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Book Reviews

Decolonization and African Society, Frederick Cooper (1996), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, ISBN: 0-521-56251-1 (h/b), 0-521-56600-2 (p/b), 677pp inc index, Price: £55 (h/b), £19.95 (p/b).

This detailed and authoritative volume changes our conceptions of "imperial" and "African" history. Frederick Cooper gathers a vast range of archival sources in French and English to achieve a truly comparative study of colonial policy towards the recruitment, control, and institutionalisation of African labour forces from the mid-1930s, when the labour question was first posed, to the late 1950s, when decolonisation was well under way.

Professor Cooper explores colonial conceptions of the African worker, and shows how African trade union and political leaders used the new language of social change to claim equal wages, equal benefits, and share of power. This helped to persuade European officials that their post-war project of building a "modern" Africa within the colonial system was both unaffordable and politically impossible. France and Great Britain left the continent, insisting that they had made it possible for Africans to organise wage labour and urban life in the image of industrial societies, while abdicating to African elites responsibility for the consequences of the colonial intervention. They left behind the question of how much the new language for discussing social policy corresponded to the lived experience of African workers and their families and how much room for maneuver Africans in government or in social movements had to reorganise work, family, and community in their own ways.

The book contains a wealth of detail, divided into five parts: Part I "The dangers of expansion and the dilemmas of reform" examines the labour question, Part II looks at "Imperial fantasies and colonial crises," Part III "The imagining of a working class," with Part IV "Devolving power and abdicating responsibility." The chapters are well laid out and clearly discussed, each capturing main points through introductory and concluding sections. The notes to the chapters are very detailed and extensive. This is a major contribution, especially valuable as comparative studies of colonial policy between British and French Africa of this detail are rare.

Reviewed by Nigel Hall, Editor of JSDA.

The Design and Management of Poverty Reduction Programmes and Projects in Anglophone Africa, Michael Bamberger, Abdullahi M. Yahie, George Matovu (eds), 1996, Economic Development Institute of The World Bank, EDI Learning Resources Series, World Bank, Washington D C, ISBN:0-8213-2767-4, (p/b), Price: N/K.

Poverty alleviation has become a timely topic in the developing countries in recent years, particularly in the context of structural adjustment programmes (SAPs). The volume edited by Bamberger, Yahie and Matovu was published at a time when several African countries were implementing poverty alleviation programmes. It addresses important issues such as the development of guidelines for improving the identification, design, implementation, and sustainability of poverty reduction programmes and projects.

The volume under review is based on papers presented at a seminar in Kampala, in 1991 on *"the Design and Management of Targeted Poverty Alleviation Projects in Anglophone Africa."* The seminar was jointly organised by the Economic Development Institute, the Poverty and Social Policy Division of the Africa Technical Department of the World Bank and the Uganda Management Institute. The main objectives of the planners, poverty programme managers and researchers from Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Uganda and Zambia who attended were to review the participating countries' experiences with poverty reduction programmes and to develop guidelines for improving the *"identification, design, implementation, and sustainability"* of national programmes and projects.

The volume, which is a compendium of 13 essays, begins with a lucid 8-page overview which provides an excellent summary of poverty alleviation strategies in Africa and guidelines for the design and management of poverty programmes and projects. The essays are grouped into five broad parts that address: (a) approaches to poverty alleviation in Sub-Saharan Africa; (b) key issues in poverty alleviation; (c) lessons from project visits; (d) guidelines for the design and management of targeted poverty alleviation projects; and (e) recommendations and conclusions.

Chukwuma Obidegwu provides a comprehensive and well-written discussion of economic trends, adjustment and poverty in sub-Saharan Africa. He argues that the macro-economic reforms have generated extensive transitional problems (eg, poverty) and marked socio-spatial inequalities. Abdullahi Yahie's essay on poverty and approaches to poverty alleviation in Ghana, Uganda, Zambia and Malawi evaluates the effectiveness of the economic development policies and poverty programmes in the four countries.

Michael Bamberger offers a penetrating analysis of the crucial role of strategic, conceptual, institutional and operational issues, in the design and management of targeted poverty alleviation programmes. In the next chapter, which I found very

instructive, Bamberger draws on extensive first-hand experience to examine poverty alleviation approaches in Latin America and Asia (eg, social funds, targeting, credit, etc) and their potential applicability in Africa.

