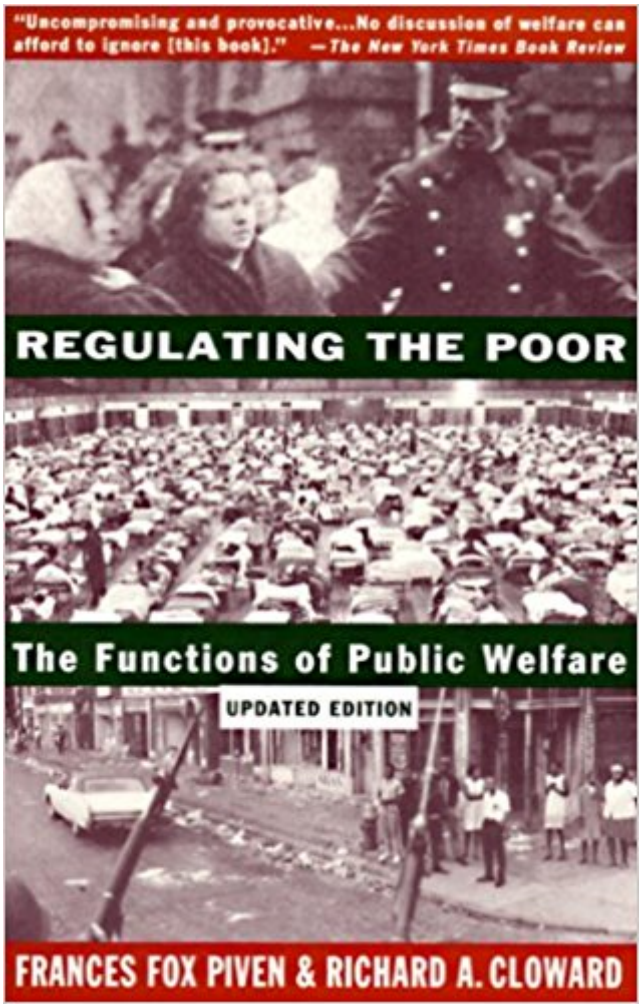
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Regulating The Poor: The Functions Of Public Welfare



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Synopsis

Piven and Cloward have updated their classic work on the history and function of welfare to cover the American welfare state's massive erosion during the Reagan, Bush, and Clinton years. The authors present a boldly comprehensive, brilliant new theory to explain the comparative underdevelopment of the U.S. welfare state among advanced industrial nations. Their conceptual framework promises to shape the debate within current and future administrations as they attempt to rethink the welfare system and its role in American society. "Uncompromising and provocative. . . . By mixing history, political interpretation and sociological analysis, Piven and Cloward provide the best explanation to date of our present situation . . . no future discussion of welfare can afford to ignore them." Ã¢â ¬â •Peter Steinfels,Ã Â The New York Times Book Review

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Customer Reviews

Originally published in 1971, this social science classic outlines the social functions of welfare programs. Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc.

"Uncompromising and provocative....By mixing history, political interpretation and sociological analysis, Piven and Cloward provide the best explanation to date of our present situation...no future discussion of welfare can afford to ignore them."--Peter Steinfels, The New York Times Book Review

i can pretty much guarantee that after reading this book, one will never quite look at welfare in the same way as before. The main premise of this book is that government provides aid for the poor to control political unrest and to control labor.The book starts off by tracing the history and development of welfare in western civilization. Prior to the early 16th century, caring for the poor was considered to be primarily the responsibility of the church or of those of the more prosperous who tried to purchase their salvation through almsgiving. Leaving charity to the church meant that few received aid and those not necessarily according to their need. This increased social unrest so governments began to be involved in providing for the poor. This was done for two primary reasons: 1.) To control social order and 2.) To extol the virtue of labor even at the lowest wages by making the treatment of the destitute so punitive and degrading that the no one wants to descend into beggary and pauperism.The book details such early government programs as workhouses, labor yards, and poor law subsidies whereby parish churches were required to care for the poor in their area.In the united States, welfare was addressed somewhat differently. Poverty in the U.S. was regarded as the obvious consequence of sloth and sinfulness. Relief was scattered and fragmentary-each township or county provided for its hungry in whatever manner it saw fit-giving of food, incarceration in almshouses, or indentured service. Poor relief was a local, not a state or national responsibility.During the great Depression, unemployment became so widespread that the government was forced to develop programs to assist the poor and the unemployed. At first the government focused on direct relief, but as imm4ediate needs were satisfied, the government moved on to work relief which, interestingly, was opposed by business leaders because it was felt that government was encroaching on areas that had been primarily reserved for private enterprise.As conditions stabilized, US policies changed to conform with the earlier view of poverty as being the rsult of sloth and sinfulness. Relief programs excluded able-bodied men.
Man-in-the-house rules excluded aid to a mother who was in any way associated with a man, particularly if the man lived in her house. Women and/or children were given aid but at the same time assigned to private entrepreneurs who were told to use them in any way possible.With the growing mechanization of southern agriculture, blacks migrated into the cities, particularly the northern cities where relief rules were not as restrictive. Four million blacks came to cities in less than three decades-congregated in largest cities in the north-New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Detroit, Los Angeles, Washington. Industry required an increasingly skilled labor force just as unskilled blacks reached cities in large numbers from the fields of the south, consequently, unemployment rose. Unrest mounted among poor blacks, culminating in the Civil Rights demonstrations of the early 60’s.Then was born the Great society as Democrats realized that blacks

