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## Argument for Social Planning, An Book Review

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BOOK REVIEW:

An Argument for Social Planning, Reviewed by Arthur S. Leonard\*

The Industrial Order and Social Policy, by Richard A. Peterson. (Prentice Hall Series in Social Policy) Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973. 159 pages.

The title of this opus promises much more than the slim volume delivers, for Professor Peterson (of Vanderbilt University) has chosen to concentrate on describing the "industrial order" and how its characteristics might affect the choice of social policies by planners rather than discussing social policies directly. However, one must cheerfully report that in what he sets out to do, the author achieves much in terms of clarity, directness, and enlightenment. Peterson gives us a well-rounded look at modern industrial society, dipping into technological history, organizational and individual behavior, and the role of sociology as a science when considered as part of the industrial process.

Peterson is at his best describing case histories to illustrate his points. He has not wandered very far from standard examples (such as Ford's Assembly Line, Hoffa and the Teamsters, Alienation of Taxi Drivers), but he relates them with such obvious relish and intuitively stylish pacing that the reader sees them as fresh and stimulating points; one would guess from reading his book that Peterson is a most enjoyable lecturer, if he tells an industrial story as well as he writes one.

Curiously, Peterson's sure-fire pacing in anecdotage fails him where he needs it most in the final chapter of the book. When the reader is finally led to confront the big question in the chapter on "Planning and Sociology in the Crucible," Peterson backs off and delivers a soggy lecture on Sociological Perspective, which might better have been placed, after suitable editorial tightening, at the beginning of the book. He states his own position on social planning early on, but seemingly forgets to come full circle with a strong restatement at the end. In brief, his moderate position is that some form of planning must take place at all levels, but that all things should not be planned at the top level. If this reader understands his practical argument correctly, it is that the national gov-

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ernment should not engage in direct industrial or social engineering; rather, the national government should maintain a general framework (i.e., generalized peacetime prosperity and relatively free markets) within which individual entrepreneurs can plan for themselves. (Peterson makes frequent use of the notion of the entrepreneur in industry, and his best anecdote concerns entrepreneurial record producers in the pop music scene.) Thus, Peterson is coming out in his book for the sort of decentralized decision-making inherent in such popular concepts as federal revenue-sharing and departmental autonomy in large corporations (a sort of executive job-enlargement). This is by no means revolutionary stuff, but the author manages to give it a fresh sound in his reasonable version.

Perhaps the most impressive thing about this book is the excellent reference section, an encyclopedic 35 pages of articles and books that should provide endless material for any reader encouraged to pursue the subject.

Unfortunately, Peterson's efforts have been undermined at times by sloppy production and poor editorial work at Prentice-Hall. A few amazing sentences have made their way into print (from a grammatical point of view) and typographical errors are far from scarce. Not all of the lapses are attributable to the publisher. Peterson is periodically subject to dull spots in his writing, and the brief discussions of sociology and sociological perspective, (particularly in the last chapter) tend to wordiness which is, unfortunately, an occupational hazard of the social sciences. Peterson also tends to get worked up over obvious points in a few places, such as political scapegoating and worker alienation. (It is, of course, easy for us to label a point obvious today when it was not obvious a year ago, when this book was most likely put into final shape.)

All this minor carping aside, one must commend Richard Peterson for authoring a useful and informative volume, not too long and not too short, on at least a significant part of a vital subject.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

The following information on the crew consist issue (See Working on the Railroad, Article I) was received too late to be incorporated into the body of the article. Gary Weidy presents the following summary of events updating his article:

The United Transportation Union and the Chicago and Northwestern Transportation Company reached an agreement concerning crew consist in September, 1973. The consist for most trains would be one conductor and one brakeman. In return for the small crew, the company agreed to raise the wages of the remaining workers by \$10.75 per day. Crews would only be reduced by attrition. The UTU and the C&NW have battled over this issue since the termination of Arbitration Board Award No. 282. Union officials stated that they did not think that they would make similar concessions to other railroads.<sup>1</sup>

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1. New York Times, 27 September 1973, p. 33.

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