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SPRC Newsletter

SOCIAL POLICY RESEARCH CENTRE

No. 55 DECEMBER 1994 FREE.

EDITOR: JULIA MARTIN

LOOKING TO THE SUMMIT - AND BEYOND

BY PETER SAUNDERS

With the end of the twentieth century in sight, politicians and commentators are taking stock of the progress we have achieved so far and looking to where we should be heading in the next century.

The year 2000 is a natural and obvious focal point around which to consider past achievements and ponder future goals and prospects. The end of the last century marked the final moves towards Federation. The 1990s offer Australians an opportunity to lift our sights above the Sydney Olympic Games - important though they are - to the 'main game' of identifying and debating issues shaping the broader canvas of world opinion.

POST-INDUSTRIAL WORLDS

The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe has focused attention on the ability of post-industrial capitalism to achieve our immediate goals and satisfy

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our longer-run aspirations. The direct ownership and control of the means of production has failed as a strategy for combining prosperity, freedom and equality. All of us, not just those who have always believed, need to become 'true

believers' of the proposition that capitalism can deliver all three - and do so on a sustainable basis.

This will need to be achieved in a world where re-invigorating the economies of the old communist nations without at the same time destroying their aspirations and social institutions, is proving to be a major task.

It will take a degree of international co-operation and commitment, not only in terms of resources, but also in terms of devising and implementing systems of social protection which are effective and affordable. The road from socialism to a market economy is a long and bumpy one, as many in Europe are discovering.

REFORM AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

There is a certain irony in Western industrial nations taking the lead in this process of reform and rejuvenation. This is particularly so in light of the role being played in the reform process by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, both of which are regarded with a good deal of suspicion by many developing countries. For much of the last two decades these agencies have openly espoused the virtues of market competition.

For their part, Western governments have repeatedly emphasised the need to curtail the growth and influence of their

own main institution of social protection - the welfare state - so as not to impede the operation of market forces.

Now, having preached the need for reduced social intervention at home, those same Western nations are playing

a leading role in designing and implementing similar mechanisms overseas.

The emphasis given to the economic (as well as the social) benefits of having an effective social safety net now causes a near-universal

nodding of heads around the tables of power in the West. Yet this apparent consensus contrasts starkly with the shaking of those same heads in response to their own citizens' calls for improved



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systems of social protection - in the causes of fiscal responsibility, monetary stability and market autonomy.

HEMISPHERES OF CHANGE

The balance of power in the world economy is not only being re-aligned in an East-West dimension centred on Berlin. Long-standing North-South differences and tensions remain between the industrial and developing nations, with the gulf between them still unacceptably wide on most dimensions.

with peace comes reduced military expenditure. How should this 'peace dividend' be spent?

Closer to home, there is the emergence onto the world stage of the 'tiger economies' of Asia, characterised by liberal economic policies operating under strict political control and encouraged by new and diverse forms of state intervention. If the balance of economic power has moved westwards within Europe, it has certainly shifted a good deal to the East when viewed from a global perspective.

THE 'PEACE DIVIDEND'

At the same time, there has been an 'outbreak of peace' over recent years which, while still not as widespread as one would wish, is far more so than most would have predicted even five years ago. This is being accompanied by the formation of new political and economic unions, giving a further boost to the scope of world trade.

These developments could not have come at a better time for a world economy still struggling to emerge from the shadows of recession. With peace (eventually) comes reduced military expenditure and this, in turn, raises issues about how the 'peace dividend' should be spent, and to what ends.

THE WORLD SUMMIT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Questions such as social protection, reform, and global change will form the backdrop to the World Summit for Social Development scheduled to take place in Copenhagen in March 1995.

The United Nations is convening the Summit, which represents an appropriate occasion to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the creation of the UN. With the UN's increased peace-keeping role throughout the world, its other functions and overall structure are being re-considered, in both economic and strategic military terms.

The Summit provides an opportunity - probably a unique opportunity - to extend the scope of this debate to a discussion of whether and how the UN can play a more active role in encouraging global social development, or at least to debate aspects of human development which extend beyond economic and military dimensions.

