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**Book Review: Powell, F. (2017). The Political Economy of the Irish Welfare State. Bristol: Policy Press.**

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**Powell, F. (2017). *The Political Economy of the Irish Welfare State*. Bristol: Policy Press. ISBN:9781447332916**

Review by Dr. Colm O'Doherty, Department of Social Sciences, Institute of Technology Tralee, Colm.ODoherty@staff.ittralee.ie

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This searching critique draws on social policy, history and sociology, as well as media sources to take a well-balanced and engrossing look at the formation of the modern Irish welfare state. *The Political Economy of the Irish Welfare State* assumes no prior knowledge of Irish social policy or history and provides readers with a scholarly and authoritative account of how the Irish state relegated welfare policy to the margins of the country's post-revolutionary political landscape.

Chapter one considers the case for *social policy to respond reflexively to changing needs and demands* in order to secure *a universalist welfare state based on social obligations, common citizenship and human rights*. Ireland's ambivalent policy positions on welfare rights, social obligation and social justice are set out and discussed here.

Chapter two critically outlines the historical impetus for positive social change in pre-independent Ireland.

Chapter three captures the political torpor and conservative culture which arrested the development of social reform in post-colonial Ireland.

Chapter four details the hegemonic strategies employed by both the Irish Catholic Church and nationalists in their pursuit of power and influence over the Irish state.

Chapter five explores *how modernisation in Ireland gradually produced an 'ad hoc' welfare state*.

Chapter six addresses the enduring problem of poverty in Ireland and the lachrymose public attitudes which have sustained patterns of inequality in the Irish states social and economic systems.

Chapter seven recounts how the ideological dominance of the Catholic Church – enshrined in the isolationist Irish state- gave way to a more pluralistic open society. The rise of feminism and the emergence of new social movements are highlighted.

Chapter eight lays bare the disconnect between economic growth and social citizenship which has produced a welfare state lacking integrity and courage.

Chapter nine reviews the impact of the economic crash and the asymmetrical relationship between austerity for citizens and tax breaks for influential multi-nationals such as Apple. Water charges were rejected by beleaguered citizens who had been exposed to the economic shock treatment of the 'Troika'- European Commission/International Monetary Fund /European Central Bank.

The book concludes with a timely and urgent call for a *reimagining of social policy in a socially inclusive choice that would embrace redistribution and reciprocity as the cornerstones of Irish democracy*. The terms of a more *socially just republic* are the establishment of a universal welfare state capable of *tackling the challenges of insecure job markets, scarce housing and overstretched public services*. The author provides us with ten social policy initiatives which will drive the enactment of a universal welfare state funded by the income generated from a reformed equitable tax base. This is a highly suitable book for undergraduate and postgraduate students of social policy, sociology, social work, social care, community work, youth work and practitioners/ academics working across these fields.