



A Citizenship Defence of the Welfare State

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Note - in presenting this paper a common query is whether by 'citizen' I mean someone who is a 'passport holder', i.e. technically a citizen. Just to be clear - and I will need to make this clearer in the body of the text - this is opposite to the meaning of citizenship I propose. Citizenship is a status we owe each other - the fact that some people are technically excluded from citizenship by passports, slavery or other measures, is a moral problem precisely because citizenship is a fundamental moral status. We are citizens, in that we are equals, the question is: *do we live in a society that recognises the moral fact of our equality?*

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Abstract

Duffy argues that current attack on the welfare state suggests that the development of the welfare state is still at an early stage. T H Marshall's proposition that promotion of equal citizenship is central to the purpose of the welfare state has not been followed by any substantive account of citizenship. However a substantive account of citizenship is possible and Duffy argues that such an account would change the political narrative around the welfare state in ways that could engage positively with conservatives, liberals and socialists. However an approach focused on citizenship also raises important questions about the adequacy of many of the current welfare systems.

Introduction

Today the welfare state is under attack as never before. In the past criticisms of the welfare state were limited to rhetorical displays or academic critiques; today we are seeing rapid and deep cuts in the social rights that have been embedded in the welfare system. However this attack is also an unusual attack. Even the most extreme critics of the welfare state declare that they are in fact only 'reforming' the welfare state; some even claim that they are seeking to promote social justice (Hague, 2005). The attack on the welfare state is veiled, and this makes the job of defending the welfare state even harder.

There is also a danger that in our defence of the welfare state we might mistake the real nature of the attack. We have a tendency to replay old debates and to miss what is changing in the political and social environment. So, first, we need to understand the real force of these attacks, what motivates them and where they draw their strength from.

Second, we need to define the kind of welfare state that we are actually defending. As an existing institution the welfare state has many strengths and weaknesses, and it is not a simple thing. The welfare state takes different forms in different countries and has changed over time. Any defence of the welfare state must be grounded in an understanding of the kind of welfare state that is desirable. There is no point defending the indefensible.

Finally we must consider what kind of defence is likely to be most effective. If this were just an academic exercise then we can choose to simply advance the cause of our favourite theory or ideology; but our circumstances are more grave than this. This is not just an academic exercise; and so our defence must be the one we think is most likely to be successful.

I will argue that the current crisis in the welfare state reflects its immaturity as an institution and the dangers that occur when institutions that should be fundamentally constitutional in nature become a mere play-thing of party politics. This risk becomes even more severe when political elites become detached from the interests of the wider community.

I will propose that the kind of welfare state we should defend is one that actively supports our equal citizenship. I will return to the argument, originally proposed by T H Marshall, that the welfare state is best understood as the means by which we ensure citizenship for all, but I will argue that this argument has not been pursued and developed (Marshall and Bottomore, 1992). We have relied for too long on a *thin account of citizenship*. Instead we need a strong and substantive concept of citizenship with which to define and test our welfare systems.

In order to defend the welfare state I will suggest that we need to appeal to what is best in each of the competing theories and traditions that are currently being used to attack the welfare state. My strategy is not to promote one theory at the expense of all the others, rather it is to propose that each theory would become better, more balanced, more true to itself, if it also embraced the kind of substantive notion of citizenship that I will advance. Each political tradition represents an inevitable perspective, but one which becomes dangerous if it cannot connect to the innate dignity of all human beings and the need to support our equal citizenship.

Of course this argument, while it is an argument in defence of the welfare state, also has its own reformist element. Citizenship has its price. I will end by reviewing some of the ways in which the current welfare state fails to support citizenship and suggest some possible reforms that would help the welfare state become stronger and more effective.

1. The development of the welfare state

In order to remain clear-headed about the welfare state it is useful to maintain an historical perspective. The welfare state did not come into existence for reasons of theory; it was developed as a response to decades of fear, terror and horror. Politicians of all colours came to see that it was going to be necessary to put in place a system of social security in order to avoid the kinds of revolutions, wars and totalitarian states that had grown out of the injustices and insecurities of the previous hundred years or more.

