

approach that engages in some amount of positive eclecticism rather than being parochial. The author's annotated bibliography is particularly helpful for students and economists interested in further research in this important area.

One could not agree more with the author's suggestion that scholars and practitioners need to re-examine their theoretical views and policy prescriptions. Such re-examinations must be undertaken even if it turns upside down the very basis of conventional wisdom. Together with the author one would hope that the text will stimulate further research and evaluation and thus advance the cause of development.

Reviewed by Obert Nyawata, African Development Bank, Abidjan.

Social Work With Rural Peoples. Theory and Practice, Ken Collier, New Star Books, Vancouver, 1984 (144pp, no price given).

This slim volume sets out to discuss the theory and practice of social work with rural people in North America, examining from an avowedly Marxist materialist perspective the nature of rural people's lives, experience and needs, and the impact social work can and could have on them. It is explicitly not a 'skills' book but a discussion of the need for social workers to 'interpret', 'analyse' and 'construct' the realities of the rural setting so that their practice may be effective and supportive rather than irrelevant or oppressive. It aims to be of use to human service workers in rural areas in general, and to rural people themselves.

Crucially, the author draws attention to the need for different approaches to social work practice in rural areas from those typically learnt and experienced in the urban setting, and he points out the problems inherent in the (urban) 'outside expert' arriving in a rural area and expecting to be taken seriously.

The author begins by outlining historical processes of economic development from foraging to agricultural and industrial economies. He draws attention to the similarity of present day foragers and agriculturalists, rural peoples, living on the periphery of centralised urban-based capitalist economies, to the position of developing countries vis-a-vis the developed world. Recognising that the relationship between the developed and underdeveloped world, and likewise that between the centralised urban sector and rural sectors within one country, are relationships of oppression, inequality and exploitation, he examines what role human service workers can play in ameliorating this situation. He argues that if such workers are not conscious of the reality of this exploitative economic and cultural relationship, then they will by default serve to promote the process of exploitation by assisting people to adapt passively to the loss of their land, to family and cultural breakdown, and to impoverishment in general.

To play a valid and meaningful role in the lives of these people, social workers and others must understand the material conditions that have led to their marginalisation and the disruption of their communities, and must help people to find ways of reducing the negative impact of 'development' and of maintaining their dignity, rights and cultural identity.

The author recognises that there is no single blueprint outlining how social workers should achieve this, particularly given the cultural and economic diversity of rural communities themselves — small nuclear family farmers, extended family farmers, different ethnic groupings, migrant labourers, the poor and unemployed — facing the rural penetration of advanced capitalism in different ways. The underlying necessity is for sensitive understanding and analysis and the capacity for widely diverse, flexible 'generalised' approaches, rather than narrow specialisation which precludes a holistic understanding of both the problems and of methods of tackling them.

To achieve such understanding, the author argues, it is essential that social workers live 'with the people', sharing in their social and work activities, and learning their priorities and problems first hand. This might involve learning a specific practical skill such as sheep shearing, or aspects of agriculture, so that the social worker is seen as having practical relevance as well as the more esoteric relevance of intellectual skills. This is argued to be particularly important when working with people who traditionally keep their problems to themselves, even when they lack the wherewithall to resolve them. The social worker must be seen to be aligned closely with the rural people rather than being an apologist for the urban and alien centralised system.

The message of the book is both a positive and a critical one. Rural peoples can successfully limit the predations of capitalism, and preserve important aspects of their lives, culture and livelihood intact, and social workers do have a constructive role to play in achieving this. On the other hand, in rural areas the insensitive and inappropriate application of 'traditional' social work skills, values, knowledge and methods is at the least irrelevant, and at worst downright destructive.

In focusing on these issues, the author makes a useful contribution to a general, basic understanding of the rural situation, and he illustrates his points now and then with highly pertinent and vivid case studies. However, the main text tends to state rather than seriously to analyse his perspective on development, and also to become rather repetitive in the process. There is a tendency for the writing, apart from the case studies, to contain generalised abstracts rather than concrete, specific examples, and this makes for a rather dry presentation, and for unclear and incomplete analysis at times. For example, when describing foraging and agricultural communities and their kinship and other social formations, not one specific ethnic or cultural

group is mentioned by name to illustrate a point. North American Indians are either grouped together or described as diverse, with no concrete illustration. Further, there is no attempt to link the oppression of rural minorities and that of the urban poor, or to examine the relevance and appropriateness or otherwise of social work in urban contexts, let alone in the rural one. This narrow analysis seems to the reviewer to be a considerable weakness.

Because of these limitations, it is perhaps unlikely that this book will do a great deal to convert those who do not share the author's perspective on development; and, for those already converted, it may serve to clarify and confirm some of their ideas, but may not take them very much further along the road of critical analysis (not to mention skill development): it is too general, too unclear, and too brief.

But if to some degree it does promote a critical and concerned understanding of the rural situation, and stimulates discussion and a diversity of approach, then to that extent the book will have succeeded in its undeniably valid and constructive central aim.

Reviewed by Helen Jackson, School of Social Work, Harare.

Vocational Rehabilitation for Women with Disabilities, Sheila Stace, ILO Geneva, 1986 (38pp, Sfrs 12,50).

This short monograph discusses the dual discrimination faced by disabled women seeking education, training and employment. It concludes that discrimination because of gender is probably of greater significance than discrimination because of disability, basing this assessment on a review of literature in both developing and developed countries.

Because of the wide geographical scope of the text, the author can only make rather general observations and proposals, and she acknowledges a great shortage of hard data and research on the subject which in itself reflects how hidden are the problems faced by disabled women. A computer search in the USA for references in psychology on disabled men and disabled women found 7 500 of the former, and only 19 of the latter. Nevertheless, some useful general points emerge from the review:

"The literature discussed indicates that underlying attitudes result in disabled women being offered fewer options, having lower aspirations and accepting a greater degree of dependency than their disability requires. It has also shown that vocational rehabilitation has not come to terms with the real pattern of women's work and their dual role of homemaker and income earner." (p 24).

The author points out that sexist public attitudes are also internalised by the (predominantly male) professionals in all areas of vocational rehabilitation, and by disabled women themselves.