were located in states of the most strategic importance in presidential contests. Democrats were losing traditional support in the South, so they needed the support of the northern cities. Service programs were developed for inner city as part of LBJ's "War on Poverty". According to the book, the true objective of the "War on Poverty" was to reach blacks and integrate them into urban political system. Method was to offer federal funds for the ghettoes and to use federal funds to create pressure for reallocation of municipal services.This book is eminently readable. I was assigned to read it for a college class and did not approach it with much enthusiasm, but I ended up thanking my professor for assigning it to me. Whether or not one buys into the book's overall premise, it certainly stimulates discussion about the overall treatment of poverty in the U.S. interrelationship of government welfare policies, racial politics, and politcal power plays.I would highly recommend this book to anyone wanting to get a view of how society has responded to the needs of the poor in history, and how we continue to repond to the needs of the poor today.

It is one of the books. I needed for school.

No problems, great buy

As an intellectual homeless shelter resident with a masterÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s degree and physical challenges restricting me to a desk job that I have yet to be offered in spite of 2,891 applications in the past 30 months, I was recommended this book by John Sheehan, the social worker at the soup kitchen at the Unitarian Church of All Souls in New York. He told me that Piven, who is still living and speaks at sociology conferences, was his inspiration to become a social worker. At the time, I was reading [author:Barbara Ehrenreich|1257]ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s [book:Bait and Switch: The (Futile) Pursuit of the American Dream|24450]. Piven is in the acknowledgements of that book as one of the manuscriptÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s early readers (and Ehrenreich was the editor of some publications with Piven and Cloward cited in this book). Frances Goldin is in the acknowledgements of this book for being Piven and ClowardÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s agent, and she was just presented an award last week by Picture the Homeless, an organization to which I belong. A useful idiot to conservatives among my cyberbullies said that citing ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“Cloward/PivenÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• in my blog undermines my credibility, which seems to peg her as an admirer of [author:Glenn Beck|188932], who has so little credibility that an entire book, [book:WhoÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s Afraid of Frances Fox Piven|12313398] has been published to reveal BeckÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s claims about Piven for the lies that they are.The main thesis of the