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

An enormous amount of preparatory work has already been undertaken in the lead-up to the Summit. Australia has played a significant role in this process, both globally and within our more immediate region.

experts from Australia, China, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Vanuatu and Vietnam, with observers also attending from the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the International Labor Office

achieving the right balance between public and private welfare institutions poses problems for rich and poor countries alike

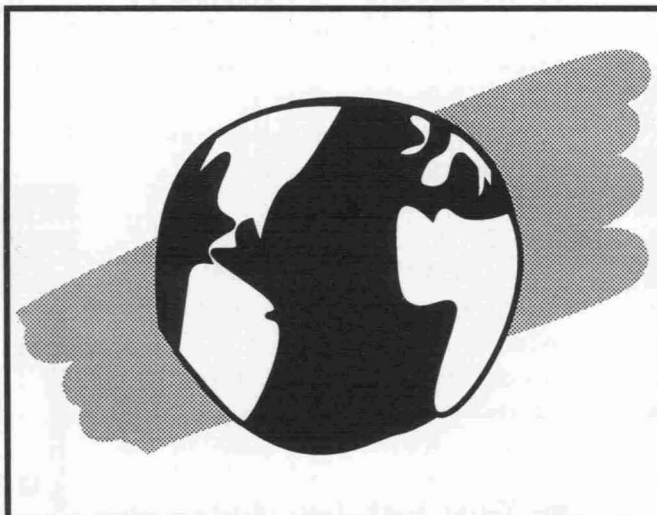
(ILO), UNICEF, the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Participants at the Seminar heard and discussed presentations describing the experiences of individual countries with a view to identifying social issues of common concern to all countries in the region. Drawing on this experience, a series of specific recommendations was developed which in turn formed the basis for the agenda of the Regional Ministerial Meeting held in Manila in October, another stage in the build-up to the World Summit in Copenhagen.

At the time of writing this article, the outcome of the Manila meeting is not known, but as one fortunate enough to attend the Bandung Seminar, the process of sharing experiences and discussing common concerns in that forum proved to be enlightening and informative.

Devising social programs within a market economy gives rise to some similar issues which transcend the scope and purpose of individual programs and which arise at all stages of economic development. Achieving the right

balance between public and private welfare institutions, mechanisms and processes, for example, poses problems for rich and poor countries alike. Exchanging information about social policies is a process from which all participants can learn and benefit.



In July this year, for example, Australia and Indonesia jointly organised and sponsored a Seminar on Social Development attended by experts from a broad range of countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Held in Bandung, Indonesia, the Seminar was attended by 43

SUMMIT OUTCOMES

If the Copenhagen Summit is to be a force for change and not just a talk-fest which dominates the media for a week before fading into obscurity, it needs to set in train processes through which genuine change can occur. Its success in this regard has the potential to have a

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lasting influence over the coming decades. A Bretton-Woods type agreement could see the dawning of a new era of international co-operation and an international institutional framework which is motivated by both economic and social considerations.

The Summit has been structured around three main themes which reflect the concerns felt in all countries: poverty alleviation, productive employment and social integration.

The three themes will structure the work of the Summit, but its outcomes will need to be given specific focus within an international context if they are to have any impact. Individual countries cannot be expected to give up their sovereignty over addressing policy concerns in ways which each sees as most appropriate for their own circumstances.

THE PROPOSED AGENDA

In its *Human Development Report 1994*, the UNDP proposed a six-point agenda for the Summit consistent with this perspective of sovereignty.

The proposed agenda comprises the introduction of a new world social charter; introduction of the 20:20 human development compact (described in detail below); the establishment of specific targets designed to mobilise the 'peace dividend'; introduction of a global human security fund; strengthening the UN umbrella for human development; and the establishment of a UN economic

security council. Coming from a body which is itself part of the UN, the emphasis on strengthening the UN's role is hardly surprising, but the agenda also makes a good deal of sense.

THE 20:20 COMPACT

The proposed 20:20 human development compact involves persuading the developing countries to agree to devote 20 per cent of their national budgets to human development concerns, specifically to such issues as the elimination of malnutrition, provision of primary health care, family planning, adequate sanitation, universal primary education, removal of adult illiteracy and provision of credit for the self-employed.

Under the compact, industrial nations would be expected to devote 20 per cent of their aid budgets specifically to these human development priorities.

The UNDP has estimated that, if the compact were achieved right now, an additional US\$39 billion dollars would be allocated world-wide to human development concerns.

Progress towards the achievement of the compact's expenditure targets could be monitored from existing data collections, while the excellent work undertaken by the UNDP itself in developing its Human Development Index (HDI) would allow the outcomes of the higher expenditure allocations to be tracked over time - within and across countries.

**replacing the
adjective 'economic'
with 'human' in
discussing the idea of
development is itself
a major advance**

THE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX

The value of the work so far put in by the UNDP in developing the methodol-

ogy and data needed to construct the HDI is already apparent. It is easy to criticise the methods used to construct the HDI and some of the data currently employed are rather rudimentary. But that is not really the point. The main value of this work lies in its role in opening up a new discourse in the international arena, one



in which development is conceived and measured in terms which extend far beyond conventional economic indicators such as the size of national income.

