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*Creating a National Home: Building the Veteran's Welfare State, 1986-1900.* Patrick J. Kelly

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elderly people are dependent on state pensions, others effectively manage the different sources of income that accrue to them. There are also significant differences in the way governments seek to formulate pension policies. Despite its misleading title, which suggests a much broader analysis of enterprise and social policy, this account of changing pension policies in the industrial nations is a significant addition to the literature.

Patrick J. Kelly, *Creating a National Home: Building the Veteran's Welfare State. 19860–1900*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997. \$ 37.50 hardcover.

Numerous explanations for the emergence of the so-called welfare state in the industrial nations in the middle decades of this century have been offered by social scientists. Generally these explanations have emphasized the role of class in the evolution of state welfare. While Marxists view welfare statism as little more than a conspiratorial attempt on the part of capitalists to subdue the revolutionary potential of the working class, social democrats regard the creation of comprehensive government welfare programs as a triumph of working class struggle. Although functionalist explanations emphasize the important of industrialization in the genesis of state social programs, they too regard class as an important factor in welfare development.

In recent years, scholars such as Theda Skocpol have offered a radically different interpretation of the emergence of government social welfare. Skocpol's historical analysis contends that the American welfare state did not emerge out of class struggle but rather from campaigns for the introduction of pensions for widows and civil war veterans in the 19th century. The initial impetus for the welfare state was not rooted in European style class politics but in populist attempts to provide for needy mothers and soldiers.

In his engaging book on the factors that gave rise to a network of residential institutions for the disabled veterans of the American civil war, Patrick Kelly extends Skocpol's work. His impressively detailed account of the way disabled war veterans were initially supported by philanthropic organizations and later by the federal government shows that populist sentiment and organized interest group politics were vitally important for the

emergence of statutory social welfare in the United States. Although the federal government initially insisted that the needs of disabled veterans should be met by charitable enterprises, persistent pressure from organized groups of veterans and their advocates resulted in the creation of what was known as the National Home. Today, its successor, the Veteran's Administration, manages the largest network of hospitals and related health care services in the country.

Kelly's book is easy to read, highly informative and scholarly. It builds on Skocpol's pioneering work and will be an essential reference for anyone concerned with the historical evolution of social policy in the United States.

William Epstein, *Welfare in America: How Social Science Fails the Poor*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997. \$ 45.00 hardcover, \$ 19.95 papercover.

Although social welfare policies originate in political processes, government policy making has long been informed by the ideas of social scientists. At the turn of the century, Social Darwinism and an obsession with 'feble-mindedness' in social science circles fostered the emergence of social programs that favored institutionalization and the sterilization of many needy people. During the 1930s, Keynesianism and related interventionist ideas provided an intellectual basis for the social policies of the New Deal. Communitarian populism exerted a similar influence on the formulation of President Johnson's War on Poverty Programs in the 1960s. In more recent times, the theories of Charles Murray, Lawrence Mead and Marvin Olasky have shaped the Republican Party's approach to social welfare, and contributed substantially to what many experts today regard as the demise of the welfare state.

In this useful book, William Epstein examines the contribution of contemporary social science thinking to American social policy formulation. The book is both a compendium and a critique. While documenting the ideas of a host of thinkers who currently inform social welfare policy, Epstein also berates the lack of rigorous efforts to test the veracity and usefulness of these ideas in policy implementation. While social science knowledge continues to inform the policy making process, he argues that