book is that poor relief, which is known in the United States as welfare, is designed to stave off revolt until its recipients can be forced into the harshest, most demeaning work available. It is thus a strategic method of keeping the wealthy in power to abuse the poor. It chronicles efforts in the 1960s to expand welfare rolls by Mobilization for Youth (MFY) Legal Services, another organization that has served me, to get people legally entitled to welfare rolls on them in ways that were never done before. The argument is there has been no significant increase in eligibility for welfare, except in the South, where laws significantly restricted it, but the expanding rolls is primarily due to grassroots efforts through the influence of JohnsonÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s Great Society to make sure that those entitled got the tiny share of the wealth to which they were entitled (276), a position that they are generally kept in by capitalist need for free or nearly free labor (345). According to the White HouseÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s website, the average taxpayer pays $36 a year toward food stamps and $6 per year towards welfare. The welfare I receive is $41 per month, plus $189 per month for food stamps, and I live in a homeless shelter. Even though when you divide that $42 figure that the average citizen contributes to welfare and food stamps on a yearly basis among all the taxpayers, the grand total is about $0.0000001, I have encountered admitted right-wingers online who are so greedy that they want me to do minimum wage physical labor (and I include fast food under physical labor because difficulty standing for long periods is one of my ailments) against my doctorsÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ orders rather than to receive it Some have even said that they want me to die for refusing. This anecdote is reflective of Piven and ClowardÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s basic points. On page 16, they detail why welfare is needed by the so-called ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“free marketÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• and touch briefly on the foolishness of not providing welfare, and why such extreme right-wing resolutions cannot possibly make it past intelligent lawmakers. That terrorism was used to enforce work in 1767 is documented on page 34ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â œonly seven out of 100 infants in the English workhouses we mostly know today through [book:Oliver Twist|18254] lived to reach the age of 2. This is to which right-wingers want to return us. They cite [author:Karl Polyani]ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s [book:The Great Transformation|53982] stating that philanthropists of 1834 advocated and practiced ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“psychological torture,ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• something right-wingers poo-poo when I write entire blog entries about the psychological torture IÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ve experienced via the welfare system. Conservatives seem to not know how to do anything but whitewash the truth, as they did, under the aegis of the Republican Party, during the era of the New Deal in 1936) (99).On page 8, she describes a WEP (work experience program)-like system in the sixteenth century, and WEP is first mentioned by name on page 129. This is a failed system in which people on welfare are forced to do slave labor that is not calculated based on the

federal minimum wage, and thus violates federal law. It is being phased out at the city level in New York, as announced by Human Resources Administration chair Steven Banks, although he admitted to a group of us from Picture the Homeless two Fridays ago that it would take two years to phase out fully), and I have heard rumors that the state is finally going to do the same. In a note on page 14, they invokes the rebellions of Wat Tyler and Jack Cade, so IÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢m in familiar territory, having reviewed [book:Jack CadeÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s Rebellion of 1450|4507199] two years ago. (For some reason it says that the Cade rebellion was in 1460.) While [author:William Shakespeare|947] made fun of Jack Cade and portrayed him as illiterate in [book:King Henry VI Part II|82378], Cade was a literate man with legitimate requests, just as I am.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“[T]he Southern case also reveals how relief policies can be used to support a labor caste system, one in which the subjugation of particular ethnic or racial groups (in this case blacks) serves to lower the price of labor generally,ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• Piven and Cloward tell us on page 131. If relief policies lower the price of labor, why would conservatives, who care most about the bottom line, want to eliminate them? They were used to push agricultural hourly wages down to 77Ãƒâ Ã Â¢ an hour in South Carolina as late as 1969. A recurring motif is the way blacks on welfare were forced to do farm labor, while whites never were. I think most people know that this has since switched to the Latino community, but it addresses the racist manor with which welfare was provided, particularly in the Jim Crow South. They also know that administrators of food programs would collude with employers to make sure that blacks were forced to work to get a meager ration of food, with examples from Polk County, Florida, and ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“a Mississippi rural countyÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• (139).Poverty is created by the wealthy. ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“The exigencies of their political environment force relief officials to design the procedures that serve the economic ends of groups outside the relief systemÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• (147). This is why only bottom-feeder employers ever come to the shelters or Workforce 1, offering low wage jobs that do not pay enough for anyone to exit the shelter system. If working in retail or food service got people out of homeless shelters, able-bodied people (of which I am not one) would be far more inclined to do it. Of course, those in power choose to blame the poor rather than the capitalists and relief officials who create the problem, and they created myths that pit the poor against the poor, identifying an illusory caste of lazy people that even other welfare recipients donÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t like, in spite of them being a straw man (172). They analyze the deep roots of hating the poor in market ideology (147-149)ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â œmost Americans believe that meritocracy is real. Thus, people come up with excuses of how I supposedly fell short, even if it involves outright lies about my history (insisting that my job applications are fake, insisting that I have substance abuse issues when there is no

