

Corporations dominate governments not only through lobbying, which is outside the decision-making process, but also from within that process. Big corporations go beyond national jurisdictions, they influence economic theory, share high officials who had served both in public service and business, and produce much of the goods and services the state should provide to its citizens. To counterbalance their influence in political life, the author suggests that stronger European institutions, fostering deeper integration, could be the solution.

Mabel Berezin discusses the radicalisation of right-wing parties in recent decades. Going through the evolution of the National Front (FN) in France, this chapter shows a slow process in which the right across Europe was able to normalise its discourse. Although extremist parties are not new in European politics, their influence after World War II was diminished. In fact, 'in the early 1980s, ... the French media establishment was vociferously criticizing Le Pen' (p. 246), the leader of the National Front. Nevertheless, his positions always enjoyed some popular support, and slowly the party made way to the public opinion mainstream. The evolution of FN went from an initial period when its stance was openly Islamophobic and against globalisation, to a current one in which the strategy is to criticise European institutions. The attack against the European Union and the EMU during the economic crisis has increased the success of the National Front, as much as of its right-wing peers in countries like Sweden or Finland. At the same time this evolution has also changed the political discourse of centre-right parties, such as the Conservative Party in England and Christian Democracy in Germany. The effects of this mix of nationalist politics and European crisis are yet to be seen.

In sum, *Politics in the Age of Austerity* poses important questions on the evolution

of democracy as we know it in the light of new economic, demographic, and political realities. Even though it does not offer conclusive answers to the proposed puzzles, it sets the agenda for future research and stimulates the reader's mind to the extent that new and interesting research ideas come like drops in a rainstorm.

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Carsten Jensen: *The Right and the Welfare State*

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This book addresses the behaviour of right-wing governments in welfare-state reforms, particularly in the domains of health and unemployment. Carsten Jensen challenges two widespread—if often implicit—assumptions of the literature on comparative welfare-state reform. The first assumption is that right-wing parties are overwhelmingly hostile to the expansion of public social-security schemes. Since they represent middle-to-high-income voters who can purchase private insurance, right-wing parties should generally oppose state-sponsored welfare programmes that involve some form of redistribution from rich to poor. The second assumption is that the welfare state constitutes a monolithic bloc where politics is relatively homogeneous, and where preferences for state intervention are consistent across schemes. Indeed, countless studies seek to explain the determinants of social spending as a whole, or try to uncover the factors that shape individual preferences for 'welfare' or 'redistribution' without discriminating between health care, pensions, unemployment, family policy, or other programmes. The implicit assumption is that voters and parties

hold similar views about state intervention across welfare schemes.

Drawing on an extensive empirical analysis using quantitative data on individual attitudes, public spending as well as case studies on Denmark, the United Kingdom and Australia, with a brief discussion of the United States, Jensen shows that both these assumptions are wrong. First, in welfare schemes such as health care, right-wing governments do not spend less than left-wing governments and in some cases even outspend them because of the need to maintain both a public system popular with voters and a private alternative propped by government subsidies. Second, he shows that middle-to-high-income voters are not less favourable to welfare expansion when it comes to programmes aimed at covering life-course risks, such as illness, that are uncorrelated to income. In these schemes, the risks to be covered are so high—e.g. the costs of cancer treatment—that even affluent voters will want as much insurance as possible from the state.

The starting point of Jensen's argument is that there is a fundamental difference between labour-market and life-course risks in terms of how they affect voters across the income distribution. Labour-market risks, such as unemployment, disproportionately affect low-income voters and therefore display a clear class divide between who pays (the rich) and who benefits (the poor). In contrast, life-course risks related to human biology, such as old age and sickness, affect individuals more or less equally across the income distribution and have a much smaller redistributive dimension. We know that poorer people are generally in poorer health, but since the probability of illness (e.g. cancer) is more randomly distributed than, say, unemployment, there is a genuine rationale even for high-income earners to ask generous coverage from the state. Much of Jensen's analysis is derived from this assumption, assuming that governments are primarily

vote-seekers. Hence, the policies of right-wing governments in the health-care domain are mostly characterised by an expansionary consensus seeking to reconcile extensive provision and some degree of marketisation, while their policies regarding labour-market risks are characterised by more frontal attacks seeking to undermine the power-base of unions in particular.

Jensen substantiates his argument with a very nice combination of micro, macro, and case-based data. The first empirical chapter clearly shows that levels of popular support vary substantially across welfare schemes. In line with Jensen's argument—but also with previous research by Van Oorschot [2006]—he shows that levels of support for life-course related risks are systematically higher than for labour-market risks. This difference in mean levels of support is due to a large degree to the behaviour of middle-to-high income voters. Indeed, whereas support for unemployment protection is clearly correlated with income (it declines clearly as income increases), support for health care stays consistently at high levels throughout the income distribution. Hence, while the poor benefit from welfare in general and unsurprisingly support both types of programmes, the rich only support those from which they can benefit directly. In a nutshell, this means life-course related risks have a much clearer potential for cross-class support, which makes them much more difficult to retrench. This even provides strong incentives for all parties to expand them if they want to maximise their vote share.

