

# Family Policies in Australia: Contest over the Social Wage

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## FAMILY POLICIES IN AUSTRALIA Contest over the Social Wage

by  
Bettina Cass



**Social Welfare Research Centre**  
THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

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## FOREWORD

This paper addresses a major theoretical debate in the sociology of the "welfare state" : to what extent do state interventions into the sphere of domestic relationships (e.g. by the implementation of "family policies") either reinforce existing class and gender based inequalities, or establish progressive changes? This is a component of a more general theoretical and empirical issue : to what extent can and do income transfers and social services (through the tax/welfare system) redistribute income to those groups most disadvantaged in the labour market, either because of their class position, their sex or their life-cycle stage?

The paper adopts a historical perspective in unravelling some of these questions, by examining the economic, political and ideological issues surrounding the implementation of family policies in two very different periods in Australia's history : the period of Post War Reconstruction 1942-48, characterised by expansionist economic policies, and the current period of economic recession 1975-81 characterised by contractionist economic policies.

The paper was prepared by Bettina Cass for presentation at the 10th World Congress of Sociology in Mexico City, Mexico, 16th - 21st August 1982, in the Program of the Research Committee on Sociology of Regional and Urban Development. The theme of the paper was designed as a contribution to the section of the Program concerned with : "The Role of the Informal Economy. Government Policies and Social Movements in Urban and Regional Change".

The ideas and material presented in the paper are central to the issues on which Bettina Cass and her colleagues have been working at the SWRC. Given the importance of the issues and their centrality to contemporary social policy, the paper is published in the Centre's Reports and Proceedings to encourage discussion and debate. It is hoped that this paper will help to stimulate theoretically informed empirical inquiry about the content, scope and form of the "social wage" in Australia and its progressively redistributive potential.

Adam Graycar  
Director  
Social Welfare Research Centre

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1. INTRODUCTION : The Ideology of State Non-Intervention into Domestic Life

State intervention into the arena of domestic life in advanced capitalist societies is considered to be non-legitimate except in the case of social policies which protect and reinforce patterns of dependencies and responsibilities held to be normal and natural within families (Land, 1979). The dominant liberal-conservative ideology of family-state relations in Australia (as in Britain) holds that the state should intervene in relations between spouses and between parents and their children only when expected patterns of support and the fulfillment of obligations have broken down (e.g. in the case of wife desertion or child neglect) or when the legitimate exercise of authority has been exceeded (e.g. in the case of domestic violence), or when adult family members have been excluded from the labour market and pass rigorous tests of eligibility to qualify for a government pension or benefit. In the latter case, cash transfers and other forms of government aid are seen as substitutes for income normally earned through gainful employment or for services normally provided by family members.

According to the dominant ideology which asserts the inviolability of the family as a private domain : when families are fulfilling their traditional obligations and responsibilities, when women provide domestic labour, when parenthood is provided according to social and legal prescription and men's work incentives have not lapsed, then the boundaries between family and state are considered to be distinct (Wilson, 1977; McIntosh, 1978; Land, 1979).

## 2. THE FAMILY, THE LABOUR MARKET AND THE STATE : Some Interconnections

Penetration of this ideology reveals that state policies (through the social welfare and income tax systems and through family law) actually regulate the social and economic relations of "normal" domestic life. The institution of marriage in its current form is seen to locate women in assymetrical relations of production, distribution and authority which disadvantage them (McIntosh, 1978) and in a labour contract by means of which unpaid labour is extracted from them (Barker, 1978). Income tax and social security policies in Britain and Australia are seen to assume and reinforce women's dependency, and provide disincentives to their paid labour market activity (Land, 1978; Edwards, 1980a; Edwards, 1980b).

Women's unpaid domestic labour advantages not only their husbands, but supports the whole structure of wages and profits in the labour market and subsidises public expenditure in the state sector. Women's work in the domestic economy provides uncosted goods and services for family use and consumption which supplements the value of wages (Cass, 1978), while women's care of children and of aged and sick relatives provides an informal and private welfare system which allows the cost of state provision of welfare services to be minimised (Waerness, 1978; Land, 1978).

Women's position in the twin institutions of marriage and motherhood renders them dependent, deprived of economic independence as unpaid domestic workers, disadvantaged in a competitive labour market by their domestic responsibilities, and therefore potential recruits into that large group of people maintained in poverty as welfare beneficiaries if they lose or reject the support of a male breadwinner (Summers, 1975; Land, 1976; Roe, 1975). Despite the presumption of women as "supported", the reality of the situation in Australia is that only one in three women is fully supported by a man (Owen & Shaw, 1979 : 38). However, the social definition of women as either totally dependent, during the years of early family formation, or partially dependent as intermittent, part-time, low-

paid wage workers with a discontinuous employment history, and the consolidation of the sex-segmented labour market in the post-war period have interacted to reinforce women's relative impoverishment (Rein, 1980; Cass, 1981a).

The presumption and reinforcement of women's dependency entails a corollary for men, the definition of men as necessarily wage-workers : conjugal relationships under the current domestic division of labour reinforce "work incentives" for men (Land, 1978). Since the time of the Poor Law Amendment Act in England in 1834, the maintenance of men's work incentives has been officially defined as a necessary adjunct to a system of "relief", so that men would be deterred from adopting the habits of the "work-shy" and abandoning wage-labour (Fraser, 1973). Under current Australian conditions, the low level of government pensions and benefits (in relation to average weekly earnings) as explicit deterrent and the presumption that men will be ultimately responsible for their family's financial support (despite the contrary provisions of the Family Law Act, 1975) have comprised the package of work-incentives which has continued to maintain the supply of male wage labour and of male job seekers.

All the previously cited accounts of the interconnections of the family, the labour market and the state conclude that the reinforcement of sex inequalities in the family disadvantage women and maintain class-based inequalities. The nub of the argument is that state policies reinforce the domestic division of labour and serve, either by design or as consequence, to maintain the unpaid labour of women as a cheap system of private welfare services to the young, the old, the ill, the disabled and to able-bodied men; and to maintain the family as a haven which revitalises and reproduces labour power.

Emphasis, however, differs. On the one hand, the welfare state is seen as a set of institutions which support and regulate capitalist economic and social relationships and which cannot be said to dominate women



directly. According to McIntosh (1978), the welfare state can be said to dominate women only in so far as social policies maintain a family-household system of male authority and women's domestic servicing : a family system which predated capitalism and became, in the capitalist period, the major institution which provides for the subsistence and care of the working class family.

