Exploring the Interrelationships between

Social Welfare and Social Movements:

Why this matters for Social Policy

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Abstract

Contemporary social policy has never been more vigorously contested. Issues range from single-issue campaigns over housing, social care, hospital closures through to organised movements around disability, environment, health and education. And at a global level social movements are active in contesting and shaping social policy developments. However, the historical and contemporary role played by social movements in shaping social welfare has too often been neglected in the discipline of social policy, while social movement studies needs to more thoroughly account for the process of social reform.

This paper therefore argues that there is much that social policy can learn from the insights offered by social movement theorising – and that in turn social policy can contribute to the understanding of social movement protest through its focus upon the contestations and indeed contradictions of contemporary social policy makings. Synthesising ideas and approaches from both 'traditions' can offer us a more developed understanding of the ways in which social policy is influenced, shaped and struggled over.

Using historical and contemporary case studies this paper critically examines the inter-relationship between state welfare and social movements. Historically, social movements contributed directly to the creation of the welfare state relating through campaigns over Beveridge's 'five giants' of idleness, ignorance, squalor, illness and want. But the 'classical welfare state' has faced contemporary challenges posed by 'new social movements' in relation to the family, discrimination, environment and global social justice. We conclude by reflecting on the possibilities of social welfare movement responses to the crisis of neoliberalism as a regime of class domination, drawing on recent examples of social movement protest and struggle.

Introduction: Social Welfare from Above?

A complex interrelationship has been established between social welfare and social movements in modernity. As the democratic ideal took hold in the nineteenth century the idea was born that all men and, somewhat belatedly, all women were created equal. It can therefore look as if the welfare state is merely the last step on the long historical march of liberal democratic societies, the culmination of an innate civilising process. T H Marshall's historical account set out in his influential essay *Citizenship and Social Class* (1950), informed as it is by the New Liberalism (associated with L.T. Hobhouse), and published during the high water mark for post-war optimism regarding the potentials for state welfare in the United Kingdom (UK), embodies this evolutionary perspective. Market-based inequalities were thought by Marshall to be lessening under the impact of state-led equalities of citizenship: 'The urge forward along the path thus plotted is an urge towards a fuller measure of equality, an enrichment of the stuff of which status is made and an increase in the number of those on whom status is bestowed' (Marshall, 1950: 18). Social democratic principles of equality through the rights conferred by citizenship at last seemed in the 'golden age' of state welfare to be emerging triumphant over the previously dominant liberal principles of unequal competition between individual agents in the free market. Marshall's Whiggish form of social democracy told its own story of the triumph of social evolution as represented by the welfare state: 'the modern drive towards social equality is, I believe the latest phase of an evolution of citizenship which has been in continuous progress for some 250 years' (Marshall, 1950: 7).

From such perspectives, the UK provides an exemplary instance of a pluralist society where there is no single centre of power. Instead all interest groups are represented in the negotiations and compromises that help to constitute state welfare: 'One effect of the growth of state welfare has been to maintain a *remarkably stable* distribution of material rewards and power' (Thane, 1982: 300, emphasis added). The accent on the uniquely British traditions of stability and consensus, 'remarkable' or otherwise, recurs in many such accounts of state welfare. Derek Fraser (1972: 226), in his standard history *The Evolution of the British Welfare State*, claims that:

> *Because social policy comprises the community's response to the practical needs of society as whole, the Welfare State is subject to those same evolutionary forces which were its ancestor. The Welfare State was thus not a final heroic victory after centuries of struggle, but the welfare complex of a particular period adapting itself to the needs of the next generation.*

Others from the social administration 'tradition' accept that the line of evolution of the welfare state may not have been quite a straight one. Still, it has been a 'romantic' journey all the same, emerging as a confusion of pluralistic demands caught between the principles of individualism and collectivism:

> *The whole process of development, at least until the present, has been one of evolution, of uneven response to problems, of unexpected twists and turns of policy, of responsiveness to many pressures and indifference to others, of compromise, of political accident, of chance. There has been nothing inevitable about it, except in so far as a concern for the well-being of the population and an increase in the power of the State, growing pari passu, were bound eventually to produce some system of social welfare.* (Bruce, 1968: 332)