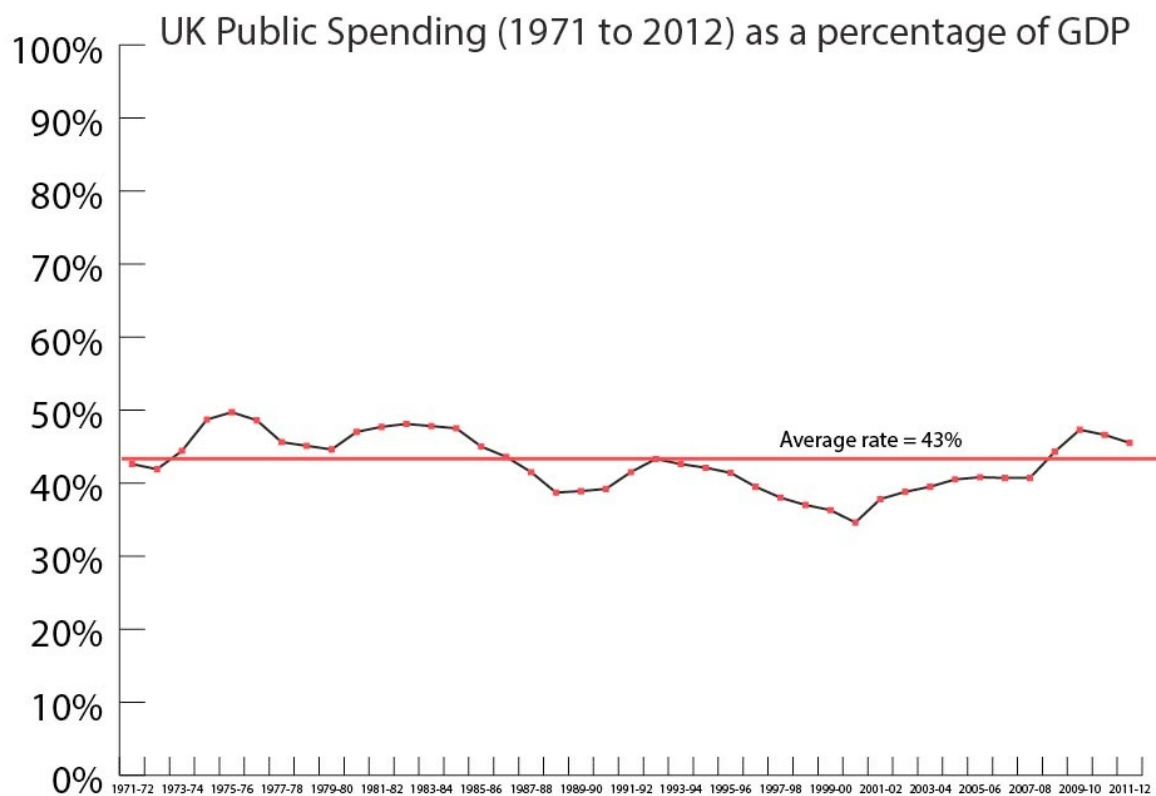
Of course there were raging ideological debates as the welfare state was formed; but the underlying consensus required to create such a significant change in society was rooted in a shared desire to avoid certain evils. For instance, in the UK, the welfare state was largely designed by William Beveridge (Beveridge, 1942). And when Beveridge was making the case for his reforms he did not rely on any narrow political theory; rather he tried to outline the central problems for which the welfare state was a solution. Conservatives, liberals and socialists could all be united in their opposition to the evil of the ‘five giants’:

The second principle is that organisation of social insurance should be treated as one part only of a comprehensive policy of social progress. Social insurance fully developed may provide income security; it is an attack upon Want. But Want is one only of five giants on the road of reconstruction and in some ways the easiest to attack. The others are Disease, Ignorance, Squalor and Idleness.

William Beveridge, Social Insurance and Allied Services, p. 6

Nor should we forget how new the welfare state really is. Of course, societies have always been ‘welfare societies’ - no society can exist for very long without institutional arrangements to promote the well-being of its members. However societies can also tolerate grave injustices, slavery, the oppression of women or eugenics. So, while all societies are welfare societies, not all societies are just or fair. The welfare state was an attempt to bring fairness to welfare and to establish welfare as a non-negotiable element of the democratic system itself.

What makes the era of the welfare state so unusual is the unprecedented level of control over society and the economy which has been granted to the state. For example, over the last 40 years, the UK government has spent an average of 43% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (see Figure 1). In 2013 spending in other ‘Western’ welfare states varies between France 56.1% of GDP and Australia at 35.2% of GDP, with the United States at 41.7% and the UK at 49.1% (The Heritage Foundation, 2013).



[Source: HM Treasury (2012) Public Expenditure: Statistical Analyses 2012]

Figure 1 UK Public Spending (1971 to 2012) as a percentage of GDP

In historical terms all these figures are high; but this does not mean they are ‘too high.’ In the past states would only intervene significantly in the economy in times of emergency; but it could be argued that the modern world, subject to constant technological change, rootlessness and inherent economic insecurities, is a world that is always on the edge of crisis (Duffy, 2013a). The welfare state reconciles us to the essential instability of modernity.

Nevertheless, the unusual nature of this historical development does demand that we show some humility about our understanding of the welfare state. It may be far too early to fully understand the meaning and impact of the welfare state. We may just be at the beginning of a complex set of changes that will in turn require further radical change. For example, if we look back to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Europe, we see that the development of the nation state was inextricably linked with an increased concentration of power in the hands of the monarchy. This in turn led to a period of democratic revolution and reform that included the development of universal suffrage and our current party-political democratic system. Any increase in the concentration of force in one place may provoke counter-balancing changes elsewhere. The story of the welfare state may still be at very early stage.

