

***Gender, The State, and Social Reproduction: Household Insecurity in Neo-Liberal Times.* Kate Bezanson. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006; xiii +241 pages; appendices; ISBN 0-8020-9065-6; \$55.00 (cloth).**

This book highlights the ideologies and influences of changes made to our social welfare state that are associated with neo-liberalism and neo-conservatism and how these changes directly impact the lives of the most vulnerable members of our communities. When the Conservative government, led by Mike Harris, took hold of Ontario in 1995, households that were merely getting by found themselves scrambling to make ends meet. The complete restructuring of key institutions such as education and health care, and drastic cuts in funding for policies such as social assistance and state subsidized child care spaces during this time, resulted in low-income households, and particularly women, being forced to absorb the consequences of these "adjustments." The interview data in this book stems from the Speaking Out research project that investigated the effects of the Ontario Conservative's "Common Sense Revolution" and is poignantly used to illustrate its devastating effects.

One of the accomplishments of the author of this volume is that her writing is widely accessible in terms of language and content across disciplines. A gender lens is used in addition to and intersecting with those of racialization, class and disabilities. This is a book that can be used for teaching in various university departments, such as Sociology, Women's Studies, Political Science, and Social Work. The author provides detailed information regarding policy changes and uses direct links to show the effects these have had on people's everyday lives. One of the important findings presented in this book is the substantial increase of unpaid household and care work that women have had to take up in order to compensate for the increased privatization of the labour market, with a particular strain being placed on lone mothers.

While there are several authors who write about Canadian social policy, Bezanson makes a significant contribution to this literature by focusing on the contemporary Conservative era in Ontario and the resulting devastation that period has had on families' lives. Her contribution to women's studies is particularly important. She offers a strong focus on gender and on the way that the gender order resulting from Conservative era politics in Ontario has disadvantaged women, situating them within a program of decreasing allocation of resources for low-income partnered mothers and especially lone mothers. The author also integrates the voices of the household participants from the Speaking Out study in her book. This provides a dialogue that is often insightful, honest and courageous. The incorporation of the lived experiences of participants, I would suggest, also makes this book appropriate, informative and consciousness-raising for non-academics, community

members and service users alike.

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