The shift in emphasis achieved by replacing the adjective 'economic' with 'human' in discussing the idea of development is itself a major advance which augurs well for the future.

REACHING THE SUMMIT

It is easy to espouse the virtues of social development, but much harder to achieve real social progress. To do so requires recognising that there is more to social development than just maximising economic growth.

Making social development a reality will require economic goals to be sacrificed on occasion, and economic resources to be deployed continuously. This is a major task, but the first steps could be made at next year's World Summit.

The goals of the UN Summit must be conquered not only because, like other summits, it is there, but also because it provides us with an opportunity to make the world a better place.

REFERENCE

United Nations Development Programme (1994), *Human Development Report 1994*, Oxford University Press, New York

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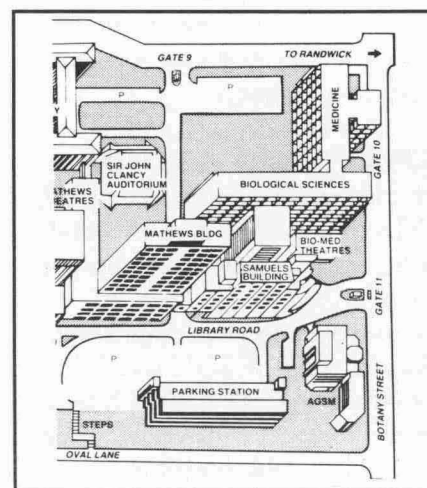
The Social Policy Research Centre (originally the Social Welfare Research Centre) was established in January 1980 under an agreement between the University of New South Wales and the Commonwealth Government.

The Centre is operated by the University as an independent unit of the University. The Director receives assistance in formulating the Centre's research agenda from a Board of Management, and in periodic consultation with the community. The Director of the Centre is responsible to the Vice-Chancellor for the operation of the Centre.

The Centre undertakes and sponsors research on important aspects of social policy and social welfare; it arranges seminars and conferences, publishes the results of its research in reports, journal articles and books, and provides opportunities for postgraduate studies in social policy. Current research areas cover poverty, inequality, and standards of living; social security, taxation and the labour market; the welfare state; and community support services for the frail elderly and younger people with disabilities.

The views expressed in this Newsletter, as in any of the Centre's publications, do not represent any official position of the Centre. The Newsletter and all other SPRC publications present the views and research findings of the individual authors with the aim of promoting the development of ideas and discussion about major concerns in social policy and social welfare.

The Social Policy Research Centre is located on Level 3 of the Samuels Building, University of NSW, Kensington Campus. Enter by Gate 11, Botany Street.



FROM THE DIRECTOR

S O C I A L P O L I C Y R E S E A R C H C E N T R E

The end of 1994 will herald the fifteenth birthday of the establishment of the Social Policy Research Centre. Next year we will embark on a new five-year funding Agreement and a new triennial Research Agenda. We are still putting the final touches to the latter, and I will describe the main features of the new Agenda in the next issue of this Newsletter.

The social policy research landscape has changed enormously over the last decade and a half. When the SPRC was established by the Fraser Government the conduct of social policy research was concentrated in a small number of research institutes and government departments and agencies, accompanied by the work of individual scholars.

Since 1980, the number of social research organisations has grown rapidly, both within and outside government. So too has their scope and the quality of research being undertaken on all aspects of social policy. Social policies themselves can now draw from a broad range of sophisticated research in their design and implementation, and all new policies must be evaluated using research techniques and analysis.

In addition to large national generic research institutes like the SPRC, the Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research and the National Institute of Economic and Industry Research, Australia has a number of national agencies conducting more focused research, including the Australian Institute of Family Studies, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling.

Government agencies like the Economic Planning Advisory Commission and the Bureau of Immigration and Population Research conduct research into social policy issues, as do the relevant government departments - Commonwealth and, increasingly, State also. There is also the very important research undertaken by welfare organisation such as the Australian Council of Social Service and the Brotherhood of St. Laurence.

This growth in institutionalised research (if I can use that term) has occurred within a climate in which many individual scholars have found it increasingly difficult to pursue their research. Scarce resources in the tertiary education sector generally have been translated into increased teaching loads which, in conjunction with the higher administrative requirements associated with a more managerialist culture, have made the sustained and uninterrupted pursuit of research a luxury for many academics. Even those fortunate enough to receive funding from the Australian Research Council or similar sources find it difficult to devote the time to supervising and directing the research assistance which those funds can purchase.