2. The attack on the welfare state

In the West the welfare state grew rapidly after World War II. This was a period when the state was in its pomp. Perhaps unsurprisingly, after the Depression and the war years, thinkers of both Left and Right were confident that only the state was competent to solve social problems. This was not just a question of power and resources, it was also a question of intelligence. The Fabian socialist Beatrice Webb reveals this common assumption when she writes:

We have little faith in the 'average sensual man', we do not believe that he can do more than describe his grievances, we do not think he can prescribe the remedies

Beatrice Webb, *Our Partnership*, cited in Michael Young's *The Rise of the Meritocracy* p. 136

There is of course an irony here. Much of what we take for granted in the welfare state, for example, public hospitals, had been developed by charities, co-operative societies or local authorities long before the creation of the welfare state (Klein, 1989). The welfare state was not born *ex novo*. Yet often the form it then took, certainly in the United Kingdom (UK), was centralised, under full public control and with limited involvement from local communities or established groups.

However, faith in the competence of the state has been in pretty steady decline since those days. This change has been for many reasons. Partly it was the failure of communism, the pre-eminent statist ideology; a failure that was both moral and economic. Partly it was social change. As society has become less bound by class distinctions and as social mobility has increased, the limitations of our leaders become more obvious, and it becomes more natural to wonder whether they really know what they are doing. It may also be that the welfare state has fostered unreasonable expectations. Many social problems may just not be the kinds of things that can simply be solved by spending more taxes on more public services.

However, for several decades, concerns about the welfare state rarely took the form of an attack upon the welfare state. Instead the political debates have focused on the question of who could be trusted to *manage* the welfare state. But today there is good reason to think we are entering a new era; an era where direct attacks on the welfare state are going to be much more successful. For instance, a recent speech by a senior Australian politician, Joe Hockey, gives a sense of how the intellectual tide is turning. He is utterly unembarrassed at attacking universal entitlements:

I wish to thank my friends at the Institute of Economic Affairs for the opportunity to discuss an issue that has been the source of much debate in this forum for sometime... that is, the end of an era of popular universal entitlement. There is nothing much new in the debate other than the fact that action has now been forced on governments as a result of the recent financial crisis. Years of warnings have been ignored but the reality can no longer be avoided.

Joe Hockey, *The End of the Age of Entitlement*.

In the UK we are now seeing the first ever deep cuts in welfare spending. This includes a 33% cut in social care and a 20% cuts in benefits and tax credits (Duffy, 2013b). Much of this is justified by the rhetoric of austerity; but it is clear that these cuts go far beyond anything required by competent fiscal management (Taylor-Gooby and Stoker, 2011).

However, not everything is being cut and it is a mistake to conceive all these changes in fiscal terms - as simply a desire to reduce public expenditure. In the UK two of the largest public services - the NHS (healthcare) and schools - have been largely protected from cuts. This is despite the fact that these services are predominantly salary-based and that controlling salary costs could have generated much greater savings than the cuts to other systems - without any loss of service. In the same way, while benefits for working-age adults and families are being severely cut, pensions have protected and even enhanced.

Two factors at least may explain these facts. First, some services and benefits, particularly those that are seen as universal, are more popular and politicians try to avoid cuttings services that are seen to benefit 'everyone'. Secondly healthcare and education are staffed by important electoral groups: middle-income earners and doctors, who retain significant influence.

Not that there are no changes in healthcare and education. In the UK a strategy of privatisation has continued, under Left and Right. Increasingly 'public healthcare' is provided by state-funded private healthcare providers and central government is also encouraging independent schools to be set up to provide public education. In both health and education this policy creates a significant fear that publicly funded organisations may seek to increase their incomes by offering enhanced services to families with higher incomes or to save money by reducing access to those with greater needs. In other words, the fear is that privatisation will ultimately undermine universality.

More radical changes have also been going on in those parts of the welfare system that have less popular support and which focus on people in poverty, the unemployed and people with disabilities. For example, the Work Programme was developed to offer people support into work (Maddock, 2012). This programme was innovative in a number of different ways:

- a) Assessments of the readiness for work of people with disabilities are made by private firms working to contracts that seem to include financial incentives for reducing claims.
- b) New more flexible forms of support are supposed to be available from a mix of private and charitable service providers.
- c) New contracts between central government and large 'prime providers' are meant to ensure positive financial incentives and a system where the private provider takes more risk, but is rewarded by savings from the benefit system itself.
- d) New powers have been created to take away benefits from people who have not been compliant.

So far this strategy seems to have largely failed to meet its own objectives. But it is useful to pick out some of the key themes. Increasingly it seems that the welfare state is seen less as a framework of universal rights, and more as a mechanism for social engineering. There seems to be little embarrassment in targeting minority groups, using negative incentives, punishments or stigma.

