

some degree of coherence is retained by the fact that authors often refer to points made in previous chapters, and by the well-ordered layout of the book.

The Third World does not feature as an area of interest in this book — despite the fact that the majority of the world's major conflicts are fought in this arena! This probably has to do with the backgrounds of the contributors, who are predominantly American, with many having held senior positions in governmental agencies in the United States. However it is also likely that some of the authors would contend that Third World conflicts are primarily symptomatic of global super-power conflicts in any case. Yet the book still has much to offer us in this part of the world as it provides a great deal of insight into the processes and mechanics of conflict generation and ways to seek its resolution. It is a useful and practical contribution to the serious task of seeking solutions and alternatives to the often violent conflicts that continue to plague our world.

Reviewed by Nigel Hall, School of Social Work, Harare.

Social Welfare in Africa, John Dixon (ed), Croom Helm, London, 1987 (358pp, £27.50 hbk).

I approached the review of this publication, advertised as a comparative social welfare volume focusing on Africa, with some anticipation and interest. There is no doubt about the need for more published and accessible information about social security and personal social service systems in Africa. In addition the need for more comparative analyses from which models can be derived and built and used for future planning is more than clear.

Social Welfare in Africa is the third volume of a six volume series, edited by John Dixon, which looks at comparative social welfare in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, under socialism and in developed market economies. In this volume on Africa, for each of the ten country studies presented, the overall format for each chapter is the same and includes the welfare system environment, the welfare system an overview, the aged, children and youths, the handicapped, needy families, the sick and injured, the unemployed, an assessment of the welfare system, and references and further reading. Each country is presented as a separate chapter and the only point of active comparison undertaken is this common framework of presentation of information — and even this framework is only the very general framework in which specific approaches to information are then taken by each chapter author.

As noted earlier, ten countries are presented using the framework indicated, all of these countries are from sub-Saharan Africa, only one is a Francophone country and none are Lusophone. In the absence of any

explanation of the reasons for the choice of countries included I seriously doubt the wisdom of calling this collection of country studies *Social Welfare in Africa*. Would it not be more honest to call this collection *Social Welfare in Sub-Saharan English Speaking Africa*? It certainly would, with the exception of the Ivory Coast and possibly Ethiopia, have been a more accurate indication of what is contained in the volume. This general point is even more important because of the lack of an active comparative analysis, as mentioned earlier. Were these countries to be seen as atypical, or typical of certain systems, are they the ones which have definitive policies, or on which information of a coherent nature is available, or was it simply that the editor could identify resource people in these countries? Or does the explanation lie in a sentence from the Preface (no page number)

"It is pointless to attempt to compare countries that are fundamentally different, hence the regional focus of this tightly structured anthology."

The lack of any other explanation of the choice of countries is a serious omission — furthermore I wonder if the editor means to imply that there are no fundamental differences within the 'region' of Africa? What is the point of comparative analysis if we cannot compare different approaches, and their effects, as they emerge from different histories and ideologies?

The ten countries presented here — Ethiopia, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Mauritius, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe — are presented with a wealth of information, almost in too much detail in some cases. This wealth of information is very valuable, but a little difficult to digest in the manner presented, particularly in the absence of any other comparative framework than the common chapter outline. I am forced to wonder what the role of the editor is in a publication of this kind, as the editor seems hardly to impinge on the publication after defining the initial outline. At the very least I would have expected an introduction and conclusion that assisted the reader to develop a framework for the analysis of the contents, pointing out similarities and differences, particularly successful or problematic areas, the influence of ideology and history, the different options recognised in view of similar histories, emerging trends for social welfare in Africa, and so on. How much more valuable would this publication have been if this had been done, and how much more seriously comparative in its nature (and in terms of its promise). Can we seriously call a selection of contributions by different authors on different countries (in the editor's words an 'anthology') a comparative study simply because the articles are included in one publication, and are presented using a common framework? Does not the notion of comparison imply that some conclusions or trends would be drawn out, and indeed compared. Doesn't the notion of social welfare in Africa imply that the selection of countries to be included would have defined criteria and run the full gamut of backgrounds and present positions in Africa? Indeed in other writings by

Dixon (for example, Dixon and Schuerell, 1987) the comparative element has been much more pronounced and the information presented, therefore, that much more useful.

There are also a number of smaller items of format that need attention and were distracting to this reviewer. In particular a map of Africa showing the geographical location, and perhaps other graphic information, of the countries presented was missed. The length of the presentations varied quite considerably, and with little relation to the size or (dare I say it) importance of the country — for example, Mauritius and Ghana use well over 40 pages each while Nigeria and Ethiopia barely 20 pages each. The appendices too are presented in a rather strange manner, without any explanation or real reference to them, and using whole and half pages without any explanation for this. Happily, however, the volume is indexed quite thoroughly.

In brief then, this volume of writings on the social welfare systems of a selection of African countries is useful and valuable in the wealth of information it presents. However, there are serious limitations to its being presented as being of a comparative nature and a more explicit drawing out of some themes, trends, conclusions, etc in an introductory and concluding chapter (at the very least) would have made the publication, in my opinion, a more useful text.

Reviewed by Brigid Willmore, *Journal of Social Development in Africa*, Harare.

References

- Dixon J and Schuerell R (1987) "Social Security in Australia and the United States: A Comparison of Value Premises and Practices" in *The Journal of International and Comparative Social Welfare*, Vol III, 1 and 2, Spring and Fall, 1987.

Plantations and Plantation Workers, J P Sajbau and J Von Mural, ILO, Geneva, 1987 (207pp, Sfrs 27,50).

This book has been written by two senior members of ILO and published by that organisation. It follows the previous approach of ILO reports on plantations and is basically descriptive, depending on questionnaires sent to countries combined with case studies. The book reviews the origins and concepts of plantations but skirts around controversy.

The trends in production, consumption and the price of plantation crops are well described. The general pattern of increasing production combined with static or declining consumption leading to declining prices is documented. The export dependency of countries on primary commodity plantation crops is described, but the vulnerability these countries face due to the vagaries of international prices is neglected. The efforts to stabilise prices through International Agreements are described, though the outlook