To overcome these difficulties, individual scholars are joining together to establish small-scale research institutes which spread the limited funds further - if also somewhat thinner. An example of this kind of endeavour is the Centre for Social Research at the Northern Territory University in Darwin, which I and my colleagues Anthony King and Michael Fine visited in late October to participate in a joint one-day Conference, **Social Policy in Northern Australia: National Policies and Local Issues**.

The increase in the number of social policy research institutes - large and small - reflects Australia's growing expertise in the area, as well as the importance attached to social policy issues. These developments are to be welcomed, but the declining role and significance of individual research scholars is a cause for concern. These new research institutes, like the SPRC itself, must continually search for funding and this

increases our involvement in the issues of concern to those with the funds - mainly government in the case of social policy, but also some private sector organisations.

There is the danger that this drive to undertake policy-relevant research will cause basic research - which asks new questions, develops new theoretical frameworks and constructs and addresses different issues - to suffer. If it does, the overall quality of our research base will decline in the longer-term.

We need to encourage more individual scholars to undertake social policy research and give them the resources to do it. Research, like some areas of social policy, may need to undergo a process of de-institutionalisation in order to achieve a more balanced profile. I am not arguing here for a reduction in the SPRC funding base, rather for increased funding for individual researchers.


STAFF

■ I am pleased to welcome back Peter Whiteford as a Senior Research Fellow.

Peter has spent the last three years on leave from the SPRC at the Social Policy Research Unit at the University of York. Whilst there, he completed his PhD thesis, **Measuring the Impact of Social Policy: A Comparative Analysis of the Wellbeing of Older People**.

His thesis will have an important effect on the methodologies employed in comparative research studies, and it represents the kind of reflective, focused and (relatively) undisturbed research from which we can all benefit.

■ One of our Research Fellows, Natalie Bolzan, recently gave birth to a little fellow named Oliver. We wish Natalie and her family all the best in the sleepless nights ahead.

 Finally, on behalf of the staff at the SPRC, may I wish you all a safe and happy holiday season.

Peter Saunders
Director

1995 NATIONAL SOCIAL

SOCIAL POLICY AND THE CHALLENGES OF SOCIAL CHANGE • 5-7 JULY 1995

POLICY CONFERENCE

BY SHEILA SHAVER

Planning for next year's National Social Policy Conference is now well advanced. We are trying to arrange a more interactive Conference, which will allow a large number of papers on a broad range of topics, but at the same time give sufficient time for contribution and discussion from the floor.

The theme, **Social Policy and the Challenges of Social Change**, centres on the complex social changes that are taking place in contemporary Australia, and their consequences for social policy.

These social changes are taking place in the economy, in family and personal life, in population and culture, and in social and economic inequalities associated with age, gender, disability, language, and indigenous and ethnic minority background. All of these areas will feature in presentations and discussions at the Conference.

Social Policy and the Challenges of Social Change also invites discussion of changes in expectations of the contemporary welfare state, and in the way in which social and community services are funded and managed.

PLENARY SESSIONS

We have invited three distinguished speakers - Stuart McIntyre, Hilary Land

and Ramesh Mishra - to address the Conference.

Stuart Macintyre, Ernest Scott Professor of History at the University of Melbourne will present the keynote address. Those in the social policy field are most likely to know Stuart Macintyre through his book *Winners and Losers*. Professor Macintyre's latest book was *A History for a Nation: Ernest Scott and the Meaning of Australian History*, published last year.

Hilary Land is Professor of Social Policy at the University of London, Royal Holloway and Bedford New College. Professor Land is completing a book on *Family, Work and Welfare*, to be published by Blackwells, and these subjects will be the theme of her address to the Conference.

Ramesh Mishra is Professor of Social Policy at York University, Canada. We have asked Professor Mishra, author of *The Welfare State in Capitalist Society*, to discuss changes taking place in contemporary welfare states in an international perspective.

FORUM SESSIONS

Next year's Conference will feature a new type of session which we hope will provide opportunities for active exchange of argument and opinion about topics and issues on the contemporary policy agenda. For these 'Forum Sessions' we are inviting a number of speakers to open the discussion with short presentations, designed to stimulate contributions from the audience and a debate on the main issues.

Forum Sessions will be held on these six issues:

- Feminism in social policy: what priorities now?
- Is poverty research still useful?
- Funding strategies for community services: weighing up the costs and benefits
- The White Paper reforms: will they (find) work?
- Migration, citizenship rights and cultural diversity
- Social policy research: can it be both influential and independent?

