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## *Taking Stock: American Government in the Twentieth Century.* Morton Keller and R. Shep Melnick (Eds.).

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While written for parents who are thinking of adopting a special needs child, this book is an excellent reference for professionals who are responsible for adoptions, or for anyone interested in adoption policy. O'Hanlon and Laws are careful to point out that the book does not substitute for consultation with a knowledgeable attorney. Nevertheless, they have made the process user friendly by citing examples of parents who have overcome problems with adoption financial assistance through persistence and the application of knowledge and advocacy skills described in this book.

Morton Keller and R. Shep Melnick (Eds.), *Taking Stock: American Government in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999. \$54.95 hardcover, \$17.95 papercover.

As the new century begins, is appropriate to consider what government intervention has achieved over the last hundred years. During the 20th century, governments around the world have become involved in economic, social, cultural activities to a historically unprecedented extent. However, the expansion of state intervention has become highly controversial. While many point to the positive achievements of government intervention, others believe that it has been disastrous. They claim that government 'interference' in economic and social affairs has been costly, wasteful, intrusive and oppressive. These criticisms have been widely accepted and today, government programs are often vilified by politicians, academics and the media.

This edited book by Morton Keller and Shep Melnick contains an interesting collection of papers designed to address the question of how state intervention has changed over the last century. The book focuses on five major spheres of government activity, namely trade and tariff policy, immigration, the environment, civil rights and social welfare. The authors show that there are interesting similarities between public policy issues at the beginning of the the 20th century and its end, but that there are also significant differences. These differences are perhaps most noticeable in the fields of environmental protection and civil rights where the role of government has been significantly extended and where the types of programs adopted have had a major influence.

The chapter on social welfare by Theda Skocpol will be of particular interest to those in social policy and social work. While Skocpol also identifies continuities and changes, unlike many historical accounts of the evolution of government social services, she avoids an optimistic linear interpretation and instead stresses the cyclical and equivocal nature of political support for the welfare state. She points out that the gains of the Progressive Era were challenged in the years following the First World War and required the Great Depression to stimulate the interventionism of the New Deal. She speculates on whether similar events will rekindle the flame of welfarism in the indeterminate social and political climate of the early years of the 21st century. The book is permeated with interesting questions of this kind. It is thought provoking and informative. Although a more systematic assessment of the achievements of government over the last century would have strengthened the book, it deserves to be widely read.

Chris Crowther, *Policing Urban Poverty*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000. \$65.00 hardcover.

For most of this century, academic debates about the nature and causes of poverty have taken place within sociology, social policy and social work, and policy proposals for dealing with the problem have focused on a variety of social service interventions from the provision of income support and other social services to skills training and job creation. But, as Chris Crowther shows in his study of poverty and policing in Britain and America, the preoccupation with the social dimensions of poverty is changing. Today, poverty is increasingly linked with criminal activity, and its containment and cure is increasingly regarded as the proper purview of law enforcement.

Urban poverty has become closely associated with drug dealing, violence and other negative behavioral traits associated with what is now widely but ambiguously referred to as the 'underclass'. This idea is not a new one. Indeed, as Crowther reminds us, it is rooted in 19th century images of what was known as the 'dangerous and perishing class', the 'residuum' or 'lumpenproletariat'. The revival of the notion of an underclass has created an image of the urban poor which draws on spatial and racist stereotypes. It has generated a moral panic among middle class and