

Book Review

Public Policy for Women: The State, Income Security, and Labour Market Issues, Marjorie Griffin Cohen and Jane Pulkingham, editors. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009; 417 pages; ISBN 978-0-8020-9500-8; \$35.00 (paper).

The sixteen chapters in Marjorie Griffin Cohen and Jane Pulkingham's volume cover a breadth of topics related to the central themes of labour, public policy, and economic security in women's lives, but the collection is well organized and reads as a coherent intellectual and political project. As such, it represents an impressive and timely compilation of feminist analyses of the politics of gender in Canada.

The editors provide a strong foundational introduction by tracing the crucial history of neoliberal political economic and public policy changes in Canada, as well as feminist responses to them. The individual chapters then explore policies and policy areas, including guaranteed annual income (Margot Young), child care (Jane Jenson), child benefits (Wendy McKeen), social assistance (Shauna Butterwick), wage supplements (Andrew Jackson), mandatory retirement (Margaret Menton Manery and Arlene Tigar McLaren), parental leave (Diane-Gabriele Tremblay), and employment policy (Leah Vosko), as well as the politics of poverty (Lea Caragata; Penny Gurstein and Silvia Vilches), immigration status (Jill Hanley and Eric Shragge), prostitution and regulation (Lee Lakeman; Emily Van Der Meulen), gender mainstreaming (Olena Hankivsky) and social provisions (Sheila M. Neysmith, Marge Reitsma-Street, Stephanie Baker Collins and Elaine Porter). Most chapters provide a valuable history of the policies in context, critiques of existing policies, and alternatives which would better meet the needs of women. All the discussions are grounded in women's lived realities, and many incorporate the voices and insights of women struggling against inequities and income insecurity. The chapters are thorough and offer comprehensive engagements with feminist debates about policy and necessary political action. At the same time, the chapters are readable and accessible.

This collection is particularly laudable for two reasons. First, it exemplifies high quality, contemporary, interdisciplinary, pan-Canadian feminist scholarship that takes women's material conditions seriously, and puts the crucial issues of work, politics, economics and social change front and centre. In each chapter, important feminist work in the academy, in communities, in legislatures and in the streets is evident, and the collection is clearly an important contribution to a much

longer and larger feminist struggle for women's economic security, equitable public policy, a just political culture and social solidarity. The second and related reason this book is noteworthy is its commitment to political change. The chapters offer meaningful proposals for creating better policy and a fairer social and gender order. The authors, working in universities, unions, shelters and feminist organizations, must be commended for producing scholarship that is not just about interpreting the world, but changing it.

This collection is an important contribution to policy studies, labour studies, social work and social science scholarship in general, and offers important insights for citizens and political workers of all kinds. It should be required reading for Women's Studies students.

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