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Pluralism at Yale: The Culture of Political Science in America. Richard M. Merelman.

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practice of social work." The author chose to omit personal details of the individuals, so as "to let the story represent their own self-descriptions." This was a mistake since many of the workers failed to provide details about themselves and their practice, which would have given more depth to their stories. Often too much is left to reader's imagination. An author's introduction and summary for each profile would have been a nice addition, as would photos of the social workers and their practice settings. Despite these shortcomings, "The Call to Social Work" gives the reader a better understanding of the personal factors that propel individuals toward the vocation and keep them dedicated to a life of service, where, as one of the social workers summarized it: "We touch the triumph of the human spirit."

Richard M. Merelman, *Pluralism at Yale: The Culture of Political Science in America*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003. \$ 26.95 papercover.

In the 1950 and 1960s, the Department of Political Science at Yale University was staffed by intellectual luminaries including Robert Dahl, Charles Lindblom, Harold Lasswell and Karl Deutch to name but a few, and not surprisingly it was regarded as one of the best in the nation. Although its leading academics wrote on diverse topics such as political theory, opinion polling and administrative science, they were all identified with the theory of pluralism which had evolved at Yale to offer a benign and optimistic view of the American political process. The theory of pluralism fostered a conceptual image of the government of the United States as little more than an arbiter of democracy which encouraged a great variety of interest groups to compete for advantage on a level playing field of political opportunity. Pluralism suggested that the state did not champion sectional interests and certainly had no motives of its own other than to promote democratic participation. The theory of pluralism appeared to be compatible with the consensus politics which ostensibly characterized American political life in the post Mc Carthy years and downplayed the role of conflict and struggle in the political process.

Merelman's fascinating book is based not only on his own experience as a graduate student at Yale during this time, but on interviews with no less than 129 faculty members and former

students of the Department. His respondents offered insights into their experiences and gave their professional opinions about many aspects of pluralism. In addition, Merelman provides a useful theoretical perspective to frame his account. Indeed, despite the important insights the book offers into the work of Yale's leading scholars of pluralism, Merelman's account is all the more significant for exploring the question of how those who exercise power are able to secure legitimation for their actions. Drawing on the writings of Marx and Engels, Gramsci, Mannheim and others who have addressed this question, Merelman shows that academics often provide the intellectual arguments on which legitimation is based. It is not that they merely serve as lackeys to the powerful but rather that their normative theories are viewed as congenial and are often adopted to legitimate political decisions. Pluralism, Merelman argues, offered a legitimating discourse which was highly suited to its time. It accompanied other legitimating discourses which were then in use. These included Keynesian economics, functionalist sociology and systems theory in administrative science.

Although Merelman's insights may not at first appear to have much relevance to social welfare, his analysis of the role pluralism played in offering a legitimating discourse for the wider political process has relevance to the way pluralism is today used to legitimate the retrenchment of state responsibility for social welfare. Those who oppose government involvement in social welfare frequently point to the way a multiplicity of welfare providers ranging from the churches and charities to commercial insurance firms and for-profit social agencies now contribute positively to a supposedly happy equilibrium which has emerged in the wake of state retrenchment. As in politics, pluralism in welfare has become a legitimating discourse which should be understood by scholars and students of social policy. This readable and insightful book will help promote this goal.

M. Byrna Sanger, *The Welfare Marketplace: Privatization and Welfare Reform*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2003. \$ 16.95 papercover.

In the decades following the New Deal, it was widely accepted that government would be the primary funder, administrator and provider of a range of social services designed to meet the social