But how are we to understand these attacks? It is certainly plausible that one of the factors is the influence of powerful global businesses. It is noticeable that many of the Left-wing think tanks that advise politicians in the UK seem to get their funding from some very surprising sources. For example, a recent report by the think tank DEMOS, recommending experiments in the use of 'welfare cards' (a modern version of welfare vouchers) was sponsored by Mastercard (Wood and Salter, 2013). However the malign influence of commerce is only part of the story, there are other factors that are also important.

One explanation is found in the increasingly elitist nature of modern politics. Modern politicians seem to have gone to similar schools, similar universities and are no longer likely to have spent much time working outside politics. Their life experience is limited and their experience of human life has narrowed. As Michael Young warned in his satire, *The Rise of the Meritocracy*, there is a grave danger that those who become powerful start to believe that they are somehow entitled to that power by their own merit (Young, 1958).

This hypothesis, the growth of meritocratic elitism, may explain why 'welfare reform' policies often involve complex contractual or commissioning mechanisms by which the state attempts to achieve complex social goals via contractual arrangements. If government were simply trying to hand over welfare to the 'market' then these arrangements would not be necessary; but the government's belief that it is actually engaged in a super-intelligent form of market management might better explain the kinds of strategies we see.

Another hypothesis that might explain the nature of the attacks on the welfare state is the nature of democratic politics. On this analysis politicians are involved in a battle for power in which they have to create a plausible offer to their audience of voters. But the audience is not all equal. The most important voters are swing-voters, especially in two party-systems like the UK, people with incomes near the median mark, neither poor nor rich. These voters use some public services more than others, and will also be concerned to minimise any taxes they pay. If this is correct then it may be that we live in a *medianocracy* - a system where a relatively small class of voters holds most sway (Duffy, 2011).

This hypothesis certainly helps explain some fundamental features of the UK's tax policy. For while it is arguable that the rich could pay higher taxes than they do, they do not pay the lowest taxes; but those who pay the highest taxes as a percentage of their overall income are the very poorest - those with the least political influence (see figure 2). In addition typically the highest rates of *marginal tax* are paid by the poorest in the form of 'benefit reduction rates' while the second highest marginal rates of tax are paid by the wealthiest. Again, the lowest rates of marginal tax are also paid by those in the middle (Duffy, 2011). It is tempting to talk about the oppression of the poor by the rich, but the reality may be that we are seeing the oppression of the poor by almost everyone.

Different levels of tax paid (2010-11)

