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**Review of *Repackaging the Welfare State*. Pranab Chatterjee.  
Reviewed by Larry Nackerud, University of Georgia.**

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Pranab Chatterjee, *Repackaging the Welfare State*. Washington, DC: NASW Press, 1999. \$32.95 paperback.

Pranab Chatterjee has written a very thought-provoking book. The book stands in contrast to anything I have ever read about the social welfare system of the United States and how that system fits within an international perspective. The contents of the book truly do represent a “repackaging” of the welfare state. Professor Chatterjee helps the reader move dramatically away from the old liberal vs. conservative debate and embrace a much more complex methodology of understanding. An appealing feature of the book is that while being presented with the author’s unique vision of how to re-structure the welfare state, the reader is challenged to consider how they might also achieve such a goal. The purpose of the book is stated as:

to explore how social welfare policy in the welfare states inherently serves conflicting and contradictory ends; how those ends have been poorly understood by different academic and community groups; and why it is necessary to explore a different paradigm—one from an interdisciplinary perspective—for establishing and maintaining social safety nets into the 21st century (p. 18).

This stated purpose, and more, is achieved within the parameters of the book. Professor Chatterjee combines material from a variety of diverse social science fields; political science, sociology, and anthropology, but he draws particular attention to the need for social work students, practitioners, and policy researchers to understand economics. A strong theme in the book is the correlative relationship between a well functioning economy and the ability of a country to even have a social welfare system.

The book is well structured. The contents are divided in a meaningful way into an introduction and seven chapters: 1) the welfare state: promises and performance, 2) the state as an agent of distribution, 3) functions of the state, 4) styles of redistribution, 5) styles of redistribution: boundary defining and rationing, 6) lessons learned in the 20th century, and 7) repackaging the welfare state. The first chapter is exemplary in its attainment of a sound mix of history regarding the social welfare state and the theoretical underpinnings which help the reader understand the significance of those historical events. Chapters five and six both

focus on styles of redistribution and cover a lot of ground. In these two chapters Professor Chatterjee provides exhaustive consideration of the structural elements of the welfare state. The book really hits full stride in chapter seven. Professor Chatterjee lays out with precision his vision of how the crisis in the modern welfare state can be solved. The author also demonstrates his willingness to take a strong stand on controversial issues. Consider, for example, Professor Chatterjee's axiom for a mission statement directing the repackaged welfare state:

From each according to his or her productivity, with an ongoing concern for incentives for further productivity, and to each according to his or her basic needs, modified by his or her means to meet them and the state's capacity to transfer (p. 178).

Although the official contents of the book end with chapter seven, actually the appendix and postscript are loaded with material worthy of review. In the appendix the author provides recommendations for repackaging the welfare state in the areas of income maintenance, health care, education, housing, drug policy, and most interestingly, the role of the social work profession. It is almost a given that the author's recommendations for a two-tiered health system and a social work profession which returns to a focus on "resocialization" of the poor and the vulnerable will be met in social work education circles with animated dialogue. I believe, however, it is a dialogue which will be welcomed by Professor Chatterjee.

While the strengths of the book are many, there are a few which really stand out. For example, rather than beginning the book with a litany of the details of social welfare programming, Professor Chatterjee begins by providing the reader with a sound theoretical and conceptual foundation for his later to be stated "repackaging" ideas. An additional strength of the book is its nearly constant inclusion of an international focus to discussions of social welfare planning and programming.

I would like to pay two additional compliments to the author and the book. First, even though I am familiar with many of the social welfare texts out there on the market today, focused on social welfare policy during my own course of PhD studies, and have taught the topic for the past six years, I felt I learned a great

deal from reading the book. It was a humbling experience to read such a thoughtful and comprehensive compilation of the author's decades of experience in researching, writing, and teaching about social welfare programming and policy. Second, while reading Professor Chatterjee's book for review, I happened to be teaching an advanced policy analysis course for second year MSW students. I immediately altered a number of course presentations to include material garnered from the book. Professor Chatterjee does not just describe the modern welfare state for the reader, he actually does "repackage" it.

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