Yet the evolutionary perspective has proven unable to stand the test of time. More recent critics of Marshallian notions of citizenship have noted its distinct lack of relevance to the contemporary UK. Marshall and many others assumed a more or less ethnically and nationally homogenous, white, male, Christian, British society where the main division was that of social class (albeit largely understood in occupational terms). This has been largely over-taken, it is claimed, by the development of a more diverse, multicultural Britain, the growth of national identity among the constituent nations of the United Kingdom (and a corresponding dilution and fragmentation of 'Britishness'), and the widening of activity by women in the public sphere (Parekh, 2000; Lister, 1997). This has given rise to a whole series of claims for rights based on collective identity such as national rights, ethnic rights, religious rights, and cultural rights of various kinds. Such demands for an expansive set of citizenship rights have emerged alongside the rise of new social movements.

Today social movements demand that citizenship rights be extended far beyond Marshall's narrow conception of civil, political and social rights as part of a project for

the amelioration of class conflict. Indeed, there has been a proliferation of rights discourses and mobilisation, few of which any longer use the language of class. Partly as a result of the women's movement and the gay liberation movement existing rights should be further extended or even supplanted by *sexual rights* (Richardson, 2000). Similarly, with the emergence of the environmental or Green movement and the dire warning of impending ecological catastrophe, demands have been made that the nation-state and trans-national institutions should recognise *ecological rights* (Cahill, 2002). Part of the same shift in the values of rights has been the social mobilisation and discourses around *animal rights* (Regan, 2004). And perhaps most widespread of all is the idea of *human rights* as an essential attribute of a flourishing human being (Turner, 1993).

These various demands for rights represent in a peculiar way the latest stage of evolutionary pluralism, even though some social movement discourses consider themselves to be 'post-citizenship' or 'post-national'. After all, any appeal for rights needs to correspond to an institutional apparatus to uphold and confer protection and entitlements. Marshall identified his tripartite division of rights with the institutions of the state: the courts with civil rights, parliament with political rights and the welfare state with social rights. It is less clear which institutions will enshrine the new evolutionary pluralism of rights. While the 1948 United Nations Declaration on Human Rights is often taken as a model, some like Parekh (2000: 134) object that it is unable to claim universal validity based as it is on liberal values and a state form that is not universally shared across cultures. Such cultural relativism tends to characterise 'post-materialist' demands for rights based on values rather the interests. By the early 1970s Marshall himself had cause to evaluate how welfare-capitalism might respond positively to the value frameworks posed by the emerging social movements (Marshall, 1972). Much 'post-materialism' (see, eg Inglehart, 1990), depends on a notion of value autonomy based around self-enclosed claims about rights and identity divorced from the substantive interests of classes in society. Agency risks being reduced to a reified, closed community of specific values and group claims, with at best a tenuous connection to capitalist political economy and the nation-state. In terms of sociological analysis the contemporary proliferation of rights discourses forces sociological analyses to move beyond evolutionary pluralism

to account more adequately for the role played by collective action in the creation, reproduction and reform of state welfare.

Social Welfare from Below?

Social reform does not occur in a vacuum; rather it occurs in a historical conjuncture which contains the following aspects: constraints and possibilities imposed by objective institutional structures; some combination of historical continuities and discontinuities represented by a crisis like war or social upheaval; the role played by values, ideas and principles; and a willingness of broad masses of people to undertake popular mobilisation from below. In contrast to the hegemony of the top-down social administration school represented by Marshall, a key aim of this paper is to begin to redress the balance and restore the bottom-up element in the contested and contentious analysis of state welfare. More reflection of the role played by social movements and direct action provides a long overdue antidote to what Edward Thompson famously called 'the condescension of posterity' (Thompson, 1970) in the erasure of struggles from below in many accounts of the establishment of social policy.