CONTRIBUTED PAPERS

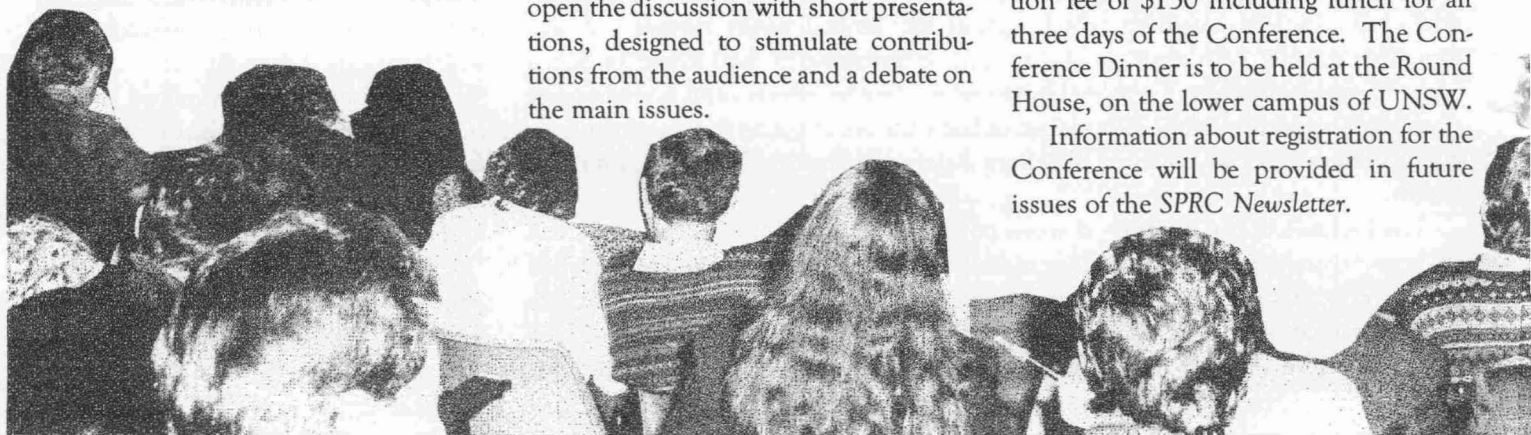
Always central to the success of the Conference is the presentation of new research and discussion papers across the range of social policy fields. We are now seeking offers of papers in areas related to the theme of **Social Policy and the Challenges of Social Change** (see the **Call for Papers** on the facing page).

GENERAL INFORMATION

As in previous years, the Conference will be held at the University of New South Wales, in the Clancy Auditorium and the Mathews Theatres. It will run from midday Wednesday 5th July to the Friday afternoon of 7th July. On campus accommodation will be available at reasonable rates.

The cost of registration remains at 1993 rates, with an 'Early Bird' registration fee of \$150 including lunch for all three days of the Conference. The Conference Dinner is to be held at the Round House, on the lower campus of UNSW.

Information about registration for the Conference will be provided in future issues of the *SPRC Newsletter*.



The 1995 National Social Policy Conference theme is **Social Policy and the Challenges of Social Change.**

Contributed papers will form a central part of the Conference, and we are now inviting offers of papers from people researching or working in Australian social policy. Papers may present the results of research, discuss conceptual approaches, describe work in progress, or raise new issues for debate.

Conference discussion will be arranged in the following five social policy areas. There will also be an Open area for papers on other subject matter of interest and importance.

1 • WORK AND WELFARE

Work and welfare have been affected by structural changes in the Australian economy and their consequences for both paid and unpaid (domestic and volunteer) labour.

Access to employment, the emergence of the 'working poor' and the effectiveness of the social safety net represent key policy concerns. Recent changes in social security and education and training have yet to be evaluated. Changes in paid employment have affected caring work with young children, the frail elderly, people with disabilities, and in general family and community settings.

2 • SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INEQUALITY

Several dimensions of inequality increased during the 1980s in Australia and elsewhere. The causes and consequences of those changes are still under discussion. Such trends encompass both the changing distribution of income among individuals and households, and the relative position of social groups such as women, Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander people, ethnic groups and the residents of urban and regional areas. Social and economic policies face pressing questions in the areas of employment, education, income security, and taxation.

3 • FAMILY, THE LIFE COURSE AND THE STATE

Gender roles, marriage and family life are altering rapidly. Changes in education, employment, and family formation are also reshaping the life course of individuals, with life-cycle stages of youth and education, marriage and parenthood, employment and retirement no longer experienced as linear and to be lived in fixed, serial order. Families are also vulnerable in the capacity of members to provide care within and between generations.