On the other hand, for Wilson (1977), Summers (1975) and Land (1978), the sexual division of labour is central to the nature of the welfare state : the maintenance of women as mothers, wives and low paid workers is a key element in the maintenance of the class structure, in the containment of class unrest and the social control of women. The maintenance of women as dependent and "protected" within the family and their consequent vulnerability to poverty is seen as a direct result of policies which protect the privacy of the domestic sphere and legitimate the authority of men within it. Social policies delegate financial support of women and children to the husband/father when the man is in work and also when he is a welfare beneficiary. The welfare system assumes responsibility for the income maintenance of women and dependent children when there is no co-resident male, under an ideological umbrella which emphasises that the state is "taking over" responsibilities properly belonging to men. There is little suggestion that the provision of income maintenance for mother-headed single-parent families has been made necessary by women's reduced labour market power and their enforced dependency.

Most of the accounts previously discussed characterise the welfare state as "social control" - as reproducer of existing class and gender-based inequalities. Other accounts however (Roe, 1975 and 1976; Land, 1975; Hicks, Friedland & Johnson, 1978; McIntosh, 1981; Cass, 1981b) examine specific social policies as the outcome of contested class and interest group demands and resistances. Roe (1976) insists convincingly that social policies which confer benefits are only introduced by Australian governments when they are subjected to the organised political action of claimant groups. Hicks

Friedland and Johnson maintain that government redistribution of income to the poor in the U S A is partially determined by conflicting class forces, with corporate and labor union organisations acting as the bases for the mobilisation of class interests. McIntosh (1981) urges the English women's movement to mobilise to defend income maintenance policies which redistribute income to women.

Such conceptions of state interventions clearly do not see them as inevitably supportive of existing inequalities. One such account (Olin Wright, 1979) maintains that state interventions may have three broad general effects : some may be optimal for the maintenance of inequalities; others may be compatible with the structure of inequalities but not optimal (i.e. they may have contradictory effects); others do not support the system of existing inequalities. The gradual introduction of social welfare benefits is seen by Wright as one of those interventions which do not reproduce existing inequalities because they partially erode the "commodified" character of labour power. Cash transfers and social services allow for the supplementation or replacement of income which can otherwise only be won through the sale of labour power as an unequal transaction in the labour market. Using the terminology of Gough (1979), state expenditure through the welfare system provides a "social wage" which partially offsets the power of the labour market to totally determine the distribution of rewards to labour.

Can the two apparently contradictory approaches outlined above be reconciled? Can the progressive effects of state-funded income support for decommmodified labour (in the form of age and invalid pensions, sickness and unemployment benefits, widows' pensions and supporting parent benefit, and family allowances paid in respect of dependent children), be weighed against the impoverishment and dependency associated with the status of welfare beneficiary and with the status of persons excluded from the labour market? Feminist social policy analysis demonstrates that the "social wage" has never been adequate and has depended upon a hidden and private welfare system in which women's unpaid labour (decommmodified

labour?) has provided physical and emotional support. Townsend's (1979) analysis of poverty in the United Kingdom demonstrates the systematic creation of poverty in working class families as an outcome of two major interconnected processes : the class system, manifested in unequal distribution of income and wealth; and the social construction of family dependencies. The systematic exclusion of the aged, the disabled, adolescents and mothers from paid work through the twentieth century, coupled with the inadequacy of government pensions and benefits and of family allowances has resulted in the impoverishment of dependents, who must rely for support, either partially or totally, on a bread-winner who is himself disadvantaged by low pay.

### 3. ANALYSIS OF AUSTRALIAN FAMILY POLICIES

These contradictions can best be examined with a historical analysis. I have chosen to study the ideological, political and economic implications of social policies which have been explicitly designated as family-directed policies, in two quite different periods of Australian history :

- (1) In the period of Post-War Reconstruction, 1942-1948, when expansionist Keynesian economic policy was dominant, the elements of the Australian welfare system were being consolidated as an explicit counterpart to "full employment" policies; public expenditure was seen as supplying a supportive infrastructure for high levels of investment in the private sector, for an increasing rate of economic growth and for the maintenance of high levels of aggregate demand.
- (2) In the latter half of the 1970s and early 1980s : a period characterised by economic recession, contractionist economic policies and neo-conservative political policies which attempt to de-legitimise the use of public expenditure for social purposes, advocate cuts in the "social wage"

and the redirection of the residuum to the "genuinely needy". The dominant "crowding out" thesis characterises increasing levels of public expenditure as inflationary, depleting the private sector of investment funds, while state regulations are alleged to have artificially reduced business profitability and business activity by controlling interest rates and by facilitating wage increases.

"Family policies", explicitly debated in such terms, are chosen for the analysis because they appear to be an aberration, a rupture with taken-for-granted assumptions about the distinctiveness of the boundaries between the family and the state. When the family-basis and family orientation of social welfare policies are given a particular salience in official politico/administrative discourse, this suggests that a qualitative shift in economic conditions, class relations and gender relations has taken place bringing the question of domestic life and its regulation onto the political agenda.

The concept of "family policy" was placed centrally in the political arena in most advanced industrial capitalist and state socialist societies as a subject for debate, interest group advocacy and government deliberation during the 1970s, in Australia in the period since 1977. The genesis of the Australian event demonstrates the politico/administrative construction of a public issue. A meeting of the Council of Social Welfare Ministers convened to discuss the (then) draft Report of the Family Services Committee in August 1977, resolved that :

"At least every three years, there should be convened a public conference on 'Family and Community Service Policy' to ensure widespread consideration of position papers developed by governments and to propose directions for future development." (Council of Social Welfare Ministers of Australia, New Zealand and Papua-New Guinea, 1980).

At the ensuing Towards a National Family Policy Conference organised in May 1980 by various administrators of State and Commonwealth

departments of welfare and community services, Sheila Kamerman and Alfred Kahn were invited to set out the elements which have constituted, or which might be brought together to constitute a coherent family policy. The major elements then outlined were :

- (i) Cash transfers and/or tax concessions to benefit families with dependent children, designed as a lateral redistribution transfer through the family life-cycle. If tied to a means test, or if these benefits are taxed, they are designed to redistribute to low-income families.
- (ii) social services for children whose parents are employed (e.g. substitute child care).
- (iii) regulation of the conditions of paid labour which recognise the parental and domestic obligations of employees of either gender (Kamerman, 1980; Kahn, 1980).

We could be less sanguine however and list the less progressive forms of family policy which are either in existence or the subject of current advocacy.

- (i) Tax and welfare treatments and legal regulations which are designed to favour formal marriage and nuptial children to the disadvantage of cohabitees and ex-nuptial children. e.g. The law of all Australian states provides no explicit recognition of the property rights of de facto spouses at the termination of a relationship, unlike the Family Law Act which regulates the property rights of formally married spouses. Under the terms of the Family Law Act, 1975 a spouse's household labour and childcare are considered as constituting a contribution to the accumulation of assets, but there is no such provision for defacto spouses. Defacto spouses lose entitlement to a government benefit on the grounds of cohabitation, but

have no legal right to claim maintenance from their co-habiting partner, and defacto spouses cannot claim a tax rebate in respect of their dependent partner, as dejure spouses can.