These struggles form part of what we might identify as a broader 'social welfare movement'. Like social movements more generally, 'social welfare movements' can be defined in various ways. Oppositional collective action at the point of service delivery is one way of delineating a social welfare movement. For Harrison and Reeve (2002: 757) the term refers to 'a connected series of conscious actions, interactions and interrelationships constituting collective action focused or organised around the consumption and/or control of important services, and/or the meeting of individual, household or group needs and aspirations, outside the sphere of direct wages'. At some level this involves a challenge to the welfare or regulatory politics of the state. Enduring, organised, contentious interaction of rank and file activists with state welfare characterises social welfare movements. But despite specific studies of particular sites of struggle in health, education, housing, social care, social security and so on, there has been little development of an overall approach to the social welfare-state institutions-social movement nexus. While a continuum can be charted from direct action protest through advocacy and user groups to incorporation with

managerial structures, a focus on contentious politics preserves our understanding of social movements as conflictual politics that resist assimilation into authority structures and the dilution of a culture of challenge. This has become more significant in recent times.

Such a movement was integral to the making of the British welfare state in the years 1942-1948 (also to its prehistory, see for example, Saville, 1957-58). A loose coalition of social movement networks from within and around the labour movement campaigned for progressive reform of education, a free modern health care system, a fair system of social security and benefit entitlements, and for improved housing stock. This agitation contributed directly to the radical political mood during the war years and the landslide Labour victory in the general election of 1945. The welfare state today remains a child of this moment of social reform - a spoiled child, a political compromise, a constantly contested terrain. As such, the idea of a welfare consensus does not quite capture the often ideologically fraught and practically disputed nature of state welfare: it is always a zone of 'contentious politics'. Welfare contention was heightened through the combined shocks of the end of the long post-war economic boom in the late 1960s and the advent of new 'social welfare movements'.

In the UK context, the 'new' movements attacked the post-war social and political consensus on all fronts and in doing so encouraged or provoked debate within the 'old' movements themselves around the question of how to engage with the appearance of the new social actors and the issues that they raised. The welfare system became a key area of contestation with new social welfare movements (Williams, 1992; Martin, 2001) emerging to challenge the state (local, regional and national) around issues pertaining to collective consumption (Castells, 1977) (for instance, public housing, health, education, transport, public amenities, and so on) and the exclusionary hierarchies and controlling rigidities of its bureaucratic administration. Equally, the very conception of 'welfare' that had been institutionalised within the welfare system was subject to a radical critique and redefinition in new ways that were concomitant to the wider issues raised by the new movements (environment, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, disability etc).

'New welfare movements' comprise a variety of groups that come together to express specific demands collectively, from HIV+ to reproductive rights groups, but who are united as a social movement by a concern with the fundamental demand for empowerment, representation, and ensuring the quality and accountability of user-centred provision (Martin, 2001: 374; Williams, 1992). As such, *new* welfare movements differ from the welfare movements of previous generations in the UK. They operate in and around an already established welfare state system to preserve, extend, deepen and improve service delivery and to resist reductions or 'cuts' in services and a wide range of exclusions. They form part of what has been called a 'culture of challenge' where expert authority is increasingly contested (see, eg; Gabe et al 2006). In the contemporary era when neo-liberal antipathy to state welfare has been central to government social policy making, these movements have mobilised to defend the very principle of social welfare itself and to defend the institutions and jobs associated with that principle.

Although the ardour of the sixties political militancy was short lived, its impact in the advanced liberal democracies has been highly significant in terms of both the theory and practice of politics. In terms of theory it revitalised dormant participatory ideologies like anarchism, political ecology and revolutionary socialism; while at the same time politicising personal, cultural and moral issues (eg; sexuality, gender and family roles etc) that were hitherto considered apolitical. In terms of practice, it facilitated the development of non-institutionalised and unconventional modes of political action (petitions, boycotts, occupations, wildcat strikes, demonstrations, direct action etc), and their normalisation as forms of political participation (Norris 2002; or what Tarrow (1994) calls the 'repertoire of contention'). During the contemporary era social movements have increasingly challenged the parties, institutions and traditional decision making processes of representative democracy as adequate vehicles of governance. In the early 2000s the socio-cultural prominence of the environmental, human rights, fair trade and anti-capitalist movements, coupled with the protest movement against the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere, and the myriad of shorter lived protest campaigns that have emerged around the defence of public and welfare services from market

encroachment, are currently the most visible manifestations of the new post-sixties mode of 'doing politics'.

