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Declarations of Dependency: The Civic Republican Tradition in U.S. Poverty Policy. Alan F. Zundel

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much that will be of relevance as the debate about the proper role of the religious community in social welfare evolves.

Alan F. Zundel, *Declarations of Dependency: The Civic Republican Tradition in U. S. Poverty Policy*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000. \$16.95 papercover.

Although much social policy scholarship was previously concerned with providing descriptive accounts of the way the social services function, more attention has been focused in recent years on the wider political, social and economic context in which social policies evolve. The role of ideology in social policy is one contextual factor which has been extensively debated but which still evokes simplistic interpretations.

In this interesting and readable account, Zundel shows how normative themes in social policy discourse today are rooted in a complex history of beliefs about social welfare. The author suggests that the notion of dependency, which is widely used in contemporary welfare debates is, in fact, central to the American founding. At the time, it was used to connote feudal patronage and reliance on the benevolence of the nobility. The colonial ethos not only rejected the feudal legacy but resulted in purposeful attempts to end it. One such attempt was the granting of small holding to settlers together with credit, supplies and equipment so that they could establish themselves as independent citizens. The state's role was not one of *laissez-faire* but of actively promoting self-sufficiency. Zundel terms this approach the 'Civic Republican Tradition' because it gave expression to the belief that a republican democracy would thrive if comprised of independent and self-sufficient property owners. This tradition, which continues to exert a powerful influence today, may be distinguished from other traditions in social policy thinking.

Examining the history of social welfare through from this perspective, the author shows how many social policy initiatives over the years have been influenced by the legacy of civic republicanism. The New Deal's emphasis on home ownership, which is deeply embedded and extensively subsidized by taxpayers today, is heavily influenced by this tradition as is the current emphasis on workfare. However, perhaps the most important example of the legacy of civic republicanism is the idea of matched savings

accounts which have become so popular in recent years. Policy proposals to create IDAs and, indeed, many other tax supported savings programs, are firmly rooted in this tradition. In addition to tracing the influence of civic republicanism, Zundel makes a strong case for its continued incorporation in social policy. In the final chapter of the book, the author explicates a set of proposals for enhancing and consolidating stakeholding through savings, and of using savings as a means of meeting social needs.

Zundel's book is a good example of how sophisticated the study of social policy has become. The author's ability to situate current social welfare debates within an historical perspective, and to link these debates to wider political and ideological themes, is impressive. Although the book would have benefited by comparing civic republicanism to other dominant approaches in social welfare today, it is an important contribution to the literature. It should be widely read.