- (ii) Tax and welfare incentives to encourage women to remain outside the market-sector; to remove themselves from wage-labour so as to be able to devote themselves to non-wage work in the domestic sector, caring for children, dependent elderly relatives and able-bodied men. Advocacy for a "mother's wage" or a "homemaker's allowance" or for increased tax rebates for tax-payers with a dependent spouse are explicitly couched in such terms.

A disconnected list such as the one above does little more than highlight the contradictory nature of various family policies : on the one hand, progressive redistributive policies designed to use public expenditure to offset some of the direct and indirect costs of child care, on the other hand, conservative policies designed as social control - to bastion a particular form of co-resident domestic group : that based on a dejure marriage with a dependent wife.

It is in fact the progressive, rather than the socially-controlling aspects of family policies which are specifically cited when family policies are being publicly debated. In such discourse, an image of a benign, facilitative welfare state is invoked whose resources will be harnessed to provide assistance and support for the child-bearing and rearing stage of the life-cycle. The image of the coercive state is usually specifically repudiated.

What remains a puzzle is why certain welfare policies, which could be defined as cash transfers in respect of dependent children, or services for children or for individuals caring for children, are brought together under the generic term of "family policy".

Such programs are not new in the history of Australian social policy

or in the policies of other similar societies. Kamerman and Kahn's (1978) collection of reports from 19 Northern, Western and Eastern European countries and the U.S.A. demonstrate the existence of a concern with family policy, under the name of "population policy" since the early decades of the twentieth century.

(i) Family Policies : 1900-1941

In Australia from the turn of the century, it has been considered legitimate for successive governments to take a vital interest in the subject of population and to deliberate on policies to promote population growth either through natural increase or migration. Sustained population growth has been seen by dominant political, religious and business elites (until the latter part of the 1960s) as the very basis of national security (to defend the "Empty Spaces" against the "Threat from the North"), as the means to promote racial purity (to increase the Anglo-Irish stock in the Pacific region, threatened by, but inviolate against Asian and other racial incursions through the judicious control of immigration), as the necessary adjunct to economic growth (to ensure an expanding workforce with adequate numbers of consumption units to stimulate demand) and as a force for moral good in society (to promote the stabilising twin institutions of marriage and parenthood) (Cass, forthcoming).

Official interest in population policies was prompted by a deep obsession with the economic, moral and racial consequences of the decline in the birth rate, which became the subject of government documentation and Inquiry after the Depression of the 1890s (Coghlan, 1903; New South Wales Legislative Assembly, 1904). The declining production of children threatened basic economic interests (the maintenance of adequate labour power and consumption units). But fears were expressed in terms of a moral world-view : declining fertility was deemed to signify women's dereliction of their duty as mothers, to cause the erosion of the domestic division of labour, and the undermining of men's incentive to labour.

Pronatalist population policies took the form of the legal suppression of the advertisement and restriction on the sale of contraceptives and the illegality of abortion (Finlay and Sihombing, 1978). In the long history of advocacy for family endowment, pronatalist rhetoric flavoured the public statements of liberal elites who saw the provision of a "social wage" to families (through the payment of cash allowances to the mothers of dependent children) as predominantly a means to legitimate wage restraint. The first enactment of a Family Endowment Bill (in the New South Wales legislature in 1927 by a Labor government) was accompanied by legislation which effectively controlled increases in the individual market wage. This was a strategy which was to be repeated by a Conservative government in the Federal sphere in 1941 as a means to control the costs of labour in the war economy (Cass, 1981b).

In opposition to these dominant economic interests, the labour movement (particularly women's groups within the Labor Party) and independent feminist groups saw family policies (in the form of "family endowment" and state funded health and welfare services for mothers and children) as a universal right, a necessary and redistributive use of public expenditure to augment the "family wage" (the "living wage" for adult male labour) to alleviate poverty in the families of basic wage-earners. Feminists advocated "direct provision" to mothers to recognise the value of their domestic labour and of their reproductive work; to alleviate the financial dependency which their labour imposed; and to undermine arguments against equal pay for women, arguments which justified higher male wage rates on the grounds of men's legal and moral obligation to support their dependents (Cass, forthcoming).

The dominant state response to the problem of the birth-rate in the period to 1940 was not the implementation of a social wage which subsidised, to any significant extent, the costs to individual families of child rearing, but the implementation of assisted immigration schemes. The use of public expenditure to subsidise the immigration of fully-grown labour and fully-grown consuming units



was considered to be not only more efficient and cost-effective, but ideologically preferable. It was claimed that state intervention into the very heart of the private domain, in the form of adequate "direct provision" for the mothers of dependent children, would undermine the father's incentive to labour and undermine the identity of interest between husband and wife (Royal Commission on Child Endowment and Family Allowances, 1929). The low rate of child endowment payments which were implemented (in New South Wales in 1927 and federally in respect of all States in 1941), and the failure to implement a statutory provision for their indexation or for a recurrent review of their real value in relation to living costs, both suggest that the interests of wage control were dominant in this meagre provision of a "social wage". However, as labour activists noted during the 1930s Depression, the regular payment of child endowment to the mothers of dependent children in New South Wales meant some sustenance to the families of the unemployed, and the labour movement defended the provision on those grounds (United Front Committee of the Unemployed, 1931; Heagney, 1935). It was recognised that regular payments as part of a "social wage" (while not subjected to routinised arbitration like the individual market wage in wage fixation tribunals) at least did not depend on having a job. In addition, these payments to mothers, even in periods of economic boom, often represent their only form of direct income, or income not reliant on intra-family transfers from the bread-winner to his dependents (Edwards, 1981).

It is clear that the state intervention into domestic relationships which took the form of an overt and direct family policy (a family endowment scheme) was predominantly the outcome of a conservative employer/state alliance, which utilised pronatalism and, in 1941, the emergency conditions of the "war effort", to legitimate a departure from the traditional ideology of family/state relations. However, in providing a component of a "social wage", a regular and universal state organised redistribution of income through the tax-welfare system to the mothers of dependent children, this family policy established a cash transfer which was not tied in any way to

the labour market situation of the recipient or of the children's father. The principle expressed in this policy represents a dissonance with the principle embedded in capitalist labour relations (that wages can be earned only through the sale of labour power) and represents a dissonance with the principle of patriarchal domestic relations (that male bread-winners must be solely responsible for their individual wives and children). This family policy is therefore not optimal for the maintenance of class and gender based inequalities, but establishes contradictions by demonstrating the potentialities of a redistributive "social wage".

