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Review of *The Assault on Social Policy*. William Roth. Reviewed by Larry Nackerud.

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contemporary issues, I was disappointed not to find a chapter on the role of religion in social services provision. While the White House Office of Faith Based and Community Initiatives and President George W. Bush's involvement in this area came at the tail end of the writing of this book, Charitable Choice passed congress in 1996 and paved the way for a renewed role for religion in the field of welfare. The authors mention President George W. Bush's pre-election religious statements twice but ignored his and Al Gore's call for the inclusion of religion in public welfare. Furthermore, even the role of traditional players such as Catholic Charities, Salvation Army, and Jewish family services are not highlighted.

Another void in the book is the role of the clergy. Over half a million Americans serve as clergy in various capacities and are held in special esteem and respect. The role religion plays in everyday life in America is mostly through local congregations. This basic sociological unit and what it does to foster community life is understudied. Also absent is the ever present debate between those advocating "creationism" versus those who advocate "evolution." Regardless of these omissions, Christiano, Santos, and Kivisto provide us with an excellent book on the sociology of religion. The many topics they elected to cover are well designed and provide a variety of view points.

The authors aim at college students as their audience and have provided us with a helpful textbook that can be the backbone of every course on the sociology of religion. Focusing on contemporary issues makes the topics more amenable to young students and the many side bars are well chosen and easy to follow. Even the photos, most of them by William H. Swatos, Jr., are most helpful and wisely inserted.

Ram A. Cnaan
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William Roth, *The Assault on Social Policy*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002. \$49.50 hardcover, \$22.50 paper cover.

I am proud of William Roth for writing this book. It takes courage to author a book in the year 2002 that suggests a replacement for capitalism. While the economic system of capitalism is

conquering the world, Roth describes capitalism as an uncaring economic system that should be replaced by something he calls "democratic socialism." With the purpose of describing the true etiology of social policies, the book is reminiscent of the only classic in the social sciences written by a social worker, Piven and Cloward's, *Regulating the Poor*.

Roth convincingly explains how social policy construction and existence favor the interests of those persons in power, particularly corporate representatives, over the interests of the poor and the disadvantaged. Assuming that Roth started writing the book at least a year before the publication date of 2002, his criticisms of the capitalistic system reveal his clairvoyant abilities. Who could have guessed that shortly after Roth had the book published, that the world would bear witness to the collapse of corporations as powerful as Enron and WorldCom and the demise of the most respected accounting firm in the world, Arthur Andersen. All this in the name of greed and poor "accounting practices." If Roth could have only known, his expressed outrage at capitalistic markets and "corpocracy" would have undoubtedly been even more intense.

Roth claims early in the book that each of the 10 chapters is "substantially different in its emphasis and approach (p. 5)." There is no question that the author's claim is fulfilled in the book. Chapter one is about policy. Policy is defined, policy is described, and a link is made to how policy, social policy in particular, is tied to the market place. The reader cannot help but realize after reading the first chapter how central the ideas of economy, marketplace, and "market capitalism" will be to the entire book. A well-developed idea in the first chapter is that "market capitalism is a construction, not some natural law (p. 15)." Chapter 2 is about the impact of corporations and globalization on social policies. Roth makes a convincing claim that corporations need social policies to be congruent with the needs of the business community. Chapters 3 through 8, even though each has a different presentation perspective, focus on traditional social policy issue areas, poverty, welfare, disability, social security, health, and children.

Chapters 9 and 10 establish the true character of the book. Chapter 9, titled "Outsiders," focuses on Roth's musings about

the constructed categories of insiders and outsiders (e.g., sick people with no medical insurance) and the resultant categories of the haves and the have-nots. The claim is that corporate power and social policy development are primarily congruent with the interests of economic insiders and the haves. In Chapter 10, the reader is provided a synopsis of the social policy analyses contained in the previous chapters. Philosophy rules supreme, however, in Chapter 10 as Roth attempts to convince the reader that conceivable alternatives to capitalism exist. He concludes first with the observation that socialism is the best alternative to capitalism. He then concludes, with considerable detail, that his personally favored form of socialism, democratic socialism, is the best.

Roth is true to his claim that "the book is not meant to be an exhaustive examination of social policy, nor is it bipartisan, nonpartisan, or even impartial (p. 5)." Roth lets everyone clearly know what is his thinking about social policy. Current social policies are described as inadequate, undemocratic, and even disgraceful.

While the message is clear, herein lies the difficulty with the book. While no one will disagree with Roth that "bureaucracy is a means of domination, a way to grind people up, and affects out lives outside the bureaucracy" or that "corporations are complex organizations of dominance, in which haves control have-nots (p. 158)," what would he have us do? Roth's proposal that bureaucracy as a structural form of organizations should be resisted creates a sense of surrealism for the book. The idea that life as we know it can be re-constructed and that the impact of the capitalistic economic system, as expressed by the existence of the corporate model, can be diminished leaves the same feeling hanging in the air.

As noted at the beginning of the review, the author is clearly worthy of praise for writing a book suggesting an alternative to the current corporate-based model of capitalism. At the same time, the book reads as if it was written in another era, quite possibly for readers reared in another era. The book has the ring of the liberal rants of the 1960s. Does the book have any application in the year 2002? The question is not whether the book is well written. It is. The question is not whether the author has been able to express his views in a cogent manner. He has. The question is

not whether a reader committed to a socially constructive analysis of current social policies will be better informed after reading the book. They will. Of these things, there can be no doubt. Any reader committed to the traditional liberal position and wanting to know more about social policies will learn a great deal about the philosophical foundation of social policy in the United States. Will a reader with a political position other than the traditional liberal one be able to maintain interest in the book as bureaucracy as a structure is condemned and corporations are recommended for reconstruction? Of that, I'm not so sure.

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Mark W. Frazier, *The Making of the Chinese Industrial Workplace: State, Revolution and Labor Management*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002. \$60.00 hardcover.

The work unit or *danwei*, had for decades been the most important institution in urban China. Every working man and woman belonged to a *danwei*. The *danwei* was, however, not just a workplace. In the pre-reform economy, the *danwei* was the principal channel through which the socialist state distributed income and resources to its urban residents. *Danwei* membership established worker's identity and entitled them to a range of state-provided benefits. These typically covered health insurance, retirement pensions, housing, nurseries, canteens, bathing facilities, various kinds of subsidies both in cash and in kind and, in large organizations, hospitals and schools. Because of these benefits and services, workers became heavily dependent on their *danwei* to meet a broad range of needs. Such dependence was accentuated by low wages, the lack of alternatives, and by the fact that there was no real exit option: job transfer was exceptional and employment within the same work unit was more or less for life. The *danwei* was therefore like a 'small society' encompassing many aspects of the lives of its members. Within their 'small societies', *danwei* leaders were more than managers responsible for production. Like heads of households, they were also responsible for the welfare of their workers and their dependents. Manager-worker relations were paternalistic and 'fief-like'.