George Matovu, David Kithakey and Abdullahi Yahie discuss decentralisation and its effects on poverty alleviation efforts in Sub-Saharan Africa. Michael Bamberger and Apollonia Kerenge examine gender issues in poverty alleviation and highlight several "*gender-based forms of exclusion*" such as women's limited access to shelter, fuel and health services, plus increased exposure to environmental problems. After examining the factors that hinder women's participation in anti-poverty programmes the authors suggest practical ways of making the programmes more gender-sensitive. The two authors provide a rich overview of the issues that adversely affect African women.

The role of NGOs in poverty alleviation programmes is examined by Abdou Drabo and Abdullahi Yahie. The authors are, however, silent about the existing power relations between NGOs that are often resource-rich and the shaky structurally-adjusting governments in the South. Joseph Okune examines the Programme to Alleviate Poverty and Social Costs of Adjustment (PAPSCA) which was introduced by the Government of Uganda to alleviate poverty and the social costs of adjustment after the adoption of the Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) in 1987. George Matovu and Abdullahi Yahie highlight the lessons learned from three project visits undertaken during the seminar to an urban renewal project in Kampala; the Rakai AIDS orphans project; and the Luwero war widows project. Though interesting, the essay however seems out of place in the volume and should not have been included. Abdullahi Yahie focuses on adapting the project cycle to the special characteristics of poverty alleviation projects.

The essay by Abdullahi Yahie on "*Improving the Selection and Design of Poverty Alleviation Projects*" takes the reader through practical ways of improving anti-poverty projects. The penultimate chapter by Abdullahi Yahie provides useful guidelines on how to improve the implementation and sustainability of poverty alleviation projects. In the final chapter Michael Bamberger and Abdullahi Yahie provide several practical recommendations and conclusions. A few of the more interesting include recommendations on improving the identification, selection, design, implementation and sustainability of poverty alleviation projects.

Although the editors have produced a readable volume, some of the common problems of an edited volume are evident. For example, the essays vary considerably in their thoroughness, analytic depth and linguistic style. Nevertheless, this volume is an important addition to the burgeoning literature on poverty and is a valuable reference source for practitioners, policy-makers, development agencies, and researchers.

Reviewed by Dr D S Tevera, Chairman, Department of Geography, University of Zimbabwe.

How to Choose a UN Chief - and how not to, Erskine Childers & Brian Urquhart (1996), Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, Uppsala, ISSN: 0345-2328, (p/b), Price: N/K.

The problem of "*haphazard selection*" of the leaders of the United Nations, including the Secretary General, "*will not go away through neglect*", say UN veterans Sir Brian Urquhart and Erskine Childers in a "fresh appraisal" of the problem they first addressed in 1990 in *A World in Need of Leadership: Tomorrow's United Nations*. The British and Irish authors point out that the process to date is "*far less searching or systematic than any small university's procedures for choosing a new president.*" The study is based on the assumption that the member governments really do wish to find the best possible person for the job of Secretary-General.

Calling for "*a personality both authoritative and charismatic*" as leader of the UN system, they make new and detailed proposals for governments to choose the UN Secretary-General more creatively, more systematically and more democratically. They propose that the General Assembly should adopt a comprehensive new policy including a single seven-year term to free the incumbent from reelection stresses and pressures. This is especially relevant given the recent furore at the UN over the reelection for a second term of Boutros Boutros Ghali and his forced departure following a veto by the United States.

Governments should search for the best possible person rather than waiting for names to surface from what the authors call "*quite literally an 'old-boy' network,*" which at the end merely finds "*a reasonably acceptable candidate who could get past five potential vetoes.*" The authors urge the Permanent Members (Britain, China, France, Russia and the USA) to relinquish their claimed right of veto over the nomination, saying "*the first to do so would be acclaimed by the world.*" They suggest that the lifting of the veto might be balanced by re-considering the tradition that no national of a permanent member of the Security Council can be a candidate for the post of Secretary General.

The study describes a positive search beginning with a public call for nominations, with a mid-point when a short list of between 5 and 10 selected names would be published by the Security Council. After 30 days for comment or additional suggestions from governments, parliamentarians, civic groups and media, the Security Council would resume the selection process. The candidates on a refined short list should then be interviewed by the Security Council before it sends a name to the General Assembly.

