

Title: Studies in the criminalisation of poverty : pauperism, pathology and policing

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Awarded: 1984

Abstract:

The study of social policy, or social administration, is usually associated with the study of statutory, welfare-oriented, distributive mechanisms. Indeed, it is precisely these distributive and welfare-related characteristics that qualifies certain kinds of policy as 'social'. Yet, there is no real justification, save historical accident and tradition, for continuing to accept this particular conception of social policy. A different kind of examination of the historical record - such as the analyses contained within this thesis - reveals a quite different legacy to the British social policy tradition. Thus, the work contained within this thesis consists of an attempt to take another look at the historical development and modern evolution of state social policy. The effort is made to show that there is an older and more entrenched social policy tradition in Britain; one as much concerned with discipline as with welfare, more to do with division than with integration and more repressive than, liberating. It is important to acknowledge that the penal code is as old as the Poor Laws, that the mercantilist science of police preceded the science of political economy and, later in the age of capitalism and industrialization, the Metropolitan Police Act predated the extension of the franchise and the reform of the Poor Laws. In short, a central preoccupation of the thesis is the attempt to elaborate Gareth Stedman-Jones' remark that, in the history of social administration, welfare and discipline, or care and control, were but two sides of the same coin. In order to develop this argument, theoretical perspectives deriving from the work of Marx and Foucault have been employed. The works of Marx have been used to help in the analysis of the state, class struggle and the changing modes of political domination, whilst Foucault's work - especially his emphasis upon the analysis of discipline - has been employed to help elaborate the ways in which objectives, techniques and practices are brought together in forms of socio-political 'intervention' - political strategies or social policies. Furthermore, Foucault's work in the analysis of socio-political discourse was of major importance insofar as it offered a technique for isolating and examining the formation of knowledges, practices and policies in social interventions. Thus, in different periods, differing discourses on pauperism, poor-relief, charity, social pathology, need and poverty, can be identified. These discourses are the preserve of the state, of philanthropists, of 'experts' and of the mass media. Equally, they all have a certain popular currency. Within a particular discourse are concealed differing political strategies and targets of intervention, forms of knowledge and relations between objectives and practices. To examine social policy - in every respect a rich field of enquiry - as a series of changing, competing and interconnecting discourses is to bring another dimension to its analysis. On the basis of such theoretical foundations the thesis examines the penalties, sanctions and disciplinary components - what Marx called 'the severities' - of the policies designed to cope with the problems of pauperism and poverty. Different chapters deal with different historical aspects of the organisation of the Poor Law and Social Security, in particular:

- the relationships of philanthropy and the investigation of the poor,
- the strategies of control embodied within poor relief and the development of insurantal techniques around the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century,
- the tests and regulations determining entitlement to relief,
- the strategy of social security after the Beveridge Report and the Second World War,
- the administrative discourse of the National Assistance Board and the preoccupation with social pathology and 'voluntary-unemployment',
- the emergence of a concern about fraud and abuse in social security and, finally,
- an analysis of the Fisher Report in 1973 and the subsequent intensification of claims-control techniques throughout the social security system.

By taking this 'alternative' look at what we might reasonably call the 'dark side' of social policy, from the early years of the 19th century to the present day in respect of the Poor Law, and Social Security systems, a range of more fundamental questions are raised. These larger questions have to do with the disciplinary and regulatory nature of social policy itself. Such questions accept that all social policy is entirely concerned with the shaping and structuring of human social relations, they leave us less inclined to take the intentions of social policy-makers at their word and more interested in the effects and consequences of social policy. With our grasp of these wider questions we can see how the more specific focus on the Criminalisation of poverty becomes just one part of a much more general project of research about the disciplinary character of social policy itself and the ramification of power relations through social policy, social legislation and governmental 'intervention'. The present thesis is informed by insights from this broader general thesis about the nature of social policy at the same time as it is intended to contribute to that more radical and challenging thesis itself. From the early 19th century a vast labour of statutory and political-economic intervention in the population expanded under the sign of 'the social'. 'Socialisation' and integration came to spell progress for almost 150 years but then a strange shift began to take place. Nowadays, the social and the anti-social sit curiously together in a range of statutory, public and private initiatives. It is less the case that a struggle over meanings is taking place, rather, an attempt is being made to economise the social - to attach it more firmly to economic

indicators. As the final sections of the thesis hopefully make clear privatisation and a new politics of disentitlement are indicative of the new relations being struck between the social and the economic.