

## Week 1 A definition of 'Social Welfare Policy':

a) '**Social policy** is a mechanism for the allocation of a society's resources according to certain values and objectives that are expected to provide conditions of welfare for its population'

(Jamrozick,2005:1);

- Australian examples: Medicare, assistance with home-ownership, renters' assistance, anti-discrimination legislation, income support

e.g. Medicare

- promoting more equitable access to health care
- Goals, elements and benefits disputed
- First introduced by Whitlam govt in 1975 as Medibank, then as Medicare under Hawke govt in 1983; under Howard govt, private health insurance rebate and medicare plus watered down universal and public nature of Medicare

### Issues in social policy

- Debates about values, assumptions of the way individuals and societies behave
- What is regarded as poor policy differs on people's values and beliefs, as well as changing ideas about work
- e.g. NT intervention debate between supposed protection of children and improving community functioning and supporting the rights and autonomy of Indigenous people
- Many believe social policy is aimed towards social control

### The forms and meanings of social policy

#### Social policy as output/product

- SP as intentions and objectives, clarifying and debating what we want to achieve
- SP as administrative and financial arrangements (the way we organise our services and institutions to achieve intentions and objectives)
- SP as outcomes (impacts of SP on different groups)

#### Social policy as formal statements with substantial detail

- e.g. 'Working Nation' Keating policy in 1994, range of detailed proposals to reduce unemployment
- Policy packages (a range of related measures to be introduced over a period of time)
- Involve action by a number of different ministers and departments
- Can involve different areas of policy

#### Policy as a set of policy statements

- Particularly applies to broad policy areas such as aged care policy, employment etc

#### Policy as more general statements of intent and values

- Often political party documents adopted at party conferences or key ministerial and prime ministerial statements
- e.g. Redfern address 1992

### Social policy as informal agreements

- Informality may be deliberate in order to circumvent requirements of formal policy
- e.g. during 1980s recession workers in commonwealth employment service had informal policy not to implement strict requirements of work test

### Social policy as a discipline

- Concerned with understanding how the organisation of society affects well-being

### History

- First developed in UK influenced by Fabian tradition of commitment to social reform based on intellectual understanding of society's needs and operation
- Drew on a tradition of research into social conditions in 19th century UK by researchers such as Rowntree and Booth
- Richard Titmuss important in articulating ethical case for welfare and social policy and developing a framework for analysing how different institutional arrangements affect well-being
- Ronald Henderson important in Australian context

### Features (Erskine 1998)

- Having views about what constitutes welfare
- Having the means to assess the impacts of policies on welfare
- An understanding of how policies are institutionally organised and implemented
- Understanding the components of welfare (how new social issues, needs and arrangements impact on welfare)
- A multidisciplinary area

### Social policy as process

- The activities people, groups and institutions undertake in order to introduce new policies or to change existing policies
- Good policy processes are more likely to lead to good policy (Althaus et al 2007)
- Good processes = more people from different organisations and roles are equipped to contribute to policy development

### Defining social policy

1. has different meanings (particular policies, areas of study or processes)
2. involves some kind of purposeful, intentional activity and authoritative choice
3. concerned about the welfare of individuals and groups in society
4. concerned with social relationships
5. concerned with both overall welfare and how welfare is distributed between groups
6. concerned with the articulation of objectives and principles
7. involves not only rational analysis but also political contest about different values and the position of different groups, requires an understanding of the power relationships within society
8. uses analytical frameworks to understand how knowledge can be used in a systematic manner

## The scope of social policy

- Concerned not only with how govts intervene to change the operations of markets, families and community organisation, but also how policies are made in these other spheres of society
- Inter-relationship between economic policy, social policy and public policy (well-being best promoted when public policy integrates economic and social policy considerations in decision making)
- Social, political, historical, international, ideological contexts important

## Welfare state and its interaction with social policy

b) **'A welfare state** is a state in which **organized power is deliberately used in an effort to modify the play of market forces** in at least three directions

- first, by guaranteeing individuals and families a **minimum income** irrespective of the market value of their work or their property\*;
- second, by **narrowing the extent of insecurity** thus enabling individuals and families to meet certain "social contingencies" ... which lead otherwise to individual and family crisis
- third, by ensuring that all citizens without distinction of status or class are offered **the best standards available** in relation to a certain agreed range of social services' (Briggs, 2000:16) .

\* = 'de-commodification'

- The form and operation of particular welfare states influences the outcomes of particular policies and the capacity to introduce policy change

## Interaction with social policy

- Concern of welfare states with well-being
- Focus on distribution of well-being
- Focus on the role and responsibility of the state for ensuring well-being
- Increased importance of role of individuals, families, the market and community organisation, and their interaction with one another

Titmuss, R. (2001) 'The Social Division of Welfare' in P. Alcock et al. (eds.) *Welfare and Wellbeing: the contribution of Richard Titmuss to Social Policy*, Part Two, Bristol, Policy Press.