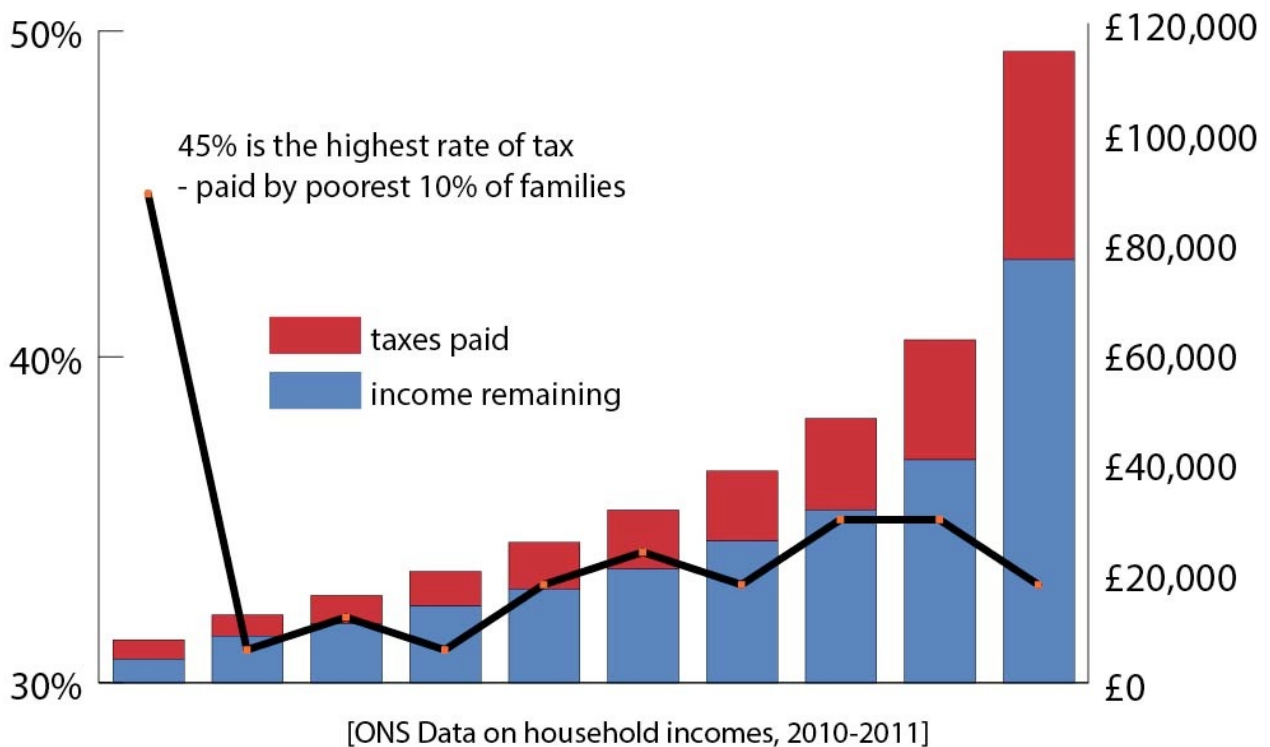


Figure 2 Taxes paid by different households as a percentage of income

This same hypothesis might also explain why politicians are still very keen to increase public spending, but often seek to minimise any immediate increase in taxes. Systems like 'payment by results' 'PFI' and the development of new systems to extending private debt, (e.g. via student loans or low cost mortgages) all serve to provide benefits today, while creating costs for future generations (Norman, 2010). Again, it seems that it is not so much that politicians are really seeking to reduce public spending or borrowing, rather it is that they must continue to provide short-term benefits to key groups, while avoiding any increase in taxes for those same groups.

My final hypothesis is that the attack on the welfare state is simply the natural result of putting welfare institutions directly into the hands of elected politicians. In a sense they have no choice but to make changes, to amend policies, reorganise structures or change systems of ownership. We have put them in charge of the welfare system and we expect them to take control and make things 'better'. So they must find things to change. For instance the NHS, while it remains a largely valued and consistent element of the UK welfare system, has been subject to frequent structural reorganisations ever since it was first created (Wall, 1999). If this hypothesis holds it would suggest that the attack on the welfare state is less an attack and more akin to leaving important electrical equipment in the hands of young children - they do not mean to break it, but if they fiddle with it long enough then they will.

To my way of thinking all of these different hypotheses are plausible and they may all be partially true. The welfare system may be prey to the forces of commerce, elitism, swing-voters or well-intentioned political interference at the same time. So, if we are to defend the welfare state we do not just need to defend it from the 'forces of capitalism' we also have to secure it from forces that are intrinsic to modern political democracies. This is not just a problem of leadership, it is also a problem of citizenship. If we abdicate rule to a narrow political elite, who in turn depend on the support of a narrow band of voters; and we expect those leaders to solve complex problems, in limited time, using only the power of law and the money that they can raise, then we are very likely to find ourselves in our current situation. In a sense we must not just defend the welfare state from the powerful, we must defend the welfare state from our own complacency.

3. The purpose of the welfare state

We cannot defend what we cannot define. However, I think we can define the kind of welfare state that we should want; and I think we can make that definition plausible and attractive to a diverse range of people who may disagree about many other things, but who may still agree to the central purpose of the welfare state. One of the key statements as to the proper purpose of the welfare state was made by T H Marshall, in his essay *Citizenship and Social Class*, who wrote:

The extension of the social services is not primarily a means of equalising incomes. In some case it may, in others it may not. The question is relatively unimportant; it belongs to a different department of social policy. What matters is there a general enrichment of the concrete substance of civilised life, a general reduction of risk and insecurity, an equalisation between the more and the less fortunate at all levels - between the healthy and the sick, the employed and the unemployed, the old and the active, the bachelor and the father of a large family. Equalisation is not so much between classes as between individuals within a population which is now treated for this purpose as though it were one class. Equality of status is more important than equality of income.

T H Marshall, *Citizenship and Social Class*, p. 33

Marshall's proposal was that we should see the welfare state as primarily helping us to live together *as equals*, in particular, as equal citizens. As citizens we are equals, whatever other differences there may be:

Citizenship is a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community. All who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed. There is no universal principle that determines what those rights and duties shall be, but societies in which citizenship is a developing institution create an image of an ideal citizenship against which achievement can be measured and towards which aspiration can be directed. The urge forward along the path thus plotted is an

urge towards a fuller measure of equality, an enrichment of the stuff of which the status is made and an increase in the number of those on whom the status is bestowed.

T H Marshall, *Citizenship and Social Class*, p. 18

This means the purpose of the welfare state is to ensure each individual within society can live as a citizen. On this analysis the welfare state's services, benefits and taxes should be measured by their effectiveness at extending citizenship to all. If we are more divided, with some groups stigmatised or excluded, then the welfare state is failing. If we are more united, able to recognise the value that diverse people and groups bring to the whole of society, then the welfare state is succeeding. As Waldron writes:

Above all, I think the idea of citizenship should remain at the centre of modern political debates about social and economic arrangements. The concept of a citizen is that of a person who can hold [their] head high and participate fully and with dignity in the life of [their] society.

