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The Future of Work in Europe

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present excellent comparative research on flexible work across advanced economies and provide valuable insights into both general and local issues. They are particularly worth reading for their cogent analysis of the complex dynamics of recent reregulation and its implications. The foundation they lay is a solid one, on which further research is sure to be erected.

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The Future of Work in Europe. Edited by Paul Littlewood, Ignace Glorieux, and Ingrid Jönsson. Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2004. 262 pp. ISBN 0-7546-3835-5, \$79.95 (cloth).

The Future of Work in Europe is an edited volume on public policies and social issues related to employment. Chapters focus on immigration, welfare, education, gender in the workplace, volunteer work, and the role of technological change. The book is perhaps slightly mistitled, since it is less about work relations proper than about public policy and social change.

The Future of Work contains a good deal of interesting research and analysis. Unfortunately, however, only a few of the chapters really rise to explore the broader implications of the findings they present. The volume also lacks coherence, as the substantive contributions do not match the theoretical chapters at the beginning, nor do they really explore common themes or use common analytical techniques. Still, even if there is no real reason to read the book cover to cover, academics interested in the particular policies or issues it deals with will find worthwhile reading.

In most cases, the authors are fairly critical of existing policies, and of the neo-liberal turn these policies have taken in recent years. The book begins with two broad theoretically oriented contributions, perhaps intended to "set the stage" for the more empirical or policy-oriented chapters that follow. First, Max Koch synthesizes and compares the Regulation School literature on changing post-Fordist labor market policies in five European countries. He concludes that all countries are heading toward flexibility, but some toward "negotiated flexibility" and others toward "capital-oriented flexibility." The countries are grouped in the way one

would expect, with the corporatist economies leaning to negotiation and non-corporatist ones to capital-orientation. In this sense, Koch makes a case for continuing nation-specific development paths in the face of globalization. In the next chapter, Bram Steijn also explores post-Fordist themes. As with the Koch chapter, there are few surprises. Steijn tells us that the "information society" has winners and losers, but that the changes are "evolutionary" rather than "revolutionary." Steijn's piece relies mostly on secondary literature and his own past work. Neither of these chapters helps to create a framework for the rest of the book, since the themes they raise are not really engaged in the substantive chapters, although there is an obvious potential to do so.

The book's better substantive chapters take a critical approach to public policy issues or social change. For instance, two chapters—Georg Vobruba on Germany, Lars Harrysson and Jan Petersson on Sweden—take to task the "workfare" emphasis of recent policy innovations. Vobruba presents empirical evidence suggesting that the influential "unemployment trap" theorem is wrong, and that short-term material incentives to stay unemployed do not actually influence the thinking of the unemployed very much. Likewise, Harrysson and Petersson argue that Sweden's labor market policies aimed at "curing" the unemployed are misdirected. The problem, they assert, lies with the structure of employment, the limited resources of the public employment agencies, and the design of the reemployment programs, rather than with the unemployed themselves. Harrysson and Petersson, as well as Vobruba, make the case that recent policy changes for the worse are motivated by conservative ideology, rather than by a desire to help the unemployed.

Paul Littlewood finds similar ideologically motivated policy influences in education. He criticizes the "commodification" of the U.K. educational system, arguing that pupils are now regarded as "consumers" instead of "learners and future workers." While rejecting the notion of a halcyon past of clean and pure education, he shows that the increasing influence of market-oriented policy is making education more vocational, more of a commodity, and more of a private good.

Barbara Littlewood demonstrates the ongoing importance of class in gender analysis. She reasons that class and gender intersect, as higher-class women are often able to use their status to push off the burden of their gender-related oppression onto lower-class women. In the

world system, this issue is mixed with exploitation of developing countries by the developed world, as women from poor countries are obliged to neglect their own children in order to perform "reproductive labor" for affluent women in the developed world. The affluent women are then free to engage in paid work, or devote their time to leisure.

These substantive contributions are thought-provoking, but they raise questions about issues of power that, except in Barbara Littlewood's chapter, the book does not really address. Paul Littlewood does relate the seemingly harmful trends he identifies to the growing power of neo-liberal ideology, but Barbara Littlewood takes it a step further, showing how global economic, class, and gender-based structures of oppression interact and reinforce each other. These contributions suggest that there are powerful political or economic agents who benefit from, and perhaps are involved in some way in perpetuating, harmful social trends and perversions of stated public policy goals. In the book's introduction, the authors hint that these are the sorts of issues the book will deal with, but only some of the chapters follow through on this promise.

Disappointingly, the other chapters are more narrowly policy-focused, and generally much less interesting. For example, M'hammed Sabour and Pasi Tulkki tell us that engineering education is important in Finland, but never explain the relevance of this observation. Ingrid Jönsson reviews recent research on work and family life, and concludes that public policies in this area vary greatly from country to country. There is an obvious opportunity for a tie-in to the regulation approach presented in Koch's chapter; yet the reader is left to speculate as to why family leave policies resist convergence, even in the context of a European Union effort at harmonization. These chapters really underline how the book could have benefited from integration into a common theoretical framework. Common themes exist that could have tied the book together, but they are not at all explored in the theoretical chapters or the introduction, nor do any of the chapters make reference to each other. Further working against the book's coherence is the lack of a conclusion.

Given the uneven quality of its contributions, its inadequate integration, and its lack of common themes, *The Future of Work in Europe* is not a book every social scientist needs on his or her shelf. That said, it contains some good research and analysis, and is worth a look by anyone with

a special interest in one of the issues it treats.

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Historical Studies

American Labor: A Documentary History. By Melvyn Dubofsky and Joseph A. McCartin. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004. 326 pp. ISBN 0-312-29565-0, \$69.95 (cloth); 0-312-29564-2, \$26.95 (paper).

In *American Labor*, two prominent labor historians have collected a wide range of documentary material in one convenient volume that is highly suitable both as a reference and for course use. The book provides a much-needed replacement for John R. Commons et al.'s *Documentary History of American Industrial Society*, an eleven-volume work that was initiated over eighty years ago. In the space of little more than 300 pages, readers can find documents pertaining to everything from the first European settlement of the United States in the early seventeenth century right through to events in the twenty-first century. The book is, as the authors intended, an effective "documentary supplement to narrative and analytical histories of American labor" (p. 5).

The organization of *American Labor* is impeccable, with six chronologically ordered sections containing over two hundred diverse documents. Within these chapters, well-placed subsections explore important themes in detail. Dubofsky and McCartin guide the reader carefully, providing both helpful introductions at the start of each section and shorter pieces concisely analyzing specific documents. Throughout the work, the authors also pose questions that teachers can use as a starting-point for classroom discussion. The brevity of the documents themselves, most of which are 1–3 pages long, suits them well for seminar discussion.

Reflecting the development and growth of the subject in the years since Commons's work was published, *American Labor* casts a wide net. Rather than focus narrowly on industrial relations, it provides vivid insights into household labor, working-class housing conditions, and child labor. The authors' richly detailed treatment of female workers makes the book a good