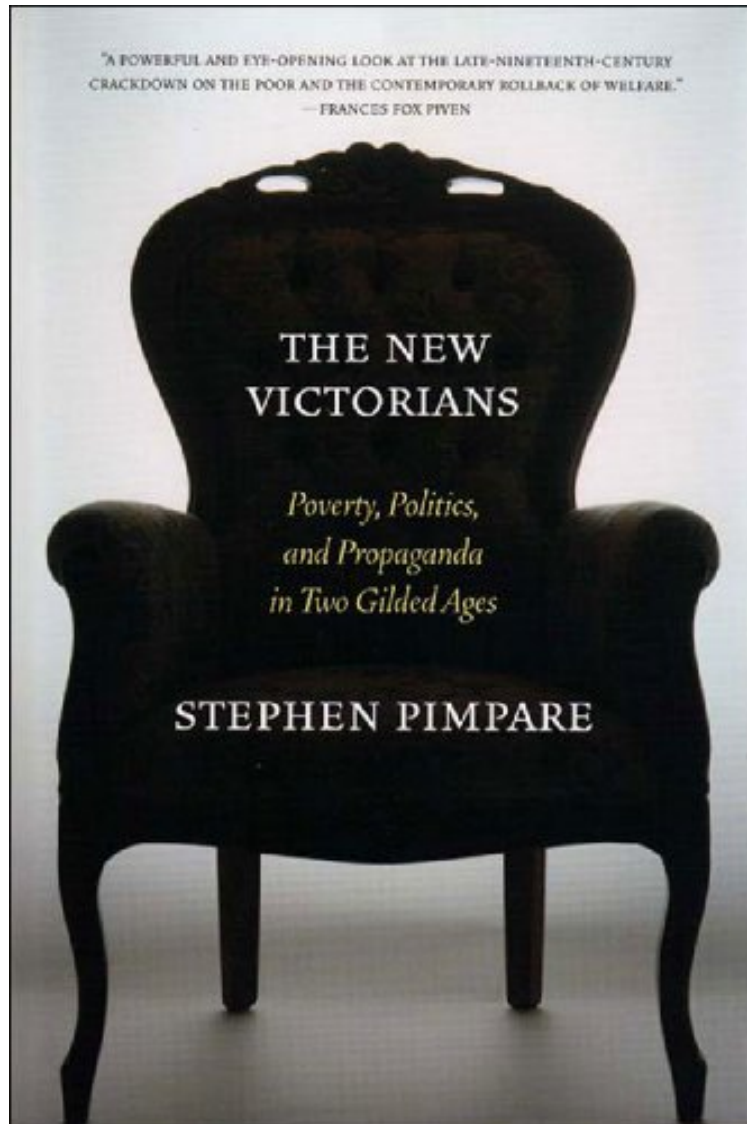


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The New Victorians: Poverty, Politics, and Propaganda in Two Gilded Ages

Stephen Pimpare

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Stephen Pimpare : The New Victorians: Poverty, Politics, and Propaganda in Two Gilded Ages before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The New Victorians: Poverty, Politics, and Propaganda in Two Gilded Ages:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Overlooked, yet one of the most important books on political history and modern policy. By Me reads Politics fascinates me. I am by all means, a political junkie. The process, what makes

people think and act the way they do, figuring out what motivates mankind is part of the allure. By default, that also makes me a history junkie, since history plays a large part in politics. The first Gilded Age, which occurred during the Victorian reconstruction after the Civil War, is one of my favorite eras of study. I began to notice stark similarities between today's political climate and those that occurred over a hundred years ago. How did we get back to that point? Did anyone else pick up on the *deja vu*? Stephen Pimpare did and gives answers to those very questions. I am in awe of this book. The subject is so explicitly researched and explained, it should be required reading for anyone involved in politics. I have long been a dissident of trickle down economics and austerity in regards to the lower classes. A healthy economy is not possible when half of the population is struggling just to meet their basic needs. Leaving the lower class to their own undoing, aka tough love, has largely been a failed policy, whether the year is 2000 or 1900. I cannot recommend this book enough. It cites clear examples from history, that we are seemingly doomed to repeat unless we take a different course of action. Read it and pass it on!

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful.

Dismal recurrence of the robber baron assault on the poor
By John C. Landon
This study of the similarity of the current neo-liberal resurgence to the Gilded Age gets down to cases with more than superficial resemblances and echoes by showing how the same strategies (of subtle class warfare) are at work in both cases, with respect to questions of public welfare. In both cases an assault on public intervention was a deliberate strategy to erase the gains of the poor. The concordances seem almost uncanny, and the result is a possible lesson the current regime could learn from, if they could learn. The main point is to pierce through the strategy of propaganda against public relief systems, alert to their faults, to see the class interest involved in the attacks on the poor, e.g. the relationship to wage structures, and the desire to eliminate any softlanding against market mechanics.

During the economic boom of the 1990s, arguments about the moral failings of the poor were used to pass welfare reforms heralded as the solution to a system that had failed everyone. Yet, as historian Stephen Pimpare demonstrates in this revealing social history, remarkably similar arguments were used to disastrous effect in campaigns against aid to the poor in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In *The New Victorians*, Pimpare reveals the disturbing parallels between the anti-welfare propagandists of the nineteenth century and the elite actors and well-funded policy research organizations of today. Alarming, he shows how the New Victorians of today often invoke the rhetoric of their predecessors while ignoring the complete failure of nineteenth-century reforms. *The New Victorians* goes on to uncover the elite and grassroots resistance in the Gilded Age that paved the way for the counter-reforms of the Progressive Era, revealing urgent lessons toward renewing support for broader state defense of the poor today.

From Publishers Weekly
In his scholarly history of American anti-welfare movements, Pimpare shows how today's "compassionate conservatives" are repeating the arguments made by Victorian propagandists during the late 1800s, when they persuaded the public that government aid hurts both the poor and the working class. The 1980s and 90s witnessed severe welfare cutbacks, culminating in the conversion of welfare to workfare in 1996; the late 19th century saw similar slashes in government aid. Pimpare contends that, while conservatives suggest that Gilded Age "reforms" proved the superiority of private "faith-based" charity over public relief, the historical record demonstrates just the opposite. Victorian rollbacks led to the 1893 depression and to the emergence of a dangerously angry unemployed class; anti-welfare crusaders eventually admitted that their "reforms" had failed and launched pro-welfare campaigns forerunners of the New Deal and the American welfare state. Pimpare argues that, in both centuries, anti-welfare crusades succeeded through "shrewdly crafted rhetoric," endlessly repeated and reinforced. His comments on the "electoral threat" of the poor are especially alarming. Forty-eight states prohibit prisoners from voting; "in seven states where ex-offenders cannot vote, 25 percent of all black men were permanently disenfranchised." With thorough research and numerous examples, Pimpare challenges the idea that welfare cuts reduce poverty. Instead, he contends, welfare helps the poor and working classes alike: it offers an alternative to low-wage work, raises the minimum wage and gives workers "leverage against the market and their employers." While some arguments may seem dry to the general reader, the book has much contemporary relevance. Welfare, Pimpare writes, allows people "to lead their lives and care for their families in ways that are impossible when their very survival is tethered to the relentless demands of the low-wage labor market." Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. A powerfully written and eye-opening book. Stephen Pimpare shows us the startling parallels between the crackdown on poor relief in the Gilded Age and the contemporary rollbacks of public welfare, illuminating an ugly episode in recent policy-making with historical perspective. About the Author A former director of Artists to End Hunger and the Food Hunger Hotline, Stephen Pimpare currently teaches politics and history at Hunter College, City University of New York.