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Building America: The Democratic Promise of Public Work. Harry C. Boyte and Nancy N. Kari.

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policy analysts know only too well, his predictions have proved to be correct before. For this reason alone, his book needs to be read and heeded.

Harry C. Boyte and Nancy N. Kari, *Building America: The Democratic Promise of Public Work*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1996. \$54.96 hardcover, \$18.95 papercover.

Despite corporate downsizing and the export of jobs to low income regions of the world, work remains central to the lives of the vast majority of the nation's citizens. Most of the population engages in regular employment and most find fulfillment in their careers. Having a job is a key element of modern life.

Despite the importance of work, the authors of this book claim that countless people today are dissatisfied with their jobs. Work has become a means to an end rather than a fulfilling life experience. Employment is the way income is generated to pay bills and meet the many other mundane demands of everyday life. Frustrated with their jobs, many people are alienated and disengage from those communal activities which are the essence of a vibrant democracy. No wonder that more and more people withdraw from civic affairs and fail to vote in elections.

To reinvigorate American democracy, Boyte and Kari urge that public work again be given the emphasis that it once enjoyed. When groups of citizens join together to improve their communities through communal labor, they become socially committed and responsive to the needs of others. Providing an interesting account of the history of public works in the United States, the authors claim that democratic institutions can be improved through civic engagement in public work and that society as a whole will benefit. This claim is further supported by positive accounts of people's involvement in a wide variety of public work activities today.

In addition to its interesting message, the book provides a useful account of the New Deal's job creation programs as well as many examples of current public work projects. However, it would have benefited from a more extensive discussion of the role of public work in social welfare. The so-called welfare reforms of recent years have placed great emphasis on moving needy people off government social programs and into productive work. In

view of widespread skepticism about the ability of many welfare recipients to find remunerative employment, a discussion of this kind would have been welcomed. Nevertheless, this is a stimulating book which should provoke much debate.