REVIEW

Steve Hothersall and Janine Bolger, *Social Policy for Social Work, Social Care and the Caring Professions: Scottish Perspectives*. Surrey: Ashgate, 2010. Pp. 466. ISBN 978-0-7546-7636-2. £25.00.

The edited collection *Social Policy for Social Work, Social Care and the Caring Professions: Scottish Perspectives* offers a fine account of the development of social work in Scotland. The breadth of this project is quite extensive as the authors cover both the history of social work and the structure and branches of the current practice. Normally such breadth detracts from finer details and thus the success of a project, but in this case the authors—all of whom are lecturers in Social Work at Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen—have created a volume where each individual essay provides a detailed examination of a branch of social policy or social work, while the monograph as a whole is an excellent introductory text on the history of the Scottish policies and practices of the ‘Caring Professions’.

Social Policy for Social Work consists of three sections that follow the development of the policies and ideologies of social work. The first section consists of four chapters written by Steve J. Hothersall, a senior lecturer at Robert Gordon University, each of which provides an introduction to the definition, history, and ideologies, of social policy. In these chapters Hothersall establishes an argument that becomes a central point throughout the book: although there have been many changes to social policy in Scotland, particularly within the last thirty years or so, each of these themes should be understood in the context of earlier policies that date back several centuries. Such a historical emphasis allows the authors to place special emphasis on Scotland’s unique position in the history of social policy as it highlights how the Act of Union of 1707, and the associated changes in the

legislation of Scotland, influenced some of the ideologies on social policy.

With the history of social policy established, the second section of the book moves to a more in-depth examination of the themes and issues associated with social policy and social work. This section includes chapters such as “Poverty and social exclusion” (Janine Bolger and Pedro Morago); “Welfare rights” (Jannine Bolger); and “Social policy perspectives on empowerment” (Rob Mackay). In this section the authors examine some of the pervasive ideologies surrounding issues such as poverty and welfare state development. The politics of ideologies are emphasised in this section, and the history of policies is further developed. Here the authors highlight the changes to policies and ideologies in the postwar era, with specific emphasis on some of the notable changes that occurred when Margaret Thatcher was in power.

The final section of the book, which is by far the longest and accounts for half of the content, takes some of the theories discussed in the preceding sections and looks at their application in current social policy situations. These chapters, including “Older people” (Rory Lynch); “Asylum and immigration” (Clare Swan); “Housing and homelessness” (Pedro Morago), address issues that are relevant to social workers throughout the United Kingdom without losing sight of the situations that are unique to Scotland. Such a focus allows the authors to address both the conditions within Scotland and how these conditions can be dealt with in relation to UK-wide policies.

Throughout the book, and particularly within the final section, the essays are punctuated with exercises and case studies that make *Social Policy for Social Work* an excellent introductory text. These exercises and case studies would be particularly useful for lecturers using *Social Policy for Social Work* as an instructional text as the exercises are good discussion questions that ask the reader to consider the themes and issues

of the chapter and apply them to personal and everyday situations. Similarly the case studies offer concise summaries of how some of the policies and ideologies may shape individual situations and the subsequent practices of care. The inclusion of such teaching materials would have worked more effectively if they did not interrupt the essays, but they would nevertheless be useful in a classroom setting.

As well as being, in many ways, an instructional text, *Social Policy for Social Work* is a fine scholarly work that contributes to both the historical and contemporary literature on social work. While the contributions to Scottish literature are obvious and emphasised repeatedly, it also offers a solid basis for a trans-national approach to the practices and ideologies of social policy. There are some parallels drawn between the developments in Scotland and the developments in commonwealth countries, which are useful as they both highlight the benefits of a transnational approach and help to market the work towards a broader audience. It is the breadth of *Social Policy for Social Work*—without any loss of focus or detail—that ensures that this book is a useful addition to the historiography on social work and the establishment of the welfare state.

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