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Policing Urban Poverty. Chris Crowther.

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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

fostered the idea that containment, confinement and repression through the agency of law enforcement is the best way of dealing with the problem. As a result, the prison population has soared, young men of color are disproportionately incarcerated, and the life chances of poor children in urban ghettos have deteriorated. In addition, pressures on the police have increased significantly. Zero tolerance policies have taken their toll not only on the poor but on law enforcement as well.

Crowther's work shows that social policy cannot ignore the link between poverty and policing. Although much neglected by social policy scholars, an understanding of criminal justice and law enforcement programs directed at the urban poor must become an integral component of poverty research. In making this important point, the author draws extensively on comparative material, showing how British policies are increasingly influenced by American ideas. The book is well written and permeated with a sophisticated use of theory. It makes a major contribution to the study of poverty.

Michael J. Graetz and Jerry L. Mashaw, *True Security: Rethinking American Social Insurance*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999. \$40.00 hardcover, \$16.95 papercover.

Debates over the long term fiscal viability of social security and medicare have long been dominated by calls for their privatization. As in so many other fields of social policy, the belief that commercially motivated providers can offer an effective alternative to public provisions has proved to be popular. However, in recent years the case for maintaining public ownership of these programs has been made with increasing effectiveness. Encouraged by the Clinton administration's commitment to social security and medicare, several persuasive proposals for remedying the weaknesses of these programs have been made, and these seem to have gathered media and public support. Generally, those advocating the preservation of social security and medicare have shown that the fiscal and other difficulties facing both programs can be corrected without the radical changes proposed by the abolitionists and privatizers. As more proposals for the incremental modification of these programs are formulated, there is hope that they may indeed survive.