

Book Reviews

Richard Rose: *Ordinary People in Public Policy: A Behavioural Analysis*. London: Sage, 1989 xii + 189 pp.

One of Richard Rose's numerous talents as a political scientist is his ability to recognize and explain the important implications of seemingly mundane observations about the social and political world. This book is yet another manifestation of that talent. Professor Rose makes the observation at the beginning of the volume that the ultimate targets and the ultimate evaluators of public policies are individual citizens. Most of conventional policy analysis concentrates its attention on political and administrative elites and the decisions which they must make about policies. Those are certainly important decisions, but in Rose's perspective where the decisions really matter are in the millions of households that comprise the country. The fundamental question of policy analysis – who gets what – may be considered collectively, but most citizens think of the answer in more personal terms. Those citizens can also arrange their lives to make the answer to that question more favorable for themselves and for the members of their family.

Using this consumers' perspective on policy, Rose examines a variety of issues in public policy. Many of these issues combine the consumer perspective with another of the consistent themes in his work – the importance of consent and legitimacy for effective and humane governance. For example, his discussion of pride in the nation in this public policy context is not important as an analysis of nationhood and symbolic politics. It is important as the background for any attempts on the part of government to impose its will on citizens. Without pride in the nation, and with that pride a willingness to accept possible deprivations from the public sector, citizens are a more difficult group to govern. With any difficulty in governance goes a restricted range of policy options available to political elites. A government that is fully legitimate will have a much broader range of 'tools' at its disposal and should be able to govern more effectively and more efficiently. If nothing else, governing through law and information is much more efficient than governing through coercion.

The chapter on taxation in this book makes the point about the importance of consent very effectively. As governments have become more expensive to taxpayers, and those tax costs have become the subject of political mobilization, the willingness of citizens to fulfill their financial obligations of citizenship has been brought into doubt. The popular press has contained discussion of widespread tax evasion by individuals and corporations, and many citizens feel they are fools to pay their taxes when so many others apparently do not. In his analysis, Rose attempts to show that evasion is not as widespread as some would believe, and that much of the willingness to pay is a function of the trust of average citizens, at least European citizens, in their government. This analysis, while more optimistic than others, does correspond to arguments (such as that by Listhaug & Miller for Norway), that tax evasion and tax compliance are political rather than economic acts for most citizens.

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the citizens' viewpoint of public policy. This point is that most public policies cannot be made and implemented solely by governments; almost all policy areas involve the interaction of citizens with their government. Even in policy-making systems, such as the United Kingdom, where government itself assesses tax obligations for citizens, there is some dependence on reporting and record-keeping by citizens and private organizations. In the United States, with self-assessment, the government ironically must trust the very citizens who do not always trust it. Other areas of public policy, such as crime prevention, depend increasingly upon coproduction between the public sector and private individuals, and even administering social benefits depend upon eligible citizens making themselves known to government. Thus, again we can see that policy analysis is not just about the decisions made by government; it is also about the millions of decisions which must be made by average citizens as they interact with each other and with government. The subtitle of the book, '*A Behavioural Analysis*', makes the point about the importance of individual behavior at the outset, and it is emphasized throughout the volume.

A final observation about this citizen perspective on public policy is that, to paraphrase V. O. Key, the average citizen is no fool. Some public policies, e.g. 'tax expenditures' rely upon citizen being self-interested and structuring his or her life to take advantage of the incentives offered by government. Other policies can be administered very easily, knowing that citizens are self-interested and are attempting to do as well as they can for themselves. Their self-interest does not mean, however, that these citizens are 'uncivic'; it only means that, despite pride in their country and legitimacy of governments, in most western countries the individual gives priority to his or her own well-being. Citizens can divide their activities among three economies without doing serious harm to the State, and they can make consumption choices without undermining the authority and legitimacy of government.

Despite the numerous interesting and important points raised by this book, there are some less positive aspects which should also be pointed out. A number of these essays have appeared as papers and their integration and linkage is not as complete as might be desirable. It is not always clear just what each chapter adds to the total picture Rose is painting. Also, at times the evidence used to make arguments is highly conjectural and alternative assumptions could produce very different conclusions. Attempts at false precision through equations, at times confuse rather than clarify the analysis. Despite these minor points, Richard Rose has produced yet another interesting and important book which should be read by serious students of public policy.

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Bernt Aardal & Henry Valen: *Velgere, partier og politisk avstand (Voters, parties, and political distance)*. Oslo-Kongsvinger: Statistisk Sentralbyrå, 1989, 329 pp.

This is the report from the survey of the Norwegian parliamentary election of September 1985. At that election, the bourgeois coalition, led by Kaare Willoch and consisting of *Høyre*, *Kristelig Folkeparti* and *Senterpartiet*, lost its majority in the Storting. The two mandates belonging to the right-wing *Fremskrittspartiet* came into a key position, from where they soon made the situation so difficult for the government that it gave up. In May 1986 it was succeeded by a minority government of *Arbeiderpartiet*, led by Gro Harlem Brundtland. Time will show whether something similar happens to the present bourgeois coalition led by Jan P. Syse; in any