Jeremy Waldron, *Liberal Rights*, p. 308

These are strong statements and they need more support, however before going on to argue for the value of citizenship, I'd like to focus on what I take to be an important gap in Marshall's account of citizenship. The central problem in Marshall's account is that he refers to citizenship, but he does not define it, other than to say that citizens are "full members" of the community. He then goes on to propose that equality of shared citizenship is the "equality of the rights and duties with which the status is endowed" but this is wrong - and importantly wrong.

First, the notion of 'equal rights and duties' turns out to be more ambiguous than we might think. A society where everyone has the same rights and the same duties may still be profoundly unequal if some people have advantages or disadvantages which mean they suffer or benefit disproportionately (Walzer, 2007). In fact one of the signs of an effective framework of social rights or duties is that it can distinguish when and how an individual's entitlements or responsibilities should be increased or reduced because of relevant individual circumstances.

Second, and this is the more profound point, citizenship places unequal demands on diverse individuals, precisely in order to equalise those who are not naturally equal (or more precisely, those who are different.) Citizenship only gets its point from the fact of human diversity. The political and social measures taken by a just society serve to rebalance what would otherwise be unbalanced. As Simone Weil puts it:

He who treat as equals those who are far below him in human strength really makes them a gift of the quality of human beings, of which fate had deprived them.

Simone Weil, *Waiting on God*, p. 86

It is this 'treatment as an equal' which is at the core of citizenship and it is essential to how we help each other without patronage and injustice (Maimonides, 2005). In other words it

cannot be the equality of rights and duties which defines what makes us equal citizens. Rather it is our *innate* equality that demands we all have somewhat *different* rights and somewhat different duties.

However Marshall does recognise that the status of being an equal member of a community is more than a matter of rights and duties, for he talks about the “urge towards a fuller measure of equality, an enrichment of the stuff of which the status is made and an increase in the number of those on whom the status is bestowed.” But understanding what this ‘stuff’ is must then become central to understanding citizenship, and therefore to understanding the proper purpose of the welfare state.

Perhaps Marshall is right to be wary of specifying the stuff of citizenship as if it could be specified eternally - that would be impossible. Status, including equal status, is built in society and so must be understood relative to actual living societies. However, our task is not to define citizenship outside all space and time. If citizenship is to be relevant to our current practical and political dilemmas then we must risk specifying it in some greater detail.

I do not think this is an impossible task. In fact I think we can learn a great deal about the stuff of citizenship - or what I have called the ‘keys to citizenship’ - by listening carefully to those people who are often excluded from real and effective citizenship (Duffy, 2006 and 2010). When we do listen carefully then the stuff of citizenship becomes clearer:

- a) **Purpose** - citizens have a sense of their own purpose which is unique to them as an individual. They are respected because they are seen to have their own unique value and distinctness.
- b) **Freedom** - citizens make their own decisions, take their own risks and shape their lives in ways that fit their own sense of purpose. They are respected because they are in control of their own life, not subject to the will of another.
- c) **Money** - citizens have the financial means necessary to pursue their purposes without undue dependence on others. They are respected because they can pay their own way and are not unduly dependent on the good will of others.
- d) **Home** - citizens have their own safe and private place within their community. They are respected because they belong to that community, and they have a real stake and long-term commitment to that community.
- e) **Help** - citizens can rely on the assistance of others and can access help from across the community. They are respected because they offer others the chance to give, to share and contribute.
- f) **Life** - citizens make their own distinctive and active contribution to their community within which they build a life of meaning. They are respected because they make their own distinct and irreplaceable contribution to the community through membership, work, family or voluntary activities.

g) **Love** - citizens can make friendships, find love, have families and bring up their own children as citizens. They are respected because they are seen to love and to be loved.

The keys to citizenship are not random. They are based upon an analysis of the factors that support or detract from social status within modern society. In particular they are based on the experiences of people with disabilities, a group who often suffer the most severe indignities and reduced status, and who rarely make it to the centre of political theory, and on the experiences of other groups who face stigma (Wolfensberger, 1972, Goffman, 1968). However it is precisely because people with disabilities experience so many risks to their status that they can help us identify the building blocks of equal status. People who possess these keys to citizenship find that they possess the means for both self-respect and the respect of others. They can, in Waldron's words, *hold their heads high*.

However, my central purpose here, is not to defend the seven keys to citizenship as the perfect or final model for defining equal status. My central purpose is to suggest that the stuff of citizenship must have some actual content and that this content becomes central to how we understand citizenship and the purpose of the welfare state. If I am right and the keys to citizenship can be specified (even in some different way) then this could change the character of political debate, and enable a more effective defence of the welfare state.

4. Defending the welfare state

Defending the welfare state means engaging with the real assumptions and live theories of political thought. My interest is to persuade thinkers from different traditions of the contribution that the idea of substantive citizenship can make to their own theories, not to persuade them of the truth of my own theory.

