

Social Democratic America

By Lane Kenworthy

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America is the one of the wealthiest nations on earth. So why do so many Americans struggle to make ends meet? Why is it so difficult for those who start at the bottom to reach the middle class? And why, if a rising economic tide lifts all boats, have middle-class incomes been growing so slowly?

Social Democratic America explains how this has happened and how we can do better. Lane Kenworthy convincingly argues that we can improve economic security, expand opportunity, and ensure rising living standards for all by moving toward social democracy. Drawing on his extensive knowledge of social policy in America and other affluent countries, he proposes a set of public social programs, including universal early education, an expanded Earned Income Tax Credit, wage insurance, the government as employer of last resort, and many others. Kenworthy looks at common objections to social democracy, such as the oft-repeated claim that Americans don't want big government, which he readily debunks. Indeed, we already have in place a host of effective and popular social programs, from Social Security to Medicare to public schooling. Moreover, the available evidence suggests that rich nations can generate the tax revenues needed to pay for generous social programs while maintaining an innovative and growing economy, and without restricting liberty.

Can it happen? Kenworthy describes how the US has been progressing slowly but steadily toward a genuine social democracy for nearly a century. Controversial and powerful, *Social Democratic America* shows that the good society doesn't require a radical break from our past; we just need to continue in the direction we are already heading.

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Editorial Review

Review

"It's too bad for Lane Kenworthy that his new book, *Social Democratic America*, was published on Jan. 3, 2014, because otherwise I'd be comfortable calling it the best public policy book of 2013... it's a fantastic book and I hope everyone reads it." --Matthew Yglesias, *Slate*

"This is a great book, and an important one. If our policy makers took Lane Kenworthy's advice we'd have a better, more equitable economy, with more opportunity and fewer of the distortionary imbalances that threaten our future." --Jared Bernstein, former Chief Economist and Economic Adviser to Vice President Joe Biden

"Lane Kenworthy's *Social Democratic America* is a serious, sobering look at the challenges facing the United States as the share of children raised in stable two-parent families shrinks, and as the labor market position of less-skilled workers deteriorates. It is also a spirited case that only a larger, more expensive, more ambitious government can meet these challenges. Whether you are inclined to embrace Kenworthy's arguments or not, you would do well to reckon with them." --Reihan Salam, Fellow, R Street Institute, and contributing editor, *National Review*

"A breath of fresh air in an increasingly stale economic debate, *Social Democratic America* shows that more generous and better-designed government policies could improve opportunity, security, and the living standards of most Americans. But perhaps most remarkable in this age of pessimism, Kenworthy believes not only that America can do better, but that it will. Agree or disagree, you will see America's economic possibilities in a powerful new light." --Jacob S. Hacker, Stanley B. Resor Professor of Political Science and Director of the Institution for Social and Policy Studies, Yale University, and co-author of *Winner-Take-All Politics*

"If you wish to read the case for a big increase in social welfare spending, this is the very best place to go." --Tyler Cowen, Holbert C. Harris Chair of Economics, George Mason University

"Well-argued and fact-driven... a reasonable, worthwhile addition to the national debate over government's role in social policy." --*Publishers Weekly*

About the Author

Lane Kenworthy is Professor of Sociology and Political Science at the University of Arizona. He is author of *Progress for the Poor, Jobs with Equality, and Egalitarian Capitalism*. His writings have appeared in the *Washington Post, Foreign Affairs*, and on his blog, Consider the Evidence.

Users Review

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