(ii) Family Policies in the Period of Post-War Reconstruction, 1942-1948

The activities of the federal Labor government in the 1942-1948 period can be summarised as an exercise in the management of aggregate demand, the management of the labour market, the control of inflation by high levels of taxation (particularly during the War) and the bringing of low income earners inside the tax net, legitimated by the political consensus engendered by mobilisation for the war effort and by the promise of a "new order" of full employment and social security whose legislative and administrative framework was being laid down before the war was over (Kewley, 1972; Roe, 1976; Watts, 1980). In this period of broadly Keynesian economic policies and social democratic politics, the "family" was constituted as the legitimate recipient of the rewards of the post-war reconstruction state. This was so because in conjunction with the use of government stimulation of the economy to maintain full employment, the introduction of a range of income maintenance measures (unemployment and sickness benefit, widows' pensions, allowances for the wives and children of age and invalid pensioners, the universalisation of the maternity allowance) there was strong official emphasis placed on solving "the problem of the falling birth rate".

The marked decline in the birth rate during the Depression of the 1930s, which was beginning to show improvement only at the onset of the War, was defined, by an official inquiry established in 1942 by the

National Health and Medical Research Council, as a "social problem" :

"such as to cause even now the gravest anxiety about the future of the Australian people" (National Health and Medical Research Council, 1944 : 9)

As a response to this 'problem', official documents such as that of the National Health and Medical Research Council's Report, and academic writings such as those of Borrie (1944, 1947, 1948) recommended a package of social services and cash transfers to foster a renaissance of intra-marital fertility. Studies of the economics of family formation and of the inadequacy of the "basic wage" to supply the needs of a larger than average family, led to the recommendation of a range of subsidised services, a health policy and a housing policy which would give preference to larger families. Within the parameters of Keynesian thought, it was not too difficult to conceive of the state supplying a supportive infrastructure for expanded fertility, as an essential element in a full employment policy which required high levels of aggregate demand (which would be enhanced by active family formation).

In this period, when the ideology of the Australian welfare state was being consolidated, the constitution of the "family" as the most appropriate target for welfare policies legitimated a particular system of income redistribution : horizontal redistribution within classes to benefit the period of child-rearing. State intervention, as the provider of a "social wage" (child endowment) and "collective consumption" (subsidised housing and health care) was seen as mandatory to compensate for the inadequacies of the market wage, not to compensate for or alter the inequalities generated by the market. And women's unpaid domestic labour was assumed as the very basis of full-employment, population and welfare policies.

It can be argued that the embeddedness of family policies of this nature in Keynesian economics and social democratic politics, in defining the family as the appropriate target for redistributive policies, obscured class-based inequalities between families and

gender-based inequalities. The ideology embedded in the Australian welfare state (parsimonious redistribution to the periods of the life-cycle characterised by exclusion from paid labour) did not explicitly establish either class or gender as the appropriate bases for the formulation of redistributive policies. On the other hand, under the expansionist economic policies of the post-war reconstruction state, the family was constituted as the recipient of a range of collective provision : it was considered legitimate that public expenditure be directed towards the subsidisation of the market wage so that families could carry out their responsibilities of procreation and childcare.

The analysis must not be pushed too far. The sale of labour power in the market by men, and increasingly also by married women, continued through the period of the post-war boom to provide by far the greatest part of individual family income. In 1950, when the post-war reconstruction state had passed its zenith, child endowment payments for 2 children reached their peak value at 11 per cent of the basic wage and 7 per cent of average weekly earnings, and began their steady decline as buoyant economic conditions allowed the value of collective provision to fade into political obscurity. By 1971, child endowment transfers for two children represented 3 per cent of the basic wage and 2 per cent of average weekly earnings (National Population Inquiry, 1978 :165). This was precisely the situation which Chifley, as Minister for Post-War Reconstruction had foreshadowed in his booklet Social Security and Reconstruction in 1944 :

"Full employment and a rising national income will attract more Australian babies and overseas migrants than the most elaborate social security services."  
(Jones, 1980 : 36)

#### 4. FAMILY POLICIES 1970-1981

From 1974, deterioration in labour market conditions and the increase in the rate of unemployment and under-employment have not enabled the economics of the market to sustain the two to three child family of the long post-war boom, when the popularity of marriage and active family formation allowed the "problem of the birth rate" to fade from the political arena. The economic downturn of the mid 1970s dashed the high expectations and personal certainties which accompanied economic buoyancy : the demographic response has been caution before entering a registered marriage, an increase in non-marital cohabitation, greater caution before having a first child, greater caution in the spacing of children and a contraction in average family size (National Population Inquiry, 1978; Cass and Radi, 1981: New South Wales Law Reform Commission, 1981).

An official inquiry into the present and future composition of the Australian population was established in the early 1970s to investigate the nature of contemporary demographic change and to make recommendations in relation to immigration policy and social policies to provide support for natural increase (National Population Inquiry, 1975 and 1978). The Reports of this Inquiry, in particular the Supplementary Report (1978) demonstrate significant continuities in population thought. Like the National Health and Medical Research Council's Report 34 years earlier, the Supplementary Report states that the economics of the market have not provided sufficient incentive for high levels of fertility, and as a result, state intervention is required to provide a publicly funded support system (in cash transfers and social services) to maintain and assist family formation. It is seen as a matter of "social equity" that transfers in cash and in kind be made to families with dependent children. It is recommended that a generous cash transfer be made for the first child to compensate for the income loss which usually occurs when the first child is added to the household (an income loss caused by the mother leaving the workforce). State intervention is thus seen (once again) as providing a supportive infrastructure to compensate

for the inadequacies of men's market wages and as a substitute for the market activities of women, i.e., as a supportive infrastructure for the sexual division of labour in the family. The notion of "social equity" used in this Report refers to horizontal redistribution through the life-cycle, from income-earners and taxpayers without children to people with children. Redistribution between classes and to women rendered dependent by childcare are not addressed explicitly as the possible objectives of a population (i.e. family) policy.

It would be misleading, however, to give the impression that only pronatalist concerns and "demographic panic" have informed family policies. In the 1930s, and again in the late 1960s, in Australia as in similar advanced capitalist countries, the "rediscovery" of poverty, particularly of children's poverty, engendered social democratic advocacy for the increased use of cash transfers and/or tax rebates to redistribute income to the child-bearing stage of the life-cycle, or, by the application of a means-test, to redistribute income to poor families. The First Main Report of the Poverty Commission, (1975) drew attention to the poverty of various family categories and estimated that 461,000 dependent children were living in poverty. To alleviate child poverty immediately, as an interim measure before the introduction of a guaranteed minimum income scheme, the Commission advocated an increase in cash transfers paid to the mothers of dependent children and the abolition of regressive taxation allowances. This social welfare advocacy for the universal extension of cash transfers was seen as promoting horizontal equity, and maintaining or establishing "work incentives", since the transfer is payable regardless of whether the breadwinner/s are in or out of paid work. In this way, a differential is maintained between the incomes of the working poor with children and the incomes of welfare beneficiaries with children.

