

# Capsule Reviews

*compiled by* Book Review/Updates Editor

WILLIAM T. ALPERT AND STEPHEN A. WOODBURY, EDS., *EMPLOYEE BENEFITS AND LABOR MARKETS IN CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES* (W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, 2000. 550 pp. Paper: \$29.00).

The tradeoff of pay versus benefits facing many workers may have far reaching ramifications in labor markets. Because of a lack of quantitative evidence, however, little is understood about the issue. This book helps to understand this worker tradeoff and is an important contribution to the literature on the economic features of employee benefits and the policy issues associated with them. With policy relevant research on the linkages between labor markets and the provision of benefits by employers and governments, this book helps to fill in some of the necessary information on the tradeoff issue.

Editors William T. Alpert and Stephen A. Woodbury create a comprehensive view into the impact that the many different types (including the lack) of employee benefits have on labor markets. Substantial differences between the American and Canadian Systems of employee benefits highlight the impacts of specific employee benefits policies on the labor markets.

The four sections of this book focus on the relationship between employee benefits and labor supply, benefits and labor demand, implications of benefits for worker turnover, wages, and equity, and finally, pensions and public policy toward retirement income.

THOMAS HYCLAK, *RISING WAGE INEQUALITY: THE 1980S EXPERIENCE IN URBAN LABOR MARKETS* (W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, 2000. 154 pp. Paper: \$14.00).

Professor Thomas Hyclak, of Lehigh University, seeks to answer some of the questions about what has caused the growing wage inequality between skilled and unskilled workers in the 1980's. He hopes to answer these questions by using data and information that was unused in previous

analyses of wage inequality.

Whereas other researchers relied on data derived from the national labor market, Professor Hyclak uses data from the Area Wage Surveys (AWS). This allows him to focus on changes in the wage structure in a sample of twenty local labor markets between 1974 and 1991. He also examines the structure of wages in forty different jobs in occupations groups such as professional-technical, clerical, skilled maintenance and material movement, and security and janitorial.

The book concludes with a summary of policy implications addressing areas such as macroeconomics, education and training, and collective bargaining, among others.

WILLIAM S. KERN, ED., *THE ECONOMICS OF SPORTS* (W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, 2000. 140 pp. Paper: \$14.00).

Authored by top sports economists, William S. Kern has compiled a collection that produces a vivid picture of economic principles in the world of sports today. Because athletics have grown into a major industry, and are no longer a simple past time, both college and professional athletics have grown into a multi-billion dollar sector of the economy that has its own winners and losers.

This book discusses the consequences of the rise in big-time sports. Issues such as the effects of sports arenas on local neighborhoods and the 1998-1999 NBA lockout are used to demonstrate contemporary economic issues in athletics. These issues range from industrial organization, racial discrimination, and price discrimination to the behavior of cartels and monopoly power.

MARTHA E. REEVES, *SUPPRESSED, FORCED OUT AND FIRED: HOW SUCCESSFUL WOMEN LOSE THEIR JOBS* (Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc., 2000. 256 pp. Hardcover: \$59.95).

The patriarchy within organizations is so entrenched and powerful that women have serious difficulty acquiring positions of real importance. This may be true even when it is in the best interest of the company to use the talents of these women fully. Martha E. Reeves surveys the structural obstacles to the rise of women while arguing that successful women executives threaten their male counterparts and the patriarchal culture. She also explains the mechanisms for operation of gender discrimination, the dynamics of such discrimination, and the processes by which women are marginalized, subordinated, and excluded.

This book is a combination of theory and first person case study accounts of women who were at first suppressed, and then later fired. The

conclusion is that, despite claims to the contrary, the glass ceiling still exists. The book concludes by drawing a picture of what the present and future hold for the progress of women in organizations.

ANDREW J. RETTENMAIER AND THOMAS R. SAVING, *THE ECONOMICS OF MEDICARE REFORM* (W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, 2000. 190 pp. Paper: \$15.00).

The high moral purpose of Medicare laid out thirty-five years ago, to provide older Americans access to modern health care while not draining their lifetime savings or placing a financial burden on their children, continues, even though the system is in trouble. Congress' dubious method of financing benefits for the growing Medicare population is the major source of such Medicare woes.

Andrew J. Rettenmaier and Thomas R. Saving describe in detail the causes they see leading to the collapse of a Medicare as we know it, while offering forth a prescription that might save Medicare. The three principle problems discussed in the book are financing, Congress' expansion of the scope of Medicare without committing additional revenues to the Medicare Trust Fund, and demographics.

The solution to the problem, the authors say, is to get rid of the current generational transfer method for a method that requires each age cohort to insure itself against retirement medical expenses. This will provide steady per-capita value of the account for each age cohort without regard to the size of such a population. Although there is no free lunch, "there is a considerably cheaper lunch that is of better quality than the one we are currently committed to buying."