In a series of interesting case studies, Jensen shows how different right-wing parties embedded in such different political settings and traditions as Denmark, the United Kingdom, and Australia ended up adopting very similar political strategies. The case studies introduce a degree of nuance into the argument in the sense that they shed some light on how right-wing governments seek to reconcile vote-seek-

ing (welfare is popular) and policy-seeking (right-wing parties want more markets and less state) constraints. In health care, this strategy consists in a subtle combination of the expansion of services and marketisation through the back door—for instance, via the contracting out of private providers, public subsidies for private insurance, or the extension of public insurance coverage to private hospitals. It is interesting to note that marketisation in these cases cannot be equated with cost-containment, as many of these reforms ended up costing much more than state monopolies in provision. This is mainly related to what Jensen understands as a process of *layering*, whereby subsidised private alternatives are added on top of the public system.

In the domain of labour-market policy, where the politics of reform should be more straightforward because the constituency of right-wing parties is not interested anyway, right-wing strategies have also been more subtle. The right-wing reforms analysed by Jensen consisted in ‘eroding and attacking’ the traditional supporters of social protection in this area, namely the trade unions. Rather than explicitly attacking social protection itself, which could be countered by left-wing parties as neoliberal attacks on acquired rights, right-wing governments have often preferred to undermine the power-base of unions, by restricting their ability to organise workers in the workplace or challenging their monopoly over the management of insurance schemes (in Denmark). In spite of their less visible nature, the long-term effects of these attacks have been profound especially in countries where corporatist arrangements played a central role in the management of the welfare system.

In a compact and provocative form, Jensen’s analysis provides an illuminating account of the preferences and strategies of right-wing governments in welfare-state reforms. It makes a bold argument and supports it with an elegant combination of

innovative theory, sophisticated methods, and a keen understanding of the issues at hand. While right-wing support for welfare had so far essentially been envisaged as coming from employers [Estevez-Abe et al. 2001; Mares 2003], he provides a powerful case for bringing right-wing parties back in the picture.

There are two points which in my opinion could have been more thoroughly developed. The first is a deeper engagement with recent literature on social class [Oesch 2008]. While Jensen seeks to depart from crude categorisations equating higher incomes with opposition to welfare, the fact that middle-to-higher incomes vote for the right is taken as a given. If this categorisation fits the countries he analyses fairly well, we know from recent research that the picture of class voting in other European countries has become more complicated than that. Low-income workers have become the main constituency of anti-immigration *right-wing* parties, while the new relatively well-off middle classes employed in the public sector (teachers, health-care workers, public servants, academics) are now the main constituency of (left) social-democratic parties. From this point of view, it may be expected that these latter electoral constituencies support health-care spending, but for different reasons than the ones emphasised in the book (for instance, healthcare, like education, is a very large employer nowadays). Hence, if Jensen clearly establishes the difference between levels of support across schemes, the reason *why* higher-income voters support health care is still open to discussion. For instance, I would suspect education spending, which does not relate to life-course risks, to look a lot more like health care than like unemployment.

Secondly, the overarching assumption of the book is essentially Downsian [Downs 1957]: voters are primarily self-interested and their preferences are determined by their position in the income distribution.

The primary concern of right-wing parties is to satisfy them. However, higher-income voters may also prefer health care over unemployment insurance not only because they do not benefit from the latter, but because they believe that recipients are more 'deserving', as suggested by Van Oorschot [2006]. In general, norm-based preferences (what people think is fair) play a small role in the book compared to largely interest-based accounts (what benefits people them directly). Here again, we have no way of knowing the psychological drivers of preferences. Besides, there are many examples of policies advocated by political parties that go against the direct interests of their voters or do not concern them directly. For instance, social-democratic parties have been strong promoters of active labour-market policies benefitting primarily the 'outsiders' of the labour market (whose electoral potential is limited), while it has been argued that their core constituency is the 'insiders' [Rueda 2005]. The 'third way' policies of politicians such as Tony Blair or Gerhard Schröder also often went against the direct interests of their core electorate. Even if it is not the core focus of the book (and does not undermine its elegant analysis), this type of case fits uneasily in the framework adopted in the book.

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Marek Rymsza (ed.): *Toward Active Welfare. The Development of Social Work and Community Work in Poland and Europe*

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This book is based on the analyses and experience generated through the 'Creation and Development of Standards in Social Services and Social Integration' project carried out by the Institute of Public Affairs Foundation and the Centre for Supporting Local Activity/CAL Association in Warsaw. The project's objective was to develop a model of local community organising as a foundation for an educational programme for social workers at the level of municipalities. The originality of the book is threefold. First, it integrates policy practice and action research with academic research and policy analysis. Second, it incorporates the concept of activation (policies) into social and community work. Third, it assesses the development in Poland in the area of community social work within the EU framework. These perspectives are new in the context of post-communist countries, where professionalisation of social work, as well as activation policies, have been introduced with some delay when compared to Western Europe. In general, such an approach is becoming more and more important in EU countries, considering the growing risks of (youth) unemployment and social exclusion result-