4 • COMMUNITY SERVICES

Community care is an important area of policy at all levels of government. In the light of both demographic change and continuing de-institutionalisation, it is likely to continue to expand.

Changing funding regimes are affecting the management of community organisations of all kinds, making new demands with respect to efficiency, accountability and responsiveness to diverse client groups. The effects of these changes on the organisation, effectiveness and availability of community services remains an important policy and research issue.

5 • CITIZENSHIP AND THE MIXED ECONOMY OF WELFARE

Increasing social expenditure, concerns about the effectiveness of welfare programs and an ideological climate of 'economic rationalism' are giving impetus to a 'mixed economy of welfare'. Other motivations reflect changing values con-

cerning the role of the individual and personal choice.

Policy is reshaping the balance of public and private provision, seeking to co-ordinate the roles of the individual, family and community with that of government. In areas as varied as retirement income, community care and child protection, policies put new emphasis on needs being met through markets, households and non-government organisations.

6 • OPEN

The Conference will have an 'Open' section providing for discussion of topics not included in any of the areas described above, and we welcome papers in this section.

SELECTION OF PAPERS

Acceptance of papers for presentation at the Conference is necessarily competitive. Selection is the responsibility of the SPRC and will be based on abstracts. Criteria for selection will include academic quality and relevance to the conference theme. We welcome papers presenting all points of view.

If you wish to offer a paper, please send us the title and an abstract of no more than 200 words.

The closing date for the submission of abstracts is **15 March 1995**. Please send your submission to:

**1995 Social Policy Conference
Papers**

**Social Policy Research Centre
University of New South Wales
Sydney NSW 2052**

or by fax to

(02) 385 1049

Enquiries about papers or the Conference should be directed to Marilyn McHugh on (02) 385 3863.



CALL FOR PAPERS

FROM THE PROJECTS

S O C I A L P O L I C Y R E S E A R C H C E N T R E

Income Distribution and Health Inequalities

BY ROBERT URQUHART

Researchers at the SPRC have had a long-term interest in exploring the connections between income inequality and poverty on the one hand, and the variations in the health status of Australians on the other.

using data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) most extensive survey of health, the 1989-90 National Health Survey (NHS) (McClelland, Pirkis and Willcox, 1992; Mathers, 1994).

A more detailed and systematic investigation of the relationship between health status and income distribution will be made possible by the new SPRC data-

base. Two databases will be merged; the 1989-90 NHS, and the ABS Survey of Income and Housing Costs and Amenities (IHCA) from the same year.

The NHS provides extensive information on the health status and health service use of Australians, as well as characteristics of their lifestyle related to health. However, the published version of the NHS data provides little detail of income, with dollar amounts only collected for gross personal annual income and aggregated into broad income ranges.

By contrast, the IHCA survey collected detailed income attributes of families and individuals but no information on their health. It is possible to greatly enhance the research value of the health data found in the NHS by utilising the very detailed income data found on the IHCA file to more precisely estimate gross personal income.

PROJECT PLANS

Peter Saunders, Anthony King and Robert Urquhart are conducting this SPRC project. In the first stage, the research team will apply and compare different statistical matching techniques to merge these two large data sets. The result will be a single national database

that includes detailed information on health status, income and a range of other demographic and socioeconomic variables. The imputed income data will be validated through comparison with the IHCA and other relevant data.

In the second stage, the research team will investigate the relationships between income distribution and health status, including which measures of income are most important (absolute income or relative income); which indicators of income inequality are most important (summary distributional measures; bottom-sensitive or top-sensitive distributional measures; poverty status benchmarks) and which dimensions of health status bear the closest relationship with these measures of income relativities.

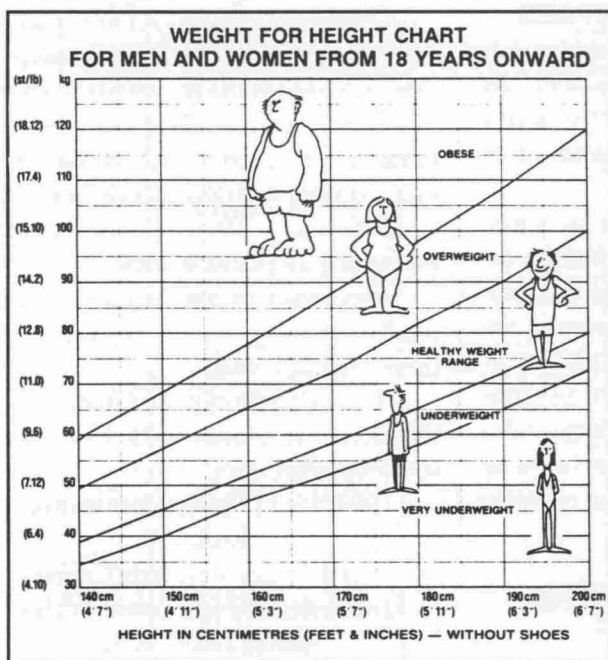
A significant change from previous research is that the analysis will examine the association between Henderson poverty status and reported health differences among Australian children.