The First Main Report (1975) of the Poverty Commission and the National Population Inquiry Report (1978) both advocated the extension of the "social wage" to benefit families containing children. In

their analyses and their recommendations, these Reports are embedded in the political/economic thought and practice of the 1972-1975 period of Australian politics when the Federal Labor government adopted a broadly neo-Keynesian, expansionist approach to the inter-relations of the public and the private sectors. The content, scope and value of the "social wage" was increased in this period by vigorous expansion of public expenditure in the areas of state education, universal health insurance, direct Commonwealth government involvement in childcare services, and in housing and regional development (Scotton, 1978).

Since that period, there has been a marked change in official family policy discourse, which has coincided not only with various demographic changes, but also with a marked reduction in public expenditure for social purposes. From 1977, family policies became prominent in welfare discourse after certain issues had been officially defined as "social problems", and after certain groups had mobilised to demand equality and social justice for women.

The phenomena constructed as "social problems" were :

- (1) Decrease in marriage rates; increase in separation and divorce; increase in the incidence of non-registered, informal cohabitation; increase in single-parent households.

- (2) Declining fertility rates.

Official recognition of these phenomena as "problems" engendered a conservative political response : advocacy to support families based on a de jure marriage with a dependent wife and dependent children.

- (3) During the early 1970s, increasing labour force participation rates of married women and of mothers, and the mobilisation of the women's movement forced onto the political agenda demands for substitute childcare services, and for the introduction of anti-discrimination legislation which would rectify some of

the employment disadvantages which women confront.

The countervailing conservative response has been to emphasise "family policies" which counter married women's incursions into the paid workforce. In many ways, the emphasis on "family policies" in the latter half of the 1970s can be understood as an attempt to "domesticate" the demands made by organised women's groups in the late 1960s and early 1970s : demands for equality in the labour-market and the work-place; for the right to control fertility and to share domestic responsibility and domestic labour with men.

The political/economic conditions which characterise the latter half of the 1970s when "family policies" are the subject of official debate in advanced capitalist societies are : decline in the rate of economic growth; high levels of inflation; a restructuring of the labour process in which substitution of capital for labour has resulted in the exclusion of less skilled workers from the labour market with resulting high levels of unemployment particularly for the young, for older workers and for unskilled women; containment of public expenditure in the areas of health, education and welfare and the redirection of state financial support towards large-scale private enterprise (in Australia towards the resources-extractive industries) with an accompanying rhetoric in support of the "small state" in which public expenditure will no longer be allowed to "crowd out" the private sector.

There is a qualitative difference in the invocation of family policies as an adjunct to contractionist economic policies and neo-conservative political policies, when compared with the use of family-directed policies to legitimate the scope and direction of social service provision in expansionist Keynesian thought. In the earlier period as previously identified, the family is constituted as the recipient of a range of collective provisions, and in the current period, the family is constituted as the provider of a range of services. Under the expansionist policies of the immediate post-war period, and the early 1970s, the family was seen to require the subsidisation of a



"social wage" in order to carry out its primary role of procreation and child care, in the current period of contraction in government expenditure for social purposes, the provision of welfare is privatised and seen as the responsibility of individual family units. The rhetoric of family policy is used under these conditions to legitimate a significant retreat from a welfare state ideology of collective provision towards a "small" state ideology of privatised provision.

The situation has been identified by feminist writers Coussins and Coote (1981) in their analysis of the ideological impact of English family policies as expressed in the rhetoric and practices of both political parties. They demonstrate that the assumptions underlying policies governing family life and underlying political descriptions about the role of the family in "troubled times" are : that the sexual division of labour in the family is natural and must be supported; that present problems which beset families must be solved individually, rather than collectively. The mounting rhetoric in support of privatisation at the expense of collective provision is uncovered as a legitimisation for an economic strategy characterised by cuts in the "social wage" : cuts in expenditure on the personal social services, in education grants, funding for child care, erosion of the value of the Child Benefit.

A similar point is raised (with less critique) by Moroney (1976) who calls attention to the reactivation of the residualist notion of welfare in a period of cost-containment in welfare expenditure. The structure of the welfare state has always depended on a set of implicit and explicit assumptions concerning the responsibilities which families are expected to assume for their dependent members : those who are young, old, sick, unemployed or disabled. In a period of expansion in public expenditure, welfare rhetoric emphasised the supportive nature of social services designed to compensate or substitute for families unable to care for their dependents. In a period of contraction of the welfare state, the emphasis is on state responsibility to assist and strengthen the family so that it can, once again, take up its legitimate responsibilities.

Statements to this effect are made most eloquently by commentators who appear unaware of the ideological significance of the relationships they have identified. Irving Tallman, one of the contributors to the Journal of Marriage and the Family (1979) debate on the merits of a "Family Policy" for the U.S.A. makes the connection between political conditions and the family policy debate quite clear :

What is important from a policy perspective is that of all these institutions (government, education and economic institutions were previously mentioned) the family frequently remains the most enduring and reliable support system available to individuals. The renewed emphasis on the family in society at this particular time in our history, reflects this view of the family as the support system of a last resort.

If government is to withdraw its support from any of the array of programs that have been developed to assist individuals, the question looms as to who will take responsibility for the persons previously served by such programs. The reasonable answer, of course, is the family. If the family is to take over services previously provided by the government then strong, well-functioning family units are needed. (p.469-470)  
(emphasis not in the original)

At the most recent Conference on Family Policy in Australia organised by the Australian Family Association (held in November, 1981), a number of politicians, government administrators, academics and Christian educationists were brought together "to create public awareness of the fundamental importance of the family unit" and to "analyse laws and policies for their effect on the Family and to formulate and promote corrective policies as necessary" (The Australian Family Association, 1981 : (v) ).