Moreover, social movements are increasingly operating at a transnational or global level because the interests that they have mobilized around – whether it be environmental justice, human rights or economic exploitation - are recognized as being insoluble at a national level and require coordinated international action. The negative side-effects of globalised capitalism require global solutions. Klein (2001: 84) argues that

> *Around the world, activists are piggy-backing on the ready-made infrastructures supplied by global corporations. This can mean cross border unionization, but also cross sector organizing – among workers, environmentalists, consumers, even prisoners, who may all have different relationships to one multinational'.*

Trans-national social movement networks (often facilitated by a combination of information technology and international non-governmental organizations) link activists together in a loose, ever-shifting community of interlinked interests which shares resources (information, organisation, personnel, finance etc.) to stand in opposition to the dominant neo-liberal version of globalization – built, Klein argues, 'on the back of human welfare' (2001: 88). These networks emerged dramatically into the open for the first time at Seattle in 1999. In one sense, corporate institutions and their allies in right-wing think-tanks, mainstream political parties, academia, corporation boards, banks and trading floors, and the media may perhaps be likened to a hegemonic 'social movement from above', in conflict with the coalition of counter-hegemonic 'welfare movements from below', whose abiding concern is to forge an alternative world of welfare-centred globalisation.

Understanding Social Welfare Movements: Questions of Theory and Practice

Social movements have made a significant direct and indirect contribution to both how social welfare is understood and how state welfare is utilised. Welfare movements emerge to dispute or issue claims about some particular aspect of social policy. What all the campaigns, events, groups, protests and values share in

common is that, perforce, they enter into a conflictual relationship with the state at different levels: local, regional, national level, and, increasingly, at trans-national and global scales of analysis. In some cases, movement leaders can end up as a collaborator rather than an opponent of state policy. Such assimilation happened to labour leaders during the post-war phase of corporatism and, later, to movements around sexuality, gender or 'race' movements in the Equal Opportunities industry and to some of those involved in urban movement struggles.

A further hallmark of social welfare movements is that they also contest the authority of expert knowledge. This is often viewed as a particular characteristic of new movements. What this obscures is that many earlier movements contested both the legitimacy and the veracity of authorised experts. Campaigns of the unemployed frequently dispute what counts as adequate social security and the institutional arrangements for redistributing resources. Elite educationalists were challenged by the broad movement for comprehensive schooling, within which the labour movement played a considerable part (Tomlinson, 2005). On the other hand new social movements are also said to mobilise considerable expert forms of alternative knowledge in their own right (Law, 2008). This can take the form of protests on the basis of public health against scientific expertise, as in the case of recent campaigns against the public health hazards represented by mobile phone masts (Law and McNeish, 2007). Again, there is nothing especially new in this. In the case of health, for instance, the NHS was only established after the ideological and legitimating conditions were established by the activities in the 1930s of radical medical pressure groups like the Socialist Medical Association and the Committee Against Malnutrition. Here medical experts used their knowledge and positions to advance the case for socialised medicine to alleviate unnecessary working class suffering. The Committee Against Malnutrition organised large public meetings in the 1930s while the Socialist Medical Association, operated mainly within the Labour Party as a pressure group, whose ideas would form the ideological and medical conditions for the creation of the NHS (Stewart, 1999). That it later changed its name to the Socialist Health Association in 1981 indicates the shifting emphasis after the 1960s, not least under the impact of feminism, from a medical model to a more socially-oriented model of health and well-being.

What appears so politically significant about welfare movements is that their action alters the familiar arrangement of things. Reforms are enacted, professional practices are changed, bureaucratic procedures are simplified, new values are adopted, closure programmes are stopped, or resources are more fairly redistributed. Individuals are released from their fate to be passive, submissive, obedient, grateful objects of social policy to become more active, confident, articulate agents of political, institutional and professional change. Welfare movements have an invigorating effect on state welfare. Such an open-ended approach to social movements means that the emergence of a radical culture of challenge to failing economic conditions cannot be precluded now as in the past, as was the case, *inter alia*, in Glasgow in 1915 and Clydeside more widely in the early 1920s (rent strike mobilisation), in South Wales in 1935 (unemployed workers mobilisation), and in Seattle in 1999, Genoa in 2001 and Edinburgh in 2005 (anti-capitalist mobilisations).