The unified data set, once created, and the preliminary analysis outlined above, when complete, will provide a useful and comprehensive resource for other researchers interested in health and economic inequality issues. We anticipate that detailed, ongoing research will build on these initial foundations well beyond the life of the project.

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- Mathers, C. (1994), *Health Differentials Among Adult Australians Aged 25-64 Years*, Health Monitoring Series No. 1, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, AGPS, Canberra
- McClelland, A., J. Pirkis and S. Willcox. (1992), *Enough to Make You Sick: How Income and Environment Affect Health*, Research Paper No. 1, National Health Strategy, Canberra

Healthy Weight Range chart reproduced with permission of the Australian Nutrition Foundation



To further research in this area, the Public Health Research and Development Committee awarded a grant to the Centre in 1992 to allow it to establish a health and income inequality database. This database will be an invaluable resource in future inequality research.

DATA: THE NEXT COMPUTATION

Most research on the relationship between income distribution and health has been conducted overseas. In Australia, the National Health Strategy, and, more recently, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, have served to highlight a number of socioeconomic variables in the determination of health status,

BOOK REVIEW

S O C I A L P O L I C Y R E S E A R C H C E N T R E

Welfare Enough?

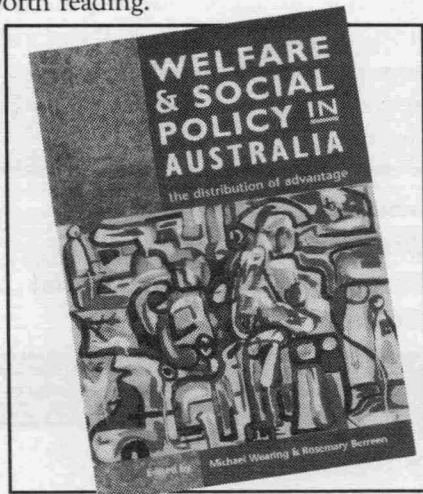
Michael Wearing and Rosemary Berreen (eds), *Welfare and Social Policy in Australia. The Distribution of Disadvantage*, Harcourt Brace; xxi + 262pp., \$32.95

Elaine Thompson, *Fair Enough. Egalitarianism in Australia*, University of New South Wales Press; xii + 283pp., \$29.95

Reviewed by Peter Saunders

The collection of essays, edited by Michael Wearing and Rosemary Berreen looks at the factors which shape the distribution of advantage and disadvantage on the allocation of winning and losing in (Australian) society. (p.xii)

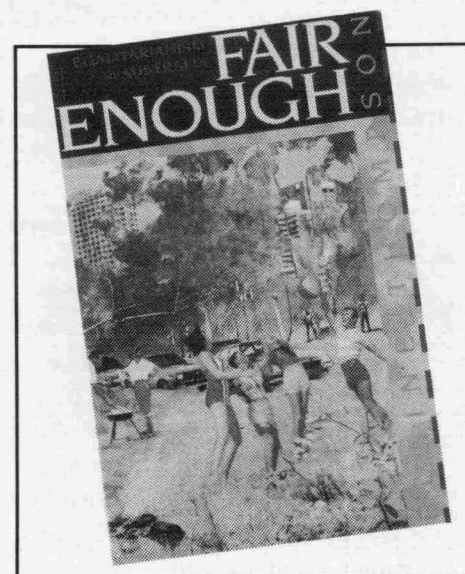
The authors adopt a critical perspective to discuss many of the main dimensions of the Australian welfare state, both its longer-run evolution as well as more recent experience. Several of the authors are excellently placed to review their material, and the contributions by Paul Smyth (on the post-war economic debates), Damian Grace (on social justice), Elim Papadakis (on public opinion), Martin Mowbray (on housing), Lois Bryson (on gender) and Frank Stilwell (on the political economy of social policy) are all well worth reading.