I will also limit myself to considering the three main political traditions: conservatism, liberalism and socialism. I recognise that there are many variant theories, including some theories that stand outside all three of these traditions. However these three traditions seem to me to be the most important in the real political debates around the welfare state.

4.1 Conservatism

Conservatives do not often use the term citizenship, and some are a little wary of its association with revolutionary thought (Scruton, 1983). But the substantive notion of citizenship, building on Marshall, can be reconciled with some of the most positive elements in the conservative tradition. For the development of citizenship, as Scruton recognises, is central to conservatism. When discussing the modern migrant he says:

They are migrating in search of citizenship - which is the principal gift of national jurisdictions, and the origin of peace, law and stability and prosperity that still prevail in the West.

Roger Scruton, *A Political Philosophy*, p. 5

In particular, conservatives value civil society, the social forms of life which range from the family to the Church, from the football club to the nation, from the club to the class. They observe that life is made up commitments, duties and loyalties; and these are not burdens but opportunities for the enrichment of life. Civil society is not different to citizenship; civil society is the place where citizenship happens.

Furthermore, citizenship ensures these traditions can be sustained and developed. A rich social life cannot be maintained without citizens who have the capacity and opportunity to join and support social institutions. Citizens build, and rebuild, civil society. This means that conservatives should welcome a welfare state that builds and supports citizenship, particularly if that citizenship serves to contribute and strengthen social life.

Of course my account of substantive citizenship is hostile to chauvinism, prejudice and discrimination. It does not seek to prefer one group or one creed over all others, it is committed to identifying the sense of purpose in all of us. So it will appeal more to conservatives who value tolerance and welcome plurality; but substantive citizenship is not essentially revolutionary, it is organic and respectful.

In fact conservatism supports a pluralistic approach to social value. Finding ways to value each other as equals becomes easier the more pathways to social value are open to us. For, as Nozick and Walzer both observe, developing esteem becomes more difficult the fewer socially valued dimensions exist (Walzer, 2007, Nozick 1974). As Nozick writes:

The most promising ways for a society to avoid widespread differences in self-esteem would be to have no common weighting of dimensions; instead it would have a diversity of different lists of dimensions and weightings. This would enhance each person's chance of finding dimensions that some others also think important, along which he does reasonably well, and so to make a non-idiosyncratic favourable estimate of himself.

Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, p. 245

Not only does civil society promote multiple forms of social value and esteem it also opens up multiple ways by which individuals can connect, make friendships, fall in love and build families (Oakshott, 1991). The conservative tradition recognises the fundamental place of love in human life and for people who face disadvantage, prejudice or exclusion it is often love that is most lacking.

Although conservatism has often been sceptical and critical of the welfare state it is possible to imagine a conservative valuing it as a valuable human institution that seeks to advance the kind of substantive citizenship that underpins a full and diverse civil society.

4.2 Liberalism

Today liberalism is the dominant political theory, but it is a theory with a chasm running through its centre. On the one hand there are Right-liberals (sometimes called neo-liberals) who focus on the precedence of civil and political rights, and who treat the right to own

property as having precedence over other socio-economic rights (Hayek, 1960, Nozick, 1974). They seek to maximise the *space for freedom*.

On the other hand there are Left-liberals, like Rawls, who seek to advance the cause of social rights as one part of the full set of our proper rights and they focus on ensuring people have the *means to enjoy their freedom* (Rawls, 1993). Simplifying the matter, all liberals are interested in advancing human freedom, but they are divided as to whether they are interested in freedom from oppression or freedom for human development. The central tool for the advancing of these freedoms are rights.

The idea of substantive citizenship may appeal to Left-liberals more than to Right-liberals, for it is in many ways an outline of the substantial rights that are essential to citizenship. A decent welfare state would put in place the practical measures necessary to ensure that these rights are achievable. For example, if citizens need homes then a decent welfare system will design systems of funding for housing that enable everyone to have their own home. A poor system would be one that led to high levels of homelessness, housing insecurity or institutionalisation.

However, even Right-liberals are still committed to ensuring that there is adequate provision of social security, for as Hayek writes:

In the Western world some provision for those threatened by the extremes of indigence or starvation due to circumstances beyond their control has long been accepted as a duty of the community.

Friedrich Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty*, p. 285

Even the Right-liberal must engage in a conversation about substantive citizenship. Although they are nervous of extending rights to people when they believe that they should be encouraged to make their own provision for their own needs, and not rely on social provision, it would be illiberal not to treat whatever social provision is provided as a right. In which case they are still joined in a discussion as to the quality of substantive citizenship - they may just be advocates of a more limited account of substantive citizenship.

The other advantage of paying attention to substantive citizenship for liberalism is that it helps deal with one of its long-standing problems - how to secure the framework of rights. Why should we fulfil our duties to each other, especially if some people seem to benefit much more than others from the framework of law?