Urquhart and Childers believe that uncertainty as to how to find the best person for what the first Secretary-General, Trygve Lie, called "*the most impossible job on this earth*" stems partly from not distinguishing between qualities and qualifi-

cations. They list essential qualities for the post, including "*stature, integrity and moral courage...maturity of character and absence of excessive ego*" and "*executive ability and ability to choose the best deputies*" and to "*share the limelight.*" The search they recommend should be for such qualities, which should also include "*diplomatic skills and a worldview,*" but with higher emphasis on "*ability to communicate ideas and inspire people in the world at large.*"

Team leadership both in the UN and among its agency heads should be given greater attention. The authors argue that since no single human being can be expert in every field the UN chief has to deal with, far more attention must be paid to equipping him or her with a small team of Deputy Secretaries-General of the highest competence in the major fields of peace, economics, humanitarian affairs and management.

Urquhart and Childers say the fact that no woman has to date even been a candidate for Secretary General is "*grotesque and profoundly damaging,*" and that it would be "*very healthy for the international community*" if its next Secretary-General were a woman.

In a second chapter, on "*A System in Need of Leadership,*" the study analyses elections and appointments in the UN's specialised agencies and funds. The authors point out that the calendar of elections to head the agencies at present has no relation with that of appointment of the Secretary-General. Unless all top-level appointments are re-synchronised, the UN system will always be deprived of a well-formed executive cabinet.

This is the fifth in a series of studies by the two former UN civil servants that have been sponsored by the Ford and Dag Hammarskjöld Foundations. The book contains detailed statistics on the history of leadership in the UN system, including data that "*thoroughly refute the widespread canard that 'the UN system is dominated by the Third World majority'.*" Nationals of Western countries have held 70 per cent of all leadership positions in the UN system since 1946; in 1996 they still hold 62 per cent of all posts.

Sir Brian Urquhart, formerly Scholar-in-Residence at the Ford Foundation, was one of the first UN civil servants, retiring in 1986 as Under Secretary-General for Special Political Affairs after 41 years. Erskine Childers, currently Secretary-General of the World Federation of UN Associations (WFUNA), retired in 1989 as Senior Adviser to the UN Director-General for Development and International Economic Affairs after 22 years in the UN system.

The study is published by the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, established in 1962 at Uppsala, Sweden, in memory of the second Secretary-General. It is a very interesting and well-researched book which is well worth reading for anyone with an interest in how the United Nations system operates.

Reviewed by Nigel Hall, Editor of JSDA.

The Political Economy of Information on Development, Democracy & Security in Southern Africa, Maurice Lundu (ed), SAPES Books, Harare, 1996, ISBN: 1-77905-43-7, 179 pp, inc index (p/b). Price N/K.

The Political Economy of Information on Development, Democracy & Security in Southern Africa is a welcome piece of work both in terms of informing the public about the crucial role of information in a democratic society, and as a basis for further research in the area. It is quite a unique book in the sense that it attempts to investigate the issue from various perspectives. This kind of work required experts in various fields; as such it not only presents the views and observations of the 'Traditional Information Workers,' but also those of professional experts.

In the first chapter Abate presents the conceptual framework of the problem. He starts by giving an overview of what he calls the three most important challenges facing the Southern African region, namely: development, democracy and governance, and security. Next, he looks at what he refers to as the "*information problematique*" and identifies various subdivisions, such as: definition of information; ideological dimensions; institutional-cum-infrastructure dimensions; the political economy of information in the context of underdevelopment; and the need for extensive research into the area. As a background to what needs to be done, it is fairly well presented. It should be pointed out, however, that with the attainment of majority rule in South Africa, some of the issues need to be examined in a new setting, hence the need for further research.

Zwizwai's study examines the process of information generation, dissemination and consumption related to the economic reform and structural adjustment programme in Zimbabwe. The study assesses the adequacy and quality of information generated by and disseminated to the various parties in society. It also examines the extent to which the government, through legislation, protects the information rights of society, both on paper and in practice; and the information infrastructure between the government and the donor community. Among its findings, the study established that the people were not informed enough about the merits and demerits of the structural adjustment programme. As is the case with many other government projects, the validity of these findings would not be doubted.

The next chapter is on information for manufacturing and foreign trade in Zimbabwe, and the study has four objectives, namely: identifying and discussing the information requirements and outputs of key players; analysing the requirements and outputs in order to determine the existence of obligations, choices and rights to information; considering the methods and mechanisms used to generate and disseminate information and discussing their shortcomings in the fulfilment of other key players' rights; and highlighting key problems on the flow of information

and recommending areas needing further examination. Chawira concludes that information does not reach its intended audiences and believes that there is a need for further research into how best the manufacturing and foreign trade sector can be provided with appropriate information.