Does this then lend support for Piven and Cloward's (1979) claim that poor people's movements only win reforms when they are spontaneous, innovative and disorganised, directed at tangible local targets? Historical research does not in fact generally support Piven and Cloward's central contention about the bureaucratic demobilisation of poor people's movements. In the 1930s for example, the NUWM (National Unemployed Workers Movement) constituted itself in a highly organised fashion, with conferences, rules, subscriptions, newspapers, and paid officials. It remained a catalyst for protest in the form of the hunger march, pavement sleep-ins, building occupations, street battles, and vandalism. When the NUWCM dropped the word 'committee' from its name it tried to move away from autonomous activist led-branches of the early 1920s. But NUWM centralization was always partial and subject to the initiatives of the local activists (Flanagan, 1991: 167; Croucher, 1987: 104). In any case, the unemployed were impelled by events to collective action in their material interest to defend or improve relief levels without waiting on instructions from a centralised leadership.

In some ways, the example of unemployed protest supports the claims of 'resource mobilization theories' (RMT) of social movements. First, the NUWM harnessed the material incentives that the unemployed had for engaging in collective action. The fight by the unemployed for adequate subsistence was clearly 'a politics of the belly'.

It was rational for the unemployed to take whatever action they could to improve or defend benefit levels. Second, although the unemployed seemed to lack material resources, especially funds, in fact the leading unemployed activists, the 'movement entrepreneurs', possessed considerable organisational resources; many of them were experienced socialists, unemployed syndicalists and ex-shop stewards. Crucial here is the active external role of left-wing cadres in providing organisational and ideological resources that 'the unemployed' did not spontaneously possess. Again, something similar occurred in the role of labour movement activists in anti-racism struggles and campaigns for health, housing and education.

In still other ways, however, RMT fails to capture adequately the vibrancy and idealism of welfare struggles. Of course such movements fight over immediate material needs. But, in so doing, they transcended the fight over this or that benefit cut, a mean-spirited regulation, or specific local grievances. These struggles are never purely strategic and instrumental. Every demand for social justice always contains an ethical dimension, a battle for ideas – for new 'ways of doing'. As Matt Perry (2007: 5) acknowledges for the struggles of the unemployed:

> *Unemployed protest is in the first instance a struggle for recognition. The demand for adequate government provision for the unemployed was a call for respect and acknowledgement. It was based upon the premise that the unemployed suffered from a plight not of their own making.*

Moreover, where analysis is restricted to the struggles of immediate milieu, say in particular benefit offices, hospitals and health centres, or urban spaces, it presents an incomplete and foreshortened picture. Protest is prematurely confined to only one stage, the most immediate and direct, neglecting the longer cycle of the wider and more circuitous route of the reform process.

Movement influence has an uneven temporal dimension, from immediate struggles through to the effects that reverberate at a later stage when the whole set of circumstances have changed. Here the struggles of the 1930s and the 1940s helped to define ('Never Again!') the post-war political landscape. The struggle of the civil rights movements of 1960s and 1970s challenged the ideal of universal civil rights when so many groups were being denied equal rights – women, disabled people,

national, ethnic and religious minorities. This was encapsulated by the Derry Housing Action Committee protesting against anti-Catholic discrimination in housing allocations in Northern Ireland/Six Counties, whose banner placed a question mark against the 1968 celebrations as the UN 'Year of Human Rights?' Meanwhile, the world of today continues to feel the after-effects of Seattle in 1999 ('*Ya Basta!*' 'Enough is Enough !') as global capitalism displays grave difficulties in maintaining itself as a system for organising socio-economic resources. By preparing the conditions for welfare reform, social welfare movements express epoch-making shifts in national social policy; in the 1940s this was on the basis of universal politics of social rights rather than discretionary charity; in the 1980s this was on the basis of a politics of cultural difference rather than discrimination. Demands for social justice challenge the distributive mechanism of the free-market which had once seemed to be an inviolable law of nature. While the vast majority of welfare users are not politically active, neither are they exactly 'free riders', sitting it out at no cost to themselves while the militant minority inside a passive majority takes all the risks and pay the costs.

Protest Unbound?