I was less impressed by some of the others. Rodney Smith's claim that Australian Labor Party social policy from Whitlam through to Keating has been fundamentally consistent in regarding state welfare as secondary to economic growth and reduced taxation was unconvincing. This argument is not only hard to stack up against the figures, it also receives scant support from an assessment of the nature and consequences of the policies themselves.

I also thought that Michael Wearing's discussion (in Chapter 10) of alternative formulations of social justice as expressed in recent social policies paled against Damian Grace's insightful conceptual discussion (in Chapter 5) of liberalism, libertarianism and social justice. After some rather questionable presentation and analysis of income data (eg. Table 10.2), Wearing quotes from a number of policy documents in an attempt to show how the discourse of social justice in Australia has been narrowed and its effects circumscribed in various ways. He concludes that 'the principles of a universalist Keynesian welfare state... have all but been abandoned in Australia' (p. 196), a theme to which he returns in the concluding chapter, co-authored with Rosemary Berreen.

Aside from this rather strange attribution to the role of Keynes in the development of the Australian welfare state, the tendency to criticise the retreat from the principles of universalism and citizenship developed by Titmuss and Marshall, respectively, and given effect in the post-war welfare apparatus constructed by Beveridge on the foundations laid by Keynes, permeates several chapters of the book. They reminded me of the 'picket fence fantasising' about a bygone world characterised by different circumstances and values which occupies the minds of certain individuals in the higher echelons of the Liberal Party. Australia's welfare past was



never like that, as Paul Smyth's essay makes clear. Even if it were, it is doubtful that one would want for Australia today a welfare structure built on ideas, principles, values and plans developed half a century ago and half a world away.

The book is described on its back cover as 'an invaluable text for students in a wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate courses'. One can understand the publisher's wishes to appeal to a wide audience, but nonetheless be suspicious of any book which lays claim to being invaluable for both undergraduate and postgraduate students.

My own view, for what it is worth, is that the book does not extend beyond second, or possible third, year undergraduate level, but I do not think that it is an appropriate textbook even at this level. There are simply too many important areas omitted - of which the more notable are the failure to discuss the crucial period in the late-1940s when the 'Keynes-Beveridge consensus' welfare state was developed (in Part One) and the lack of any systematic discussion of demographic aspects of social policy, ethnicity or multiculturalism (in Part Two).

The book would, however, make a useful supplementary volume for students keen to study specific areas of social policy in greater depth. It is also a helpful

continued on page 10 ►

book for those with a general interest in the Australian welfare state and keen to come to grips with some of the recent debates on social policy.

Elaine Thompson's book, *Fair Enough. Egalitarianism in Australia*, charts the development of Australian egalitarianism and analyses the basis for it - now and over the course of the last two hundred years.

Defining egalitarianism in the sense of 'sameness' (p.ix), the book

tries to put the critical arguments that say that Australians are not egalitarian, or that they are egalitarian in strictly limited ways (but) also tries to look at the strengths of the egalitarian tradition and isolate some of the key claims that have been made about Australia as a result of its egalitarianism. (p. viii)

While there is some interesting material in the book (the role of Chinese settlers in the gold rush era, for example) its central arguments and much of the supporting evidence and justification are already fairly well-known. Australian egalitarianism does have a specificity which, while it has not embraced all dimensions of fairness (such as gender or ethnicity), has manifested itself in distinct ways in others (for example, egalitarianism as a form of social mannerism).

Thompson's analysis is perhaps weakest when it comes to a discussion (in Chapter 6) of the evidence on the material dimensions of egalitarianism, specifically those relating to the distributions of income and wealth. Her discussion of recent evidence is sketchy and the arguments she summarises conveys an unfamiliarity with the literature.

On page 188, for example, she quotes evidence (from *The Weekend Australian*, no less!) claiming that, on the basis of its income distribution, Australia is 'one of the least egalitarian of industrialised nations in the world' - an absurd proposition that would be dispelled by even the most cursory assessment of the research evidence itself. This and many other areas where the basis for the arguments presented can be challenged detracts from a book which contains a good deal of interesting material but fails to fulfil its true promise.

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Economic progress does not occur in a social vacuum but has a longer-term role in achieving social goals and policies in a re-invigorated and vibrant economy. Economic performance is important in determining the material standards which the population is able to enjoy, but many social goals are achievable in their own terms, irrespective of economic constraints.

At the End of Eligibility: Female Sole Parents Whose Youngest Child Turns 16

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Immigrants and the Distribution of Income: National and International Comparisons

PETER SAUNDERS

SPRC Discussion Paper No. 52

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PETER SAUNDERS

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