evidence, alleging that I could have prevented the problem by having been a STEM major, which is also false (see also http://issues.org/29-4/what-shortages-the-real-evidence-about-the-stem-workforce/). The conclusion reached by Piven and Cloward is ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“That the working poor are ready to forfeit such substantial sums is powerful testimony to the force with which the ideology of work and success, together with abhorrence of the dole, has been driven home by those who gain the least from their labor. It is especially powerful testimony considering that, while the poor shun ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Ëœthe dole,ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ affluent groups profit greatly and regularly from public subsidies of many kindsÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• (175). When I have tried to point this out by showing my attackers this video, I usually get a lot of blubbering about worthiness that never addresses the substance of the arguments presented.The book doesnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t directly address situations like mine. The case study focuses on Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), for which I do not qualify, although food stamps and other sorts of welfare (including men on welfare) are certainly touched upon, as are social security and unemployment insurance. Even so, terminology I have dealt with just keeps coming up, such as ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“failure to complyÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• on page 157. Anyone who has ever been on food stamps has probably been found in failure to comply at some point, usually because of a failure on the agencyÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s part to provide the recipient with specific instructions, such as letters announcing mandatory appointments getting conveniently lost in the mail. It also goes into late-night raids of the sort William Bratton was using in early 2012 on shelters to violate the homes of welfare recipients in direct violation of the fourth amendment to insure that no man was present, thus forcing family instability onto the recipients (166), a scandal that eventually led to AFDC-UP (unemployed parent).Scandals are pervasive when dealing with those who work with the poor. Page 203 notes the story of Roy Flowers, who violated laws surrounding minimum wage, child labor, overtime pay, and record keeping, and who was renting shacks to black workers for $70 per month that should have been $5 per month. He was made an example, and forced to pay 200 employees $50,000. On the other hand, in another example of collusion, he was also paid by the U.S. Department of Agriculture $10,832 for not cultivating 4,000 of his 16,000 acres. This example shows that since the wealthy can restrict the amount of work that can be done by labor, we need to separate having necessities from availability of work.Right-wing lies that are commonly heard in the press are debunked here. For example, in 1988, 64% of minimum wage workers were over the age of 20 (354), yet right-wingers still try to talk about the issue as though we want to give living wages to teenagers working for spending money. The situation today is worse than ever. A few years ago, Florida tried to institute begging licenses that

cost $90 per person and were unavailable to those who needed them. This was tried and failed as early as 1531 in England (15), and again in New Jersey in 1936 (109), and was eventually ruled a first amendment violation in Florida.At Occupy Wall Street Alternative Banking, we decry economists who present their mathematical models in a vacuum and pretend that they apply to real life. On page 355, Piven and Cloward demonstrate that the ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“Phillips CurveÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• is not reflected by real-life data. The curve shows that unemployment and wage levels vary inversely, but in the late 1960s and early 1970s, unemployment rose without falling wages, and in fact, wage increases accelerated (355-6). They also demonstrate the lie of the ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“free marketÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â œÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“When people had an alternative means of subsistence, they were not as likely to sell their labor except under terms that improved their situation, and they were less likely to accept the most backbreaking or degrading forms of work.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• This is what the right truly despises. They desire a market that is anything but free, in which people have no alternative but to accept torture for the barest means of subsistence (358-9), even going as far as to whine that food stamps are ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“unfairÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• (361) as though barely surviving on backbreaking labor is, and bemoaned how food stamps facilitate strikes. [author:Solomon Fabricant|1492204] even recommended letting unemployment rise in order to bring wages down (358).
ThatÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s about as unfair as it gets. The immorality of those on the top is nearly unfathomable, yet even a leftist like [author:Daniel P. Moynihan|268655] erroneously externalizes immorality onto the poor. The authors he is trying to make reinterpret correlation as causation (368).TodayÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s buzzword, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“income inequalityÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• is invoked on page 361, with its enormous expansion under that most overrated president, Ronald Reagan, as is his policy of ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“ritualized degradationÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• (367), so-called ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“workfare.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• [author:John E. Schwarz|412758] and [author:Thomas J. Volgy|666811]ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s [book:Forgotten Americans|599850], quoted on page 389-90, is most succinct: ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“No matter how much we may wish it otherwise, workfare cannot be an effective solution. Among the most important reasons for this is the absence of enough steady, decent-paying, full-time jobs to go aroundÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• because ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“low-wage employment riddles the economy,ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• to which they add that in 1989, 1 in 7 year-round full-time jobs paid about $2,000 below the poverty line. They also state that Scwarz and Volgy found that people AT the poverty line were being forced to forego medical treatment and other necessities. They also cite right-wing nutjobs like [author:Mickey Kaus|500610] who whine about workfare increasing marriage rates while providing absolutely no data to that effect. ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“Marriage