The crux of the arguments presented at this conference in relation

to family responsibilities and government responsibilities is exemplified in the following passage, delivered in the address of the keynote speaker :

"Increasingly it is argued that the care of small children, the chronically ill, and the aged are public responsibilities to be carried on in publicly funded institutions outside the home - child care centres, hospitals, twilight homes - even in those circumstances where (a) there is nothing in the condition of the person in need of supportive care that makes it impossible for such care to be given in the home and (b) there is nothing in the circumstances of the other members of the family to prevent them combining to provide such care. In other words, it is thought by many that the mere fact that it is inconvenient for them to provide such care themselves (e.g. because it interferes with the career of one of the members of a two career family) generates a public obligation to provide or at least contribute substantially to the costs of such care. It is imperative that such a view should be resisted. Instead of removing such dependents from family care and attention, we should be making it easier for them to receive it, by removing the disincentives to provide home care for the very young, the very sick, and the very old. It is not just that it cheaper for such support to be given, wherever practicable, in the home (at lower capital costs) from relatives (lower labour costs); far more important is that the underlying principle governing care and attention is mutual affection, and not that of paid employment. It should be part of a national family policy to identify, and where practicable, remove those factors which genuinely prevent the provision of care and attention for the needy in the home by other members of the family." (Chipman, 1981 : 10)

We need to break through the opacity of the concept of the "family" as used by Moroney, Tallman and Chipman to ask : who is doing the caring and the supporting and taking up their legitimate responsibilities? There is an invisible "welfare system" being activated : the unpaid domestic labour of women, who are called upon to provide not only the material and physical care but also the emotional support of dependent family members (cf Waerness, 1978). But this is not all - what is also being reinforced is "work incentives" for men, since the corollary of women's, children's and older relatives' dependency is the maintenance of men as necessarily wage-workers.

#### 5. UNEMPLOYMENT AND THE FAMILY : 1974-1980

It is critical for the purposes of this paper to examine the incidence and impact of unemployment on various population groups. Since 1974 there has been a marked deterioration in investment, activity and employment in the private sector of the Australian economy, particularly in manufacturing and construction, with controls imposed on employment in the public sector. As a result, by 1980, recorded unemployment had reached 6 per cent of the labour force, while "hidden" (unrecorded) unemployment had reached a further 6 per cent, reflecting a darkening of perceptions about employment prospects and a rising duration of recorded unemployment, resulting in whole categories of potential workers dropping out of active job searching (Sheehan, 1981). The categories of labour and potential labour most affected by the combination of recorded and unrecorded unemployment are the young (aged 15 - 24), people over 45; married women; recently arrived migrants. In each group, labour market disadvantage is associated not only with age or sex or lack of English, but more importantly with lack of formal job qualifications (Cass, 1981c).

From 1974 to 1980, the categories of labour whose rates of unemployment rose significantly or whose labour force participation rates fell (indicating an increase in hidden unemployment) were men and women heads of single parent families with dependent children;

married men without dependent children (of whom 76% are over the age of 44 and 14% are under 30); people living with their parents (of whom 89% are between 15 and 29 years); other relatives in the family (parents or siblings of the household head); and people who do not live in a family/household (of whom, in 1980, 80% lived alone) (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1981). Married men and women with dependent children experienced a smaller increase in unemployment. Married women's labour force participation rates rose slightly (with the major increase in women's employment being in part-time work) (Cass, 1981c.)

Certain groups experienced an increase in their share of total unemployment : people living with their parents and those who are not family members (in each case predominantly young people); while married men and women with dependent children's share of total unemployment decreased. The worsening labour market situation of older men (those without dependent children) is reflected in the marked decrease in their employment to population ratio and their labour force participation rate, indicating forced early "retirement" and an increasing usage of government benefit (age, invalid and service pensions) induced by the recession (Stricker and Sheehan, 1981). While the figures for recorded unemployment suggest that married women's labour market situation did not deteriorate markedly in this period, it has been shown that their total unemployment rate (recorded plus "hidden" unemployment) is more than double their recorded rate, that rates of unemployment increase with age and fall particularly heavily on women without formal job skills (Stricker and Sheehan, 1981).

It would appear from these figures and from other evidence that in the period of economic downturn from 1974 to 1980, it is married men with dependent children (in the period of family formation) whose attachment to the labour market has been least affected. Their labour power has retained its commodified character, while married women's movement into full-time jobs (particularly after the period of family formation) has ceased its upward trend; while young people's paid labour has declined dramatically, while older men are experiencing increased exclusion from paid work (earlier "retirement", earlier recourse to government benefit). Perhaps so long as "prime-age males can still earn income, and their wives can still perform

TABLE 1

EMPLOYMENT TO POPULATION RATIO; SHARES OF LABOUR FORCE;  
SHARES OF UNEMPLOYMENT BY FAMILY STATUS : 1974-1980

	Employment to population ratio %		Labour force participation rate %		Unemployment Rate %		Percent of total labour force (male & female) %		Percent of total unemployed (male & female) %	
	1974	1980	1974	1980	1974	1980	1974	1980	1974	1980
<b>MEN</b>										
Married with dependent children	96.5	93.5	97.9	95.9	1.4	2.4	30.4	27.5	15.9	12.2
Married without dependent children	73.3	63.3	74.2	64.9	1.2	2.5	16.6	14.8	7.5	6.6
Total married	86.8	80.1	88.0	82.1	1.3	2.4	47.0	42.3	23.4	18.8
Not married with dependent children	90.7	74.4	94.7	78.6	4.3	5.3	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.5
Not married without dependent children	66.7	61.9	68.3	65.4	2.3	5.4	0.7	0.5	0.5	0.5
Child of family head*	88.2	83.3	92.7	92.7	4.8	10.1	9.9	10.7	17.8	19.8
Other relative in family	54.2	56.6	57.8	63.1	6.1	10.2	0.8	0.9	1.7	1.8
Not member of a family	70.8	69.1	73.9	75.3	4.2	8.2	6.8	8.2	10.7	12.2
<b>WOMEN</b>										
Married with and without dependent children**	39.1	40.9	40.3	42.8	3.0	4.4	21.6	21.6	23.6	17.4
Not married with dependent children	43.4	37.8	45.2	42.8	4.1	11.5	1.2	1.5	1.8	3.1
Not married without dependent children	30.3	25.4	30.8	27.0	1.7	5.8	0.7	0.7	0.4	0.7
Child of family head*	83.8	77.6	88.6	89.2	5.4	13.0	5.9	6.4	11.9	15.1
Other relative in family	19.5	23.1	20.5	27.4	4.9	15.6	0.5	0.6	0.9	1.6
Not member of a family	40.4	42.9	42.1	46.5	4.0	7.7	4.4	5.9	6.5	8.4

Sources : ABS, Family Status and Employment Status of the Population,  
November 1974 and November 1975. Cat.No. 6.55 (p.3)

ABS, Labour Force Status and Other Characteristics of Families,  
July 1980. Cat.No. 6224.0 (p.8)

\* This category includes all children 15 years of age and over who are not full-time students.