Some commentators (as well as large swathes of academia) have largely discounted the unemployed or the labour movement of the twenty-first century from ever again mounting any challenge to mass unemployment, insecurity or diswelfare (cf Bagguley, 1991). Since the 1970s institutional restructuring and bureaucratic centralisation have all but closed down the spaces that provide a focus for discontent and make possible mass solidarities and cultures of challenge. Claiming on an individual basis at a remote distance from decision makers has made self-organisation much more difficult compared to the 1970s let alone the 1930s (Bagguley, 1999). The Claimants and Unemployed Workers Unions active in the 1970s stressed their autonomy, participative structures and ideological opposition to the forced take-up of low paid employment (Jordan, 1999). Such a stance is characteristic of new social movements perhaps but also self-consciously modelled after the NUWM of the 1930s. Moreover, their alternative culture and radical nature can be exaggerated. Many Claimants Unions were preoccupied with the day to day

business of advocacy and casework without combining with agitation and direct action as earlier movements had done.

But even the ideological and organisational space for this type of culture of challenge to market orthodoxy has been curtailed over the past thirty years. After all, and notwithstanding the massive Anti-Poll Tax campaign of the late 1980s, Bill Jordan (1999: 217) has argued:

> *Public protests or campaigns are rather easily suppressed; if miners and printers failed, why should unemployed people believe they can succeed, especially in the absence of support from trade unions or political parties?' Instead of looking to the structures of the welfare state for redress through their own organised collective action, the unemployed can find individual solutions to their predicament by opportunistically working in the informal economy while claiming, strategic separation of couples, begging, petty crime, and busking rather than complying with state parsimony and regulation.*

Such everyday 'weapons of the weak' appear to some activist-academics like Jordan, and Piven and Cloward as a form of resistance which frustrates the market-led policies of the state. They invert the negative connotations of the 'underclass' narratives and disrupt the view social exclusion as self-exclusion discourse and valorise the recalcitrant quality of the more informal cultures of people experiencing poverty. This has been given further theoretical ballast in Hardt and Negri's (2004) idea of 'the multitude'. Instead of confronting the authority of the state directly through collective organisation, resistance by the 'multitude' is preoccupied with micro-level, guerrilla tactics of 'nomadic' struggle of anonymous masses on the move, above all migrants, that can swarm the chaotic, lumbering structures of the Empire and subvert it at any point. Such a curiously intangible and vague notion as that of 'the multitude' did have a short-lived appeal for the some among the Seattle generation. In such ways, direct action can sanction an abstract voluntarism, glamourising the theory of the deed, over praxis, the political process of mutual reasoning that comes from the close interweaving of theory and practice.

However, by the first decade of the twenty-first century, so the argument proceeds, declassed new social movements on the one hand and the market-driven politics of

the neoliberal state on the other hand has left a vacuum of political legitimacy for collectivist politics. Class, it is often claimed, has been de-centred from its former position at the centre of the political universe. Since the late 1960s, the working class, it is further suggested, has been comprehensively restructured and fragmented by upward social mobility, service sector employment and the international division of labour. In response to the earlier crisis of the mid-1970s the state has progressively removed from the free play of market forces much of the apparatus of national protectionism and social welfare. Into the breach stepped the new social movements, expressing concerns with trans-class or 'post-materialist' problems of identity, culture, feelings, values and ethics, or 'militant particularism'. Moreover, standing in between the state and social movements as a demobilising buffer zone are the incorporated but dependent forces of pressure groups, lobby organisations, partnerships and organised policy forums (Barnes, et al, 2007).

Against uni-directional explanations of social reform and mobilisation, an important lesson of history is that the possibilities for resurgent social movements should never be entirely discounted. The very process of organising can open-up spaces of resistance where perhaps none seemed to exist before. This is what gives movements their 'astonishing' or 'miraculous' character. Even where conditions seem unpropitious movements can emerge; it is only retrospectively that they appear to be an inevitable outgrowth of their times. Even in the 1930s social movements differed radically from each other according to the national context. In Germany, all independent social movements were physically annihilated after the Nazi's came to power in 1933. In France, the radicalisation of protest in 1936 brought lasting reforms to the social security system that even now right wing governments like Chirac and Sarkozy challenge at their peril.

