

Social Security Policies in Industrial Countries: A Comparative Analysis, Margaret S Gordon, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988 (377pp, US\$49.50, £32.50 (hbk), ISBN 0 521 33311 3bk).

This book provides a comprehensive analysis of social security policies in 28 industrial countries, and focuses on developments since the Second World War. The author contends that the social and economic consequences of World War II necessitated a reorientation of social security policies. The attention of the readers is drawn to the proclamations of the 'Four Freedoms', the Atlantic Charter, the International Labour Organisation, and the Beveridge Report, all of which in one way or another have helped to shape social security policies in industrial countries. The author observes that the concern of many governments after the war was to extend coverage of social security to every citizen, and to ensure that the benefits provided were adequate. The author, however, argues that the economic problems of the 1970s and '80s, characterised by high rates of unemployment and inflation, weakened many social security schemes and forced governments to review their social security policies. Such reviews often resulted in the withdrawal of some benefits and the tightening of eligibility conditions.

A comparative analysis is made of the coverage of social security programmes, eligibility criteria, type and adequacy of benefits, and the financing of programmes. Major social security programmes (including old age, longterm invalidity, industrial injury and employer pensions, as well as unemployment compensation, health benefits, family allowances and public assistance) are analysed in detail. Significant attention is also given to the pattern of expenditure on social security. The author observes that there is great variation in social security spending among industrial countries, but in general "countries with the oldest social security programmes have been found to be the largest social security spenders in several studies". The debate on flatrate benefits versus earnings-related benefits is given sufficient coverage. An interesting note from the author is that, although earnings-related benefits do not serve the interests of the poor, flatrate benefits are not likely to be introduced because of the "strong political support for earnings-related schemes".

The role of international linkages in shaping social security policies is explored, but the author points out that instruments developed within the parameters of these linkages have not necessarily been implemented. The author discusses linkages which are effected through the ILO, the Council of the European Economic Community, and bilateral agreements, and also provides a useful framework for determining the extent to which social security policies are sensitive to international linkages.

The author assumes that readers are familiar with the concept of social security, and consequently does not provide a detailed conceptualisation of social security. Those readers who are not familiar with the subject may, therefore, find it difficult to follow the analysis. Despite this limitation the book is written with great clarity and has thematic flow. The analysis shows evidence of wide research and the book provides a detailed comparative analysis of social security policies in industrial countries. Policy makers, social science students and academics in both developing and developed countries will find this book a useful addition to their reference material.

Reviewed by E Kaseke, Principal, School of Social Work, Harare.