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Actively Seeking Work: The Politics of Unemployment and Welfare Policy in the United States and Great Britain. Desmond King.

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medicalization of social problems and the imposition of services by formal agencies. For most of its history, American society has solved its own social problems through the intervention of relatives, neighbors and caring community members. In recent times, these endogenous forms of care have been replaced by outsiders who have succeeded in imposing a medical interpretation of social problem on local communities and in persuading them that they need professional help to deal with their problems.

McKnight provides a graphic illustration of this argument by arguing that professional bereavement counselors have infiltrated local communities to provide professional assistance at a time when the bereaved previously turned to relatives and friends for support. Through their intervention, there has been a decline in the support offered by traditional carers. To make matters worse, professional undermine personal care. The author contends that unless the process of medicalization and professionalization is reversed, the very moral basis of American society will be subverted creating serious problems in the future.

McKnight's book will have resonance with many Americans. This is, after all, a culture where communitarian and populist beliefs are deeply ingrained. However, the book overstates a problem that has been debated before. The writings of Illich, Lasch and other popular intellectuals who are hostile to formalized responses to social need are now well known. Nevertheless, McKnight's book is worth reading. It provides interesting insights into the way populist ideas continue to exert a powerful cultural influence and, despite its tendency to exaggerate, it demonstrate the need to maintain a balance between community and formalized systems of support.

Desmond King, *Actively Seeking Work: The Politics of Unemployment and Welfare Policy in the United States and Great Britain*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1995. \$17.95 papercover.

The modern welfare state is based on the notion that employment is the primary mechanism by which people earn income and thus maintain adequate levels of welfare. Social policy and the social services should function to supplement income earned from employment or substitute for it when employment is interrupted or terminated. This idea was institutionalized in

Bismarck's original social security proposals, in the New Deal job creation programs, and in Beveridge's insistence that full employment is a precondition for effective social intervention.

It would seem, therefore, that employment policy should form an integral part of social policy. However, as Desmond King points out, social policy in Britain and the United States has paid scant attention to employment issues. Instead of seeking actively to promote employment, social policy has sought to provide assistance to those who are, for various reasons, unemployed. Unlike the Scandinavian countries where labor market and social policies are highly integrated, work-welfare programs in Britain and the United States operate at the margins of the welfare state catering to groups who are themselves marginal to society.

King's definition of work-welfare programs include employment exchanges, job-training schemes and workfare programs which require employment as a condition for benefit. He argues on the basis of an extensive analysis of the evidence that all three have failed to promote the goal of fostering employment and independence for persons receiving social aid. They have failed not only because wider liberal attitudes in society undermine their purpose but because they have become institutionalized within the social welfare system and are thus resistant to much needed attempts at reform. The identification of these programs with the hard-core unemployed, the indolent and, in the United States, with a 'welfare culture' effectively prevents them from making a positive contribution. It is only when the compartmentalization of these programs is ended that reform will be possible.

Although some analysts will disagree with King's rather pessimistic analysis, this important book is one of the first to provide a comprehensive account of work-welfare policies and programs in Britain and the United States. It is richly documented, theoretically grounded and interesting. Hopefully, it will foster more research into the relationship between employment and social policy. Given the current challenges facing traditional social welfare approaches, research of this kind is badly needed.