In contrast to the more favourable political climate of New Deal America, the unemployed movement in Britain faced a deeply hostile national political environment. The NUWM were demonised by the press and even the official labour movement, which sought to demobilise the unemployed. Activists braved considerable personal risks, including imprisonment, police violence, victimisation, and loss of benefit. The gains that were made for millions of people in these years were a direct result of the action of the active unemployed minority itself rather than

sympathetic politicians. This hostile national political context in Britain indicates the limits to the idea of a 'political opportunity structure' as a necessary precondition for collection action. In the face of widespread political hostility, determined collective action by a sizable militant minority of the unemployed itself helped to reshape the political context. Importantly, they were only able to effect this due to a localised focus on Boards of Guardians and PACs. The local state, in other words, provided a tangible political opportunity structure for recurrent mobilisation at a level beneath the centralised national state (see Bagguley, 1991).

By neglecting the complex structures of class society, 'post-materialist' new social movements accounts seem to express what Bourdieu (1984) called the cultural capital of middle class theorists, elevated above the crude, undignified business of the crude fight for material necessities. It could be argued that post-materialism is a skilful mark of class distinction rather than an accurate reflection of the disappearance of class as a locus of political struggle. Perhaps as global capitalism retrenches under the impact of economic crisis and recession a less superior attitude will be taken to the strategic kind of collective grievance emphasised by Resource Mobilisation Theory.

In practice, loose alliances are often formed between direct action protest groups, different 'movement entrepreneurs', socialist groups and working class communities. The anti-roads protests of the 1990s and more recent protests against environmentally damaging infrastructure developments (airports, shopping centres, waste incinerators etc) have all been animated by such alliances. Equally, the anti-racism struggles of the last few decades from the Anti-Nazi League and Rock Against Racism through to the defence of asylum seekers have been taken forward by coalitions of progressive forces centred on the mobilisation of working class communities. The case of Seattle and the 'global social justice movement' gives a clear signal that a sometimes fraught, but nevertheless fruitful alliance can be built between labour activists and environmentalists, between 'Teamsters and Turtles' in that vivid case. While in France, there is a wide confluence of social forces that has militantly contended around state welfare for the past decade or so.

At the other end of the debate, particularly on the question of poverty where crude materiality predominates, resistance to professional power and expertise can often take forms that stand apart from the contentious politics of formal social movement organisations as traditionally conceived. Like the Equal Opportunities apparatus, a poverty infrastructure has also emerged that encompasses intermediaries, professionals, bureaucrats and functionaries. Pressure groups like the Child Poverty Action Group form part of a pressure group lobby that attempts to highlight the unacceptable levels of impoverishment and deprivation in society and influence government policy. Within health, a blurring of boundaries is also apparent between user-groups and voluntary sector organizations (Barnes et al, 2007). Others like Benefit Rights Workers and Citizen Advice Centres advise and represent the interests of poor people in negotiating their way through the quagmire of benefit rules and regulations to claim entitlements. Such intermediaries necessarily substitute for the self-activity of their clients. Institutional changes in entitlement processes, especially the removal of discretionary powers, have altered the political opportunity structure for claimants themselves to organise collectively.

Conclusion: Ya Basta: Towards A New Deal for Social Welfare Movements?

As the worst global financial crisis for eighty years broke over the heads of national governments in 2008, some commentators lamented the absence of a social movement in a position to forcefully pose alternative solutions. Where were the forces today that would pressure governments and banks to mend their ways? Which mobilisations will prepare the conditions for an alternative to neoliberal social welfare in the way that struggles around unemployment, poverty, sickness, housing and education prepared the ground for the Beveridgean welfare state? In the past, the labour movement largely performed that role. It had focussed its efforts on the strategic power of the state as the medium for social reform. Through long and difficult struggles a major plank of its programme was realised with the foundation of the welfare state while its influence was further acknowledged in the post-war corporatist institutional collaboration between state, labour and capital (Harris, 1972).

In earlier periods of economic crisis, such as the 1930s the Depression, class and state were the locus for emerging mass solidarities. Some contemporary

commentators see an 'uncanny' parallel with the 1930s, with important historical lessons for today.