\*\* In 1974, married women with and without dependent children were not disaggregated.

unpaid domestic labour, childcare and care of the aged and infirm (as well as part-time paid work), then the higher levels of unemployment of the young and of older workers can be absorbed and cushioned within the system of family obligations and dependencies. Under such conditions, family policies which work at the ideological level to reinforce men's 'work incentives' and women's domestic servicing acquire a special importance.

The experience of unemployment however is not distributed equally or randomly through families in the class structure : unemployment is concentrated in working class families whose members occupied or might have entered jobs in the secondary sectors of the labour market, jobs characterised by low pay, insecurity, few fringe benefits, little control of the labour process (Cass, 1981c; Jamrozik, 1981). Analysis of Australian Bureau of Statistics data on the labour force status of families in 1979 and 1980 (Tables 2 and 3) shows that labour market disadvantages are accumulated in the same families.

In 1979, wives of unemployed men were more than four times as likely to be unemployed and less than half as likely to be employed compared with the wives of employed men. In 1980 this situation had become more pronounced : wives of unemployed men were more than six times as likely to be unemployed and nearly a third as likely to be employed compared with the wives of employed men. Similarly, young people in families where either parent was unemployed were twice as likely to be themselves unemployed when compared with the children of employed parents.

Such data must be interpreted carefully. They point to the sharing of labour market disadvantages in families, the result of the reproduction of class inequalities, and the result of housing, urban planning and transport policies which have located working class families long and expensive distances away from the current major centres of employment in the tertiary industries in the public and private sectors. In addition, they point to the erosion of job opportunities in the traditional manufacturing sectors. Data on

TABLE 2

Unemployment in Married Couple Families —

	Wife employed	Wife unemployed	Wife not in labour force	Total
	— per cent —			
<hr/>				
<u>July 1979</u>				
Husband employed N= 2,672,100	47	2	51	100
Husband unemployed N= 63,200	20	9	71	100
 <u>July 1980</u>				
Husband employed N= 2,683,200	49	2	49	100
Husband unemployed N= 67,300	18	13	70	101

Source : ABS, Labour Force Status and other characteristics of Families, July 1979, July 1980.



TABLE 3

Non-dependent children<sup>(1)</sup> living in families: employment status by  
employment status of household heads: July 1980

N = '000

2 PARENT FAMILIES		EMPLOYED	UNEMPLOYED	NOT IN LABOURFORCE	TOTAL
Husband	N	668.5	69.3	46.3	784.0
Employed	%	85.3	8.8	5.9	100
Husband	N	14.6	4.7	1.7	21.0
Unemployed	%	69.5	22.4	8.1	100
Husband	N	101.4	14.3	19.6	135.2
not in Labourforce	%	75	10.6	14.5	100.1
Wife	N	348.0	35.6	22.8	406.4
Employed	%	85.6	8.8	5.6	100
Wife	N	8.9	2.0	0.3	11.2
Unemployed	%	79.5	17.9	2.7	100.1
Wife	N	427.5	50.7	44.4	522.6
not in Labourforce	%	81.8	9.7	8.5	100
Total in 2 Parent Families	N	784.4	88.3	67.5	940.2
	%	83.4	9.4	7.2	100

TABLE 3 (Continued)

1 PARENT FAMILIES		EMPLOYED	UNEMPLOYED	NOT IN LABOURFORCE	TOTAL
Male	N	33.7	6.3	6.9	47.0
Headed	%	71.7	13.4	14.7	99.8
Female Headed	N	51.6	8.0	3.0	62.6
Employed	%	82.4	12.8	4.8	100
Female Headed	N	108.2	18.3	27.1	153.6
not in Labourforce	%	70.4	11.9	17.6	99.9
Total in	N	195.8	33.3	36.9	266.0
1 Parent Families	%	73.6	12.5	13.9	100.0
Total in	N	980.2	121.6	104.4	1,206.2
All Families	%	81.3	10.1	8.7	100.1

SOURCE: Unpublished data supplied by Australian Bureau of Statistics

(1) "Non-dependent children" are defined as sons and daughters, 15 years and over, who are not full-time students.

the spatial distribution of unemployment in the outer metropolitan suburbs of western and south western Sydney and in Gosford-Wyong, Newcastle and Wollongong demonstrate the significance of the location of the household in exacerbating class-based labour market disadvantages (Stilwell, 1980). Studies of labour markets show that they may be conceptualised as local networks in which jobs are sought and found often through informal contacts of family, relatives, friends, neighbours providing knowledge of and introduction to job opportunities (Vipond, 1980). When family members are not firmly embedded in employment, the opportunities for other family members appear to diminish. Explanations of the reduced likelihood of employment for the wives of unemployed men must also take into account government social security policies which heavily penalise the payment of benefit to an unemployed person whose spouse has gainful employment.

Consideration of the concentration of labour market disadvantages in families must lead to the conclusion that the intensification and prolongation of the experience of joblessness in Australian society since 1974 is a particularly intense example of the concentration and accumulation of class-based disadvantages : there appears to be a shared burden of unemployment borne by the same working class families.

#### 6. STATE RESPONSES : 1976-1981

We can identify three major areas of government policy in the period since 1976 which may be categorised as either an "explicit" family policy or an "implicit" family policy (i.e. social and economic policies of a general nature which have a significant impact on domestic life). The first area concerns the relationship between the treatment of families in the tax transfer and the taxation systems. The second area concerns the treatment of unemployment beneficiaries in the income maintenance system. The third area concerns reduction in government expenditure for social purposes. The last two may be designated as "implicit" family policies because these welfare policies are based on assumptions about traditional patterns of

obligation and dependency in families.

(i) Family Allowances in respect of dependent children v Tax Rebates in respect of dependent wives

The most explicit family policy in Australia since 1976 has been the system of cash transfers to women caring for dependent children (Family Allowances - an extension of the Child Endowment scheme introduced in 1941) and the system of tax rebates for taxpayers (almost entirely husbands) with a dependent spouse. From 1976 to 1981 the real value of Family Allowances fell by 57 per cent. Although the value of the transfer was raised in the Budget of 1981/82 for third and subsequent children, this increase benefits only 27 per cent of families. In the same period, the real value of the dependent spouse rebate was raised sufficiently each year to keep pace with average earnings. As a result of the combination of these two policies, financial assistance for a family with two dependent children on average weekly earnings is at its lowest for 25 years, while assistance relative to earnings, for a tax-payer with a dependent spouse has never been higher (Podger et al, 1981). This family policy preference represents a significant retreat from a policy of redistribution to women caring for dependent children in favour of fiscal support for men with a dependent wife who in 30 per cent of instances does not have dependent children (Cass, Keens and Moller, 1981). Such priorities signify support for the traditional dependency of women and for dejure husbands who maintain their own work incentives.

