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Human Rights and Social Policy in the 21st Century. Joseph
Wronka

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its application in major social programs seldom results in careful performance assessments. Where assessment are made, their claims of effectiveness are seldom dependable. Inaccurate data, inappropriate methodologies and weak scientific designs negate assumptions about the efficacy of policy approaches based on social science theories. The depressing result is that social science knowledge does not drive the policy making process but tends rather to support the ideological preconceptions of the proponents of particular approaches. The result is a failure to formulate policy interventions that will effectively address the needs of the poor.

While some readers may view Epstein's critique as unduly pessimistic, this should not detract from the major contribution he has made to documenting, in an encyclopedic way, the vast body of social science literature that has accumulated in recent years to illuminate many complex aspects of social welfare policy. His summaries of social science contributions to welfare reform, employment, family disintegration and other issues are comprehensive, informative and incisive. This excellent book will undoubtedly be widely consulted.

Joseph Wronka, *Human Rights and Social Policy in the 21st Century*.
Langham, MD: University Press of America, 1998 (revised edition). \$ 52.00 hardcover, \$ 25.00 papercover.

As reports of civil strife and government oppression in different parts of the world continue to dominate the popular media, the issue of human rights remains at the forefront of public consciousness. But, as Joseph Wronka points out in this revised edition to his informative book, the notion of human rights has social as well as civil and political dimensions. The emphasis placed on social rights in the United Nations *Declaration of Human Rights* and similar international instruments is seldom mentioned, and yet it is as important as the civil and political freedoms which are more frequently referred to. This has created a double standard which focuses attention on civil rights abuses in many poor nations but ignores the way industrial countries such as the United States have avoided their obligation to ensure social rights for all. The fact that the United States has still not ratified the United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of the Child* suggests that much more

needs to be done before the social aspects of human rights are properly respected by a nation that leads the world in advocating for human rights.

Wronka's book begins with a detailed analysis of the United Nations Declaration, describing its contents and tracing its historical evolution. He compares its key provisions with the Constitution of the United States and with those of several other American states as well. He highlights key similarities and differences and points out that it is in the field of social policy that the notion of human rights is least well developed. The book contains an interesting historical review emphasizing the emergence of civil and political rights. It is in this regard that the book could have benefited from a more extensive discussion of the work of T. H. Marshall and other social citizenship writers whose ideas have been challenged in recent times. While these writers sought to provide a normative basis for government social provision, they have been undermined by critics such as Lawrence Mead who have stressed the obligations rather than rights of citizenship. Nevertheless, Wronka's book covers a substantive field and should be widely used in social policy teaching. His ability to integrate international material with the more localized interests of many students is particularly commendable.