> *The Roaring Twenties that preceded the crash of 1929 was the first great age of consumer and corporate debt – and the last 10 years was the second. In the darkest days, people buried their money in coffee cans in the back garden, while workers from the northeast of England marched on London in what came to be called the Jarrow Crusade.* (Parker, 2008: 75)

A further parallel has been drawn between the 'recapitalisation' of the banks in October 2008 and the New Deal in the US of the 1930s. In both cases the previously sacrosanct principles of the free market were unceremoniously abandoned. Another ominous parallel is the return of the spectre of mass unemployment. By 1933 anything between one-quarter to one-third of the US labour force were out of work (Galbraith, 1961). With the election in 1933 of Franklin D. Roosevelt, a series of New Deal reforms were implemented to help stabilise the economy and alleviate the suffering of the poor and the unemployed. The New Deal created public works that allowed the unemployed to earn an income which they then spend and in this way help to reflate a depressed economy. Better this, the managers of state and capital thought, than a growing rebellion turning into a revolution. Political mobilisation and sit-down strikes against lay-offs also played their part in the creation of the New Deal. In many parts of the country the concessions represented by the New Deal further incited desperate people to help themselves. Unemployed Councils were set up all over America. As one writer at the time described unemployed activism in 1932:

> *If an unemployed worker has his gas or his water turned off because he can't pay for it, to see the proper authorities; to see that the unemployed who are shoeless and clothesless get both; to eliminate through publicity and pressure discriminations between Negroes and white persons, or against the foreign born, in matters of relief … to march people down to relief headquarters and demand that they be fed and clothed. Finally to provide legal defense for all unemployed arrested for joining parades, hunger marches, or attending union meetings.* (Quoted in Zinn, 2001: 394).

Hence the example of the American New Deal has a contemporary resonance. For instance, the pattern of financial crisis that has engulfed Argentina since 1995 has been followed with an ascending curve of protest and collective action among the unemployed (Garay, 2007). Nevertheless, the forces that prepared the conditions for the New Deal or the Beveridgean welfare state do not represent a model for the revival of social movements everywhere and at all times. There remains an ongoing need for detailed empirical studies and rethinking of social policy in the light of an inter-related understanding of social movements, mobilisation and social reform.

In the coming period it is likely that questions regarding the future of welfare will be posed starkly, again and again as states seek solutions to the fiscal crisis of neo-liberal capitalism. States will be required to recoup the billions of pounds spent in trying to stabilise the international banking system and stimulate declining economies. In the short term the money has been borrowed through the international credit markets, but in the medium term that money will have to start to be paid back. In this country it will mean higher taxation and cuts in public spending after the next UK general election (in 2010) – such is the magnitude of the state's deficit that spending cuts are likely to be historically unprecedented in their depth and severity. Welfare of all kinds will take the brunt as the public sector is squeezed – will anything resembling even the inadequate welfare system that the UK currently possesses be left? The answer to this question of course depends upon the actions of social welfare movements: what form will resistance take? Who will it involve? How will it be organised? Could such movements move beyond the defensive to become offensive? Already predictions are being made that the public spending cuts of the near future are likely to provoke a bitter battle between the state and the public sector that may be as politically definitive for a generation as the Great Miners Strike of 1984-85 (Glover, 2009). The stakes are high – a loss could mean the beginning of the end for state welfare as experienced under advanced capitalism in the post-war period – a victory could however mean a progressive remodelling of welfare for the social and environmental needs of the 21st century. It is imperative now that social policy devotes more attention to the movements that are actively seeing to resist attacks on welfare – and to those emergent movements that are actively trying to construct new worlds of welfare.

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"Until now, studies of social welfare and social movements have pursued largely separate tracks. The authors of this book bring them together, opening a new world of questions. This argumentative and lively book will leap onto 'must-read' lists."
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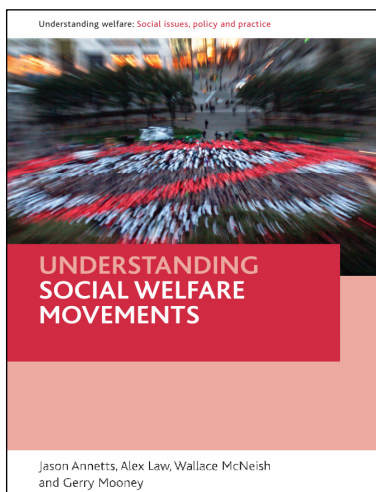
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