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Review of *The Failed Welfare Revolution: America's Struggle over the Guaranteed Income Policy*. Brian Steensland. Reviewed by James Midgley.

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authors present their material in a clear and systematic way and while they make use of theoretical concepts and approaches, they avoid the jargon that often characterizes theoretical social science accounts. Of particular interest is the extensive use of the discourse of capital in the book. Reflecting the dominance of market-based ideas in both the policy and academic worlds, the authors emphasize the role of "the capitals" in community life. Some may question the value of this approach, but the authors succeed in showing how "the capitals" play a vital role in rural communities. They also demystify these concepts and link them effectively to policy. Although the book may have benefited from a more extensive discussion of community economic development and other interventions that can enhance the well-being of rural people, it is a comprehensive and helpful resource which should be consulted by anyone working with rural communities. It will be of particular value to rural social workers and community practitioners who will benefit from its broad conceptual framework and extensive discussion of the issues and challenges facing rural communities today.

James Midgley, University of California, Berkeley

Brian Steensland, *The Failed Welfare Revolution; America's Struggle over the Guaranteed Income Policy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008. \$35.00 hardcover.

The idea that all citizens should be guaranteed a minimum but adequate income to meet their basic needs and live productive lives without being bound to the demands of regular wage employment has enjoyed a revival in recent times. Rooted in long-standing utopian beliefs and socialist thinking, proposals for a guaranteed minimum income for all have never been fully implemented, although the payment of demogrant social allowances and comprehensive social insurance in the European welfare states gives expression to this idea. Indeed, guaranteed minimum income proposals have historically been associated with European welfarism and regarded as least likely to be adopted in countries with strong market liberal traditions.

But, as this book reveals, a guaranteed minimum income policy was almost implemented in the United States in the

1970s by the Nixon administration. Although few social policy scholars associate the Nixon administration with liberal or progressive welfare thinking, Steensland contends that the United States came close to experiencing a "welfare revolution" when the President's Family Assistance Plan was almost approved by the Congress. The plan would have paid a guaranteed minimum income both to the "working poor" and those in receipt of welfare benefits under the country's Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program. The plan was essentially a negative income tax, based on the ideas of market radicals such as Milton Friedman. Steensland believes that it would have addressed the inadequacies of the means test and made a significant contribution to poverty alleviation. After lengthy debate, the President's proposals were rejected and the scene was set for the restrictive and minimalist income maintenance policies of the Reagan administration.

Although the Nixon Family Assistance Plan is frequently mentioned in the social policy literature, Steensland has provided an impressively detailed and scholarly account of the intense disagreements about a guaranteed minimum income which took place both within the executive and legislative branches. The book traces the origins of the proposals, examines the formulation of the proposals by the administration and traces in detail the Congressional debates that ultimately led to its demise. The author contends that the plan's failure was primarily due to deeply institutionalized cultural beliefs about the deserving and undeserving poor and about the importance of work and individual responsibility in American society. The failure of the guaranteed income proposal consolidated the link between welfare and work which is today the hallmark of American social policy.

This scholarly book will be a valuable resource for anyone interested in current debates about the merits of a guaranteed income policy. It is richly documented, draws effectively on theoretical ideas and transcends the limitations of many historical accounts by linking developments in the 1970s to current social welfare debates. An added bonus is the discussion of proposals by the Carter administration later in the decade to reformulate these ideas. The author's reflection on the role of cultural factors in social welfare thinking also makes a

significant contribution and will hopefully facilitate future analyses that will explore the importance of culture in the formulation of social welfare policy.

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