Deve and Derges look at information for economic, social and cultural equity in Southern Africa and both contend that this equity does not exist. Deve, for example, argues that, these economic and social inequalities are based on racial lines, whereby the minority peoples of European descent are better-off than the majority of African descent. This is explained in terms of access to and control over information. The authors believe that to attain a reasonable degree of equity, peoples' strategic concerns, classified basically as access to clean water, decent food, health care and education, should be placed on the information agenda. Derges points out that the state seems not to see the importance of information in relation to the promotion of cultural equity. This is evidenced by the absence of well-articulated information policies; and the lack of adequate investment of resources to develop the information sector for the promotion of culture. She further states that SADC existed for fifteen years before the establishment of a culture and information sector.

Lundu and Likubangwa examine the concept of 'Information is Power' and how this affected the privatisation of the copper mining industry in Zambia. They start by presenting the history of the mining industry in Zambia; the change in policy direction at the beginning of the new political dispensation; and a general analysis of technical, economic and social issues. They then proceed to discuss the information scenario with regard to the copper mining industry; with a systematic presentation of the six parameters of the *information problematique* outlined in the research methodology. The findings of the study indicate that the government did not conform to all these six parameters in their handling of privatisation.

Mugwara discusses information for food security in Southern Africa and his findings show that there is inadequate information on water resources and needs, household food security and the use of indigenous knowledge. He recommends the establishment of a regional information system on food security. The chapter, however, does not touch much on the subject of information in the context of the *information problematique*.

In the conclusion, Lundu contends that policy-makers, political functionaries, business executives and leaders of academic and research institutions must endeavour to make use of information generated, produced and disseminated within the region; and he views this as the cardinal point upon which information across borders in the Southern African region beyond the year 2000 should be conceptualised and developed.

As mentioned in the introduction, the book has generally set the stage for further research in the field of the political economy of information and how it affects development, democracy and security in Southern Africa. One serious weakness, though, is the lack of consistency in the way the research was carried out as reflected in the way the results have been presented. In fact, the observation made in the preface that only two researchers pursued the investigation in a consistent and systematic manner is very correct. Some papers went so much away from the locus of the study that they ended up saying very little about the problem that they were set to address.

Of importance also are some errors that may have originated from either the editing process or the printing process – such as incorrect citations and titles for some articles. Otherwise this is a book worth reading.

Reviewed by Bright Nkhatha, Librarian, SAPES Trust, P O Box MP111, Mount Pleasant, Harare. Acknowledgements to SAPEM, Vol 10 No 1 1996 where this review originally appeared.

**2nd International Conference: Social Work in Health and Mental Health
12-15 January 1998, World Congress Centre, Melbourne, Australia**

Participate in this exciting event in which you can share ideas across boundaries and across cultures by discussing critical contemporary issues, innovations and outcomes of health-related social work in dynamic and complex environments. The Conference will focus on the challenges of change for individuals, families and communities seeking appropriate ways to meet their health needs and identify lessons from the past as well as future directions for social work in the fields of health and mental health. This Conference builds on the first international conference auspiced by the Paul Baerwald School of Social Work, at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem in 1995, which arose from initiatives of the Mt Sinai Medical Center, New York. The First Conference clearly demonstrated the academic and practice need for an international forum focussing on this substantive area in social work, and the Israeli hosts strongly supported the move for an Australasian-based Second Conference. Just some of the issues highlighted in the Conference will be:

- Changing relationships between consumers and providers in health and mental health
- Innovations in clinical practice, education and research
- Community development and rural health and mental health
- Accountability for costing and quality improvement: outcome and program evaluation
- Case management
- Managed care
- Social work contributions to health care access and equity
- Gender, cultural and socio-economic dimensions of policy, program and practice
- Women's health and mental health
- Indigenous health and mental health issues
- Dilemmas in the structuring of social work delivery systems
- Relationships between government and non-government sectors
- Privatisation and changing fiscal structures
- Interprofessional collaboration
- Shifts from inpatient to community-based care
- Ethical dilemmas
- Escalating areas of concern such as HIV/AIDS, youth suicide, road trauma, addictions, frail aged and disability from acute care, chronic care and rehabilitation perspectives
- Social and psychological determinants of mental and physical illness.

The Conference is auspiced by the School of Social Work at the University of Melbourne and has been widely endorsed by national and international professional bodies and health-related organisations. Further details are available from the Conference Secretariat at: International Convention Management Services, 84 Queensbridge Street, Southbank, Melbourne, Vic. 3006, Australia. Tel: +61 3 9682 0244; Fax: +61 3 9682 0288, E-mail: 2icsw.98@icms.com.au