rates,ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• Piven and Cloward say, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“might indeed have increased were jobs with adequate wages available to men, as well as to women on welfare who choose to work, but that would have required responses by business different from disinvestment, speculation, and declaration of war against laborÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• (392). They also discuss how stay at home mothers are often the anchors to impoverished communities, and that forcing them to work for negligible sums makes communities worse, not better. ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“No social analyst explained convincingly why these women would contribute more to their communitites by taking jobs flipping bhamburgers. Nor did anyone explain why it would not be the better part of public policy to shore up income and social supports for women who are struggling to care for children in the jungle-like conditions of urban poverty.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• They note however, that many want to work, and if jobs were actually available, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“coercion would be unnecessaryÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• (394), which ought to be on a sign at every welfare rights protest until 100% of the populace understands and agrees.The book demonstrates many systemic problems that resulting increased poverty: ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“The more professionally oriented the welfare staff, the lower the proportion of the poor who got relief: ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã ËœHigh scores on the professional orientation scale were given to caseworkers who belonged to professional associations, read professional journals, and held or were working toward the masterÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s degree in social work. There was a strong inverse relation between the measure of professionalism and the AFDC poor rate. The lower the number of caseworkers with a professional orientation to the field of social work, the larger The number of poor persons using AFDC [Emphasis added.] (New York State Department of Social Services Nov. 1968-Feb 1969 report, 52)ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• (176) ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“[T]he institutional changes which weakened the occupational and life supports of the poor, and the role of the dominant classes in promoting those changes, were typically ignored. The result, as we said in the original introduction of this book, is that ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Ëœmuch of the literature on reliefÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â œwhether the arid moralisms and pieties of nineteenth century writers or the ostensible ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Ëœvalue neutralÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ analyses of twentieth-century professionals and techniciansÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â œmerely serves to obscure the role of relief agencies in the regulation of marginal labor and in the maintenance of civil orderÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• (370-71).As mentioned in my comments, I was annoyed at their repeated pluralizing of years with apostrophes, which I do not believe any style manual says is correct. I found an instance on the first line of page 191 of a missing word ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“who.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• A professor in whose book I found a similar missing word in time for a new printing suggested I look for work as a proofreader. that was before I became homeless. I have applied for 42 proofreader jobs in the time I have become

homeless alone. One welfare agent told me that I need to apply for 42 proofreader positions a day, and I laughed at her openly for assuming that one could find 42 individual proofreader positions in one day, which would be tough even if one had the resources to relocate anywhere.Recently, cyberbullies ganged up on me on Twitter talking about how it would be better to accept $9 an hour job with no medical benefits in Texas from one of said cyberbullies. I considered that offer extremely unreasonable, even though it included a bus ticket and a week in a hotel. ThatÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s very similar to the proposal from a graduate school colleague that left me homeless in Jacksonville, where shelters are not free and there is no legal right to them, and in that case the promise was experience in my chosen field. This guy has even less to offer, but the mentality of enforcing low-wage work is strong even in those who get no benefit from it. According to the White House, SNAP costs the average taxpayer $36 a year, and welfare $6 a year, yet there is an insistence that even an educated, disabled man work at a low-age menial job, take a second job (security) at night, and not have anything to show for it but loss of the possessions I currently have in storage. It is this work-for-nothing mentality among the elites and their useful idiots who vote Republican that must be eradicated. A social worker saw me reading this ion the subway, assuming that I was a student, and when I told her about all about my situation and my cyberbully attacks, she said, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“I hate Republicans.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• Now you know why Republicans want this book suppressed, with lies if not outright censorship. Even so, they do think that purer capitalism might alleviate the need for welfare, so itÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s also not fair to label their work with any dismissive ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“-isms,ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• either. They do cite Marx four times, most poignantly in a footnote on page 415: ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“Capital cares nothing for the length of life of labour-power. all that concerns it is simply and solely the maximum of labour-power that can be rendered fluent in a working day.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• Capitalism, we see, is inhumane. If outrage at inhumane treatment is ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“commie,ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• then so be itÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â œit is unarguably right. They go into the cowardice of Southerners relating to strong national government because of their attachment to the slave labor system, which Edward Baptist has shown has a fundamental basis in American capitalism. They also go into capitalismÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s tendency toward oligarchy long before that complaint became an Occupy buzz-phrase (454). ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“Instead of liberalizing the means-tested programs, the rolls were driven down, payments were simply slashed, and the ritualized degradation of the wealthy was intensified. To our minds, this contradiction can only be explained by the demise of protest from below, and by the mobilizing of the elites from above, in this case a politicized business community in league with Republican administrations, to force poorer people to take less even while richer people were taking more.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• This is why I

Occupy. Did I mention the guy who wants me to move to Texas for $9 an hour with no benefits claims to play golf for a living?

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