## The negative stereotype of the welfare state

- a process of unilinear progression in collective benevolence for the working classes
- 1948 as year of establishment
- Successive governments working to improve welfare
- Leads to arguments that welfare state was established too quickly and on too broad a scale, harming economic health and moral fibre of nation
- The error of welfare state policies since 1948 has been, according to this diagnosis, to confuse ends and means and to pursue egalitarian aims with the result that the 'burden' of redistribution from rich to poor has been pushed too far and is now excessive

- Their conclusion, like that of Hagenbuch and other writers, is that there should be a closer relationship between what people pay in and what take out
- Social security should be based on 'more genuine' actuarial principles, while the ultimate objective for other social services should be as more and more are raised above a minimum standard of living to a position of freedom in which they may purchase whatever medical care, education, training and other services they require
- Pursued to its logical conclusion the welfare state would be transformed into the 'middle-class state'. Meanwhile, social legislation and its application should recognise more clearly that (as Macleod and Powell put it) "the social services only exist for a portion of the population", namely, that portion which takes out more than it puts in
- These views have helped produce a stereotype of the welfare state

#### The assumptions of critical writings on social policy

- the performance of welfare has more or less fulfilled the promise of welfare
- The aggregate redistributive effects of social service activity since 1948 have wholly or largely represented a transfer of resources from rich to poor
- It is possible to define what a 'social service' is and to identify, in each sector of state intervention, who has benefitted and who has paid
- It is practicable, desirable and meaningful in a complex society undergoing rapid and widespread change to abstract a 'social service world' from the Greater Society and to consider the functions and effects of the part without reference to the life of the whole

#### Development of 'the social services'

- All collectively provided services are deliberately designed to meet certain socially recognised 'needs'; they are first, of **society's will to survive as an organic whole and, secondly of the expressed wish of all the people to assist the survival of some people**. 'Needs' may therefore be thought of as 'social' and 'individual'; as interdependent, mutually related essentials for the continued existence of the parts and the whole.
- The term has indeed acquired a most elastic quality; its expanding frontiers, formerly enclosing little besides poor relief, sanitation and public nuisances, now embrace a multitude of heterogeneous activities
- For example, Boer War pensions and disablement benefits were officially classified as social services in 1920; the universities and public museums were added after the Second World War
- Those acts of state intervention which have somehow or other acquired the connotation of 'social' have developed alongside a much broader area of intervention not thought of in such terms but having in common similar objectives

#### 3 major categories of welfare

this division is not based on any fundamental difference in the functions of the three systems or their declared aims - arises from an organisational division of method, which, in the main, is related to the division of labour in complex, individuated societies

- They all in varying degrees signify that man can no longer be regarded as a 'unit of labour power', they all reflect contemporary opinion that man is not wholly responsible for his dependency and they all accept obligations for meeting certain dependent needs of the individual and the family
- The lack of any precise about what is and what is not a 'social service' confuses and constrains the social conscience, and allows the development of distinctive social policies based on different principles for arbitrarily differentiated groups in the population

## Social welfare

- more 'states of dependency' have been defined and recognised as collective responsibilities and more differential provision has been made in respect of them
- involve to some degree the destruction, curtailment, interruption or frustration of earning power in the individual, and more pronounced secondary dependencies when they further involve the wives, children and other relatives
- Presence of dependency more defined due to increase in labour specificity in the 20th century (Durkheim, 1933 - as man becomes more individual and more specialised, he becomes more socially dependent)
- i. more and more people consciously experience at one or more stages in their lives the process of selection and rejection (education, work, vocational training, promotion, prestige, tests of mental and physical fitness etc)
- ii. the arbiters of opportunity and dependency have become more directly personal, more culturally demanding, more psychologically threatening
  - simultaneously, man becomes more aware of what has caused his dependency, and thus more to uncertainty and conflict about the purposes and roles he himself is expected to fulfill
  - more self-knowledge of the 'man-made' causes of dependency has been reflected in social through the greater recognition accorded to individual dependencies and their social origins and effects

## Fiscal welfare

### *Cash payments vs tax breaks*

- Under separately administered social security systems, like family allowances and retirement pensions, direct cash payments are made in discharging collective responsibilities for particular dependencies
- Allowances and relief from income tax, though providing similar benefits and expressing a similar social purpose in the recognition of dependent needs, are not, however, treated as social service expenditure
- The first is a cash transaction; the second an accounting convenience
- "By reducing the tax liability of a person with dependants the State is sharing in the responsibility of caring for each taxpayer's family just as certainly as if it were paying cash allowances in each case". (Cartter 1953, p 219)
- In their primary objectives and their effects on individual purchasing power there are no differences in these two ways by which collective provision is made for dependencies
- Both are manifestations of social policies in favour of identified groups and both reflect changes in public opinion in regard to the relationship between the state, individual and family

### *Forms*

- increasing support for the family through the recognition of more types of dependencies and substantial additions to the value of the benefits provided
- Initially restricted to the lowest paid sections of the income tax population

### *Significance of developments*

- Shows the growth in public concern and responsibility for state of dependency, family and kinship relationships, individual self-improvement and standards of minimum substance among income taxpayers
- Taxation has ceased to be regarded as an impertinent intrusion into the sacred rights of private property
- The story of when and why women were recognised in the system of social welfare