

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Jillian Jimenez

Regulating the Poor was published in 1971. I first encountered it during my graduate studies at the Florence Heller School for Advanced Studies in Social Policy during the decade of the 1970's. Had it not been published before I began my studies toward my Ph.D.s in Social Policy and in American History, I honestly cannot fathom what I would have learned during my years there. My entire outlook on social policy was directly informed by that book and by the work of David Gil, my advisor. Both Cloward and Gil were committed deconstructionists, before many of us on this side of the Atlantic knew what that meant. Gil taught me that change is always possible, that inequality was *arbitrary* as well as oppressive (others spoke only of the inevitable oppressions of capitalism). Gil gave me a vision of what reality *could* be. Richard Cloward and Frances Fox Piven finished the work of dismantling my false liberal consciousness by exposing the dirty secret at the heart of American social welfare policy that had been previously hidden by Whig versions of social welfare policy: the determined effort at social control that informed liberal policies in the twentieth century. Gil's utopian socialism demanded the fleshing out offered in the arguments of Cloward and Piven in *Regulating the Poor* and in their later work. Had I not come across them, I would have remained wistfully discontent, but thoroughly incompetent at both historical analysis and policy analysis. Fashioning a dissertation and later a book on the history of the treatment of the insane in colonial New England, I sat squarely on their collective vision of the uses of liberal policies and their inevitable devolution into mechanisms of social control.

I am very proud to offer *Reflections'* readers this issue celebrating Richard A. Cloward. I am happy to have this opportunity to acknowledge my intellectual debt to him and to Frances Fox Piven.

It is an opportunity others will envy.

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