(ii) The treatment of unemployment beneficiaries in the income maintenance system

The major issues here are : firstly, that entitlement to unemployment benefit is income-tested on the joint income of husband and wife, thereby disentiitling an unemployed person from benefit if their combined income rises above a certain limit and reducing benefit by 50 per cent when income is between \$6 and \$50, and by 100 per cent above that point. This policy (which is analogous with the treatment of all cohabiting heterosexual couples who are eligible for a

government pension or benefit) is based on the presumption that only one adult income in a family requires replacement through the welfare system, ignoring the significance of the second income in keeping low-income families from poverty. Secondly, Government benefits to unemployed adolescents, aged 16 - 17 years and to single adults 18 years and over without dependents are not indexed, and are raised at irregular intervals subject only to government discretion. The maintenance of these beneficiaries on incomes well below the "poverty line" is based on the assumption of intra-family income transfers. It is held that families have a legitimate responsibility to care for their dependents, which entails augmentation of their inadequate benefits. Such assumptions take no account of the class and family concentration of unemployment, and result in significant impoverishment for families experiencing the average duration of unemployment (Cass, 1981 a & c).

(iii) The Social Wage : 1976-1981

In the period from 1975/76 to 1981/82 can be identified a series of expenditure allocations and political economic assumptions at federal government level which reflect a dominantly contractionist economic position. Accompanying cuts in government expenditure in grants for public authority housing, health insurance, public education, urban and regional development, children's services, and the non-indexation of family allowances (Scotton, 1980) there has been a rhetoric of the "small state". Growth in the public sector is seen as "crowding out" the private sector, while cuts in government expenditure are held to be anti-inflationary, to increase rates of growth in the private sector, and to re-establish the conditions for the alleviation of unemployment.

However calls for the containment of expenditure in the public sector in Australia and in other advanced industrial market economies (New Zealand, United States, United Kingdom) have not been aimed at dismantling the publicly provided infrastructure of the private sector, or the fiscal benefits which accrue to the private sector, or at dis-

mantling the institutions of social control. Rather, they have been aimed at selective reduction of costs in the areas of public expenditure for social purposes. Ian Gough (1979) sees this as a restructuring rather than a dismantling of the welfare state, in which, within total expenditure, a higher priority is given to expenditure designed to maintain or improve industrial capacity and the conditions for capital accumulation.

Cuts in public expenditure for social purposes and the maintenance of unemployment beneficiaries below the poverty line with an accompanying emphasis on the private sector for the provision of services (Dixon and Foster, 1980), represent a significant retreat from the collective funding of social services which benefitted lower income groups. We can identify the dismantling of the universal health insurance scheme, the redirection of education funding to the private schooling system, the cutting back of allocations for public authority housing and the erosion of the Children's Services program as a redistribution of income, services and resources away from working class families. The official emphasis on a "National Family Policy" which will provide moral incentives to families to care for their dependents at home, so as to ease the burden on the welfare system (cf Chipman) is clearly the ideological counterpart to such contractionist policies. Support for the "privatisation" of welfare in families serves as justification for the redirection of public expenditure to the private sector, and has an inequitable impact on working class families with the least resources to allow them to fulfil their obligations.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions can be drawn from this analysis at two levels of generalisation : at the level closest to the historical evidence; and at a higher level of explanation which examines class and gender contestation over the scope, content, value and direction of the "social wage".

As an outcome of labour demands and feminist political activity,

whose policies were co-opted to employer and ruling political interests, components of a "social wage" were introduced at federal government level in the first 45 years of the twentieth century, to redistribute income through the tax/cash transfer system to those periods of the life-cycle characterised by exclusion from paid labour in the market. On the one hand, collective provision was meagre and parsimonious, (Australia did not see the more comprehensive and universal social services of the British welfare state), the status of welfare beneficiary was associated with poverty, even during the long boom (Henderson et al, 1970) and cash transfers to families in respect of dependent children have never been indexed to living costs but raised only according to political discretion.

On the other hand, the extension of the social wage and the political emphasis placed on increased social services and income maintenance provisions in the period of post-war reconstruction 1942-1948, clarified the potential of the "social wage" to redistribute income in ways which are contradictory to the principles of the capitalist labour market and of patriarchal domestic relations. Services and cash transfers were seen as necessary to augment the inadequate market wage, to encourage fertility, to stimulate adequate aggregate demand so as to support high levels of economic growth, a return to full employment and increased industrial capacity. Elements of the social wage which were designated as "family policies" were an integral part of Keynesian economic policy and social democratic politics. An increase in public expenditure for social purposes, seen as supportive infrastructure for the growth of the private sector and for the promotion of higher standards of living, was politically legitimated as redistribution to "families" who were to be the basic consumption units of the new economic order. A policy of redistribution to families did not confront the sources of social inequality : class-based inequalities and gender-based inequalities experienced between and within families, but the family was at least defined as the recipient of a range of services and transfers. Some of these transfers (child endowment, the

maternity allowance, widows' pensions) were directed to women, in recognition of their roles as wife/mother - responsible for consumption in domestic life or rendered destitute by the loss of their male bread-winner. While this was not explicit recognition of the impoverishment of women as a result of their domestic responsibilities outside of waged market work, such transfers established elements of a social wage redistributed to women (but only in their roles as mothers or older ex-wives); transfers which did not depend either on the sale of labour power or on intra-family transfers from the bread-winner to his dependents.

After a brief reactivation of neo-Keynesian policies in 1972-75, when public expenditure for social purposes was greatly increased, the latter half of the 1970s saw the dominance of contractionist economic policies in a period of labour market recession and high levels of unemployment. Reduction in public expenditure for social purposes (cuts in the value, scope and content of the 'social wage') has been accompanied by an ideological campaign to establish 'national family policies', policies whose basic thrust is to re-establish the family as the provider of services for the state. Taxation policies which favour male tax-payers with a dependent wife; income maintenance policies which maintain unemployment beneficiaries below the poverty line on the presumption of intra-family income transfers; incentives to families to purchase services (e.g. health, education) on the private market; cuts in the value of the social wage to women (the non-indexation of family allowances and the erosion of expenditure on childcare services) all signify components of an implicit family policy : the reinforcement of women's dependency as non-market workers and of men's obligation to provide income by wage work.

It is clear that the 'social wage' is an arena for class contestation and for feminist political activity (which are both strongly opposed) as is the market wage in the industrial arena. It is also clear that state interventions into the sphere of domestic



relations and class relations need not inevitably support existing inequalities but may establish contradictions which demonstrate the potential for state redistributive policies which are not locked into the principles of the market or of patriarchal domestic relations.

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