of great value to students seeking a route through the complex thickets of policy practice, political controversy and theoretical contention which characterise the field. Its arguments are set out systematically and

clearly. Each section is accompanied by a guide to further reading and readers are consistently referred across to related sections of the book.

Burden usefully summarises a wide range of perspectives and clusters them together into a limited and manageable number of categories—'right-wing', 'reformist' and 'radical'. The value of categorising positions in this way is that

it highlights the contested nature of the field, instead of implying that the development of social welfare follows some more or less inexorable logic (whether towards a social-democratic or a neo-liberal nirvana). One danger is, of course, that each category may appear to be homogeneous, so that those politicians, activists and theorists placed in it are presumed to share the same outlook and favour the same policies. But Burden avoids this by recognising the importance of debates and disagreements within the categories, and the possibility of influences working across the divides identified. He acknowledges the tensions which exist within the main positions as well as between them.

The first part of the book is deeply (and justifiably) rooted in and informed by the British experience, despite some references to other literature and the introduction of what appear to be general concepts. The three principal perspectives are used as organising principles through the first five or six chapters of the book, highlighting a range of different ways of approaching and analysing particular social policies, social problems and strategies. The only obvious absence is that of benefits and social security which were a fundamental underpinning of the Beveridge welfare state and are at the heart of today's restructuring in the shape of Blair's 'New Deal'. But the second part of the book moves away from Britain, turning first to a consideration of the diversity of welfare states around the world (drawing on the examples of Japan, the Asian Tigers, Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands, Austria, Cuba and China), and then to a consideration of Anglophone welfare states (including Great Britain, as well as Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, the United States and Canada) before turning to the impact of globalisation on social policies and their implementation.

The move outwards from the British experience and towards global forms of social policy is very much to be welcomed. It helps to challenge the sometimes rather cosy context of much social policy debate, which tends to assume that Britain is the 'norm' against which every other country has to be judged or that only the British experience really matters very much. It usefully highlights the role of international organisations which often seem so distant from the day to day realities of social welfare practice, whether expressed in social work intervention or health provision.

For all its strengths in developing and sustaining a powerful narrative, the strategy adopted in the book also has its downsides. The three perspectives are broad ones, using them as a starting point nevertheless makes it difficult adequately to explore some issues. So, for example, radical approaches are summarised as containing two variants of Marxism, or three if Habermas counts as a Marxist, and the anti-industrialism of Illich. Feminism does make an appearance in the initial discussion of 'ideological perspectives', but only re-emerges (in two variants—Marxist and radical) as part of the radical approach in the discussion of gender. Anti-racism is treated in a similar fashion. Although surfacing from time to time, the wider critiques represented by feminism and post-colonial analysis are not pursued consistently through the book.

The challenge of summarising quite so much material in so little space also makes it difficult to acknowledge some of the continuing tensions within social policy and its debates. Since everything has to be covered in a paragraph, the scope for subtlety is severely limited. This does make for clarity, but it also sometimes leaves the reader gasping at the audacity of Burden's summaries. The three way

characterisation of perspectives often works well, but it is less convincing at the international level. So, for example, the differences between the ‘right wing’ countries (Japan, the Asian Tigers and Germany) are probably greater than the differences between some of them and countries which have been labelled differently—is Germany’s welfare system really more like that of Hong Kong than that of Sweden? Is China’s welfare strategy really more like that of Cuba than that of South Korea?

There may simply be a problem of using analytical perspectives developed in one context to describe welfare regimes in another. Exactly what is it about the Chinese ‘welfare state’ that makes it ‘radical’ in the terms introduced at the start of the book? Some of the discussion here suggests that an emphasis on encouraging people into paid employment is the key, but does that mean that the Blair government’s welfare to work strategy is also radical? Perhaps for good reasons, it is difficult to characterise

Britain in the terms applied to other countries.

One of the strengths of the book is that it provides a structured framework to work through for those seeking to study social policy and welfare—and it will be of value to introductory courses across the country. As well as offering a direct engagement with important debates, it also presents an interesting and challenging curriculum. It may be possible to criticise the details of the book, but it offers a powerful way into some of the core debates about the future of welfare in Britain and across the globe. There is a trade off between clarity, comprehensiveness and, perhaps, sophistication. But Burden’s dedication to getting across a clear and straightforward message also means that he is able to generate a powerful dynamic that will encourage students to pursue those debates. His approach encourages readers to keep asking questions rather than seeking to close them off. For that reason it is likely to be a very effective teaching text.

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