For many liberal thinkers there is a temptation to fall back on a kind of narrow individualism where rights are valued for what they give us, but duties are deprecated because of their burdens (Mackie, 1984). In fact one of the intellectual attractions of Right-liberalism is that it focuses on minimising the burden of duties placed on the individual. However, even if the liberal can argue that a social arrangement is fair because it is one that a rational agent would agree to, in reality many human beings will not consent to arrangements that don't seem fair, where inequalities seem too great and where some are left excluded and despised (Rawls, 1971).

Yet, if society were to aim at developing the institution of *citizenship for all*, then it must embrace rights, duties and freedoms together. Citizenship describes the inner logic of the whole framework of law and justice. Designing the right set of rights and duties, ensuring that they are fair and balanced, becomes central to establishing a fair society. The test of this framework is whether it enables *everyone* to play their full role as a citizen, as an equal. If some are excluded from full citizenship then the framework must be improved. The law supports citizenship, and so citizens must respect the law.

4.3 Socialism

Socialists value social justice, in particular social equality, and citizenship provides an account of how this kind of equality can be achieved, for real. It is not an approach to equality that every socialist will welcome, but it is an approach that overcomes some of the long-standing problems of socialism.

The most important problem for advocates of equality is that human beings are different. They may be equal in innate dignity, they should certainly be equally valued and respected, but human beings are born different and, through the course of life, by an uncertain mixture of luck, accident or effort, differences tend to grow bigger (although we are all fated equally to death). For some of us this natural human diversity is a good thing - it is not desirable that human beings have the same gender, skin colour, background, life stories, abilities or characters. Difference is good. But what does this mean for equality? What kind of equality should we seek?

Hannah Arendt argues, building on Aristotle, that it is through the medium of a shared community that we reconcile diversity and equality:

Here [in the Greek polis] the meaning of politics, in distinction to its end, is that men in their freedom can interact with one another, as equals among equals, commanding and obeying one another only in emergencies - that is, in time of war - but otherwise managing all their affairs by speaking with and persuading one another.

Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics*, P. 117

If we lived in a society where everyone was already equal then citizenship would have no meaning. You only need citizenship if you want to build a community of equals out of people who are different from each other. As Arendt also observes:

Aristotle explains that a community is not made out of equals, but on the contrary of people who are different and unequal. The community comes into being through equalising, 'isathenai.' [Nich. Ethics 1133 a 14]

Arendt, *The Promise of Politics*, p. 17

In a sense citizenship offers a pure form of egalitarianism - different people, living as absolute equals, because they are citizens. But does citizenship mean that nothing else must be changed? Certainly, if we value diversity and difference for their own sake, we will be nervous of any attempt to standardise or equalise individual differences. You are equal

because you are a citizen; all the other differences between us do not matter, because they do not define or dictate your citizenship. In fact those differences are, at their best, opportunities for reciprocity and deepening citizenship.

However, this does not mean that citizenship has nothing to say about the distributions of power, money or other resources. For example, while it is clear that absolute income equality is not a requirement of citizenship, extreme differences in income are hostile to citizenship, and for at least three reasons. First, those who are in extreme relative poverty are likely to become dependent upon those with much greater wealth, and this may radically undermine their ability to pursue their own ends. As Rousseau puts it:

by equality, we should understand, not that the degrees of power and riches are to be absolutely identical for everybody; but that power shall never be great enough for violence, and shall always be exercised by virtue of rank and law; and that, in respect of riches, no citizen shall ever be wealthy enough to buy another, and none poor enough to be forced to sell himself

Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, p. 96

Second, extreme inequality leads people into anxiety and a sense of unworthiness which even infects those who are better-off (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010). Extreme inequality is bade for everyone. Third, those who have great wealth may delude themselves that they do not need other people and so stop acting like citizens and sharing in their collective responsibilities.

On this understanding it is not that citizenship removes every question of social justice; instead it reframes those questions. It is not so much that each citizen must be alike, it is rather that each citizen must have *enough*. Practical questions of distribution are measured by their impact on citizenship. This connects to even older traditions of thought where both wealth and poverty are seen as potential evils:

I neither say nor maintain that kings should be called rich any more than the common folk who go through the streets on foot, for sufficiency equals wealth, and covetousness equals poverty.

(Guillaume de Lorris) & Jean de Muin, *The Romance of Rose*, p. 286

For the socialist then, commitment to citizenship becomes a way in which the proper desire for justice can be reconciled with as appreciation of human diversity. It makes the passion for justice more realistic and more human and it reduces the need for the state to interfere in all aspects of life to enforce equality. Citizenship allows socialism to restore to itself commitment to freedom and human development. It connects with the socialist tradition of collective action and reciprocity.

So, citizenship, substantive citizenship, offers each tradition of political thought much of what they value. It respects community and society as the necessary environment for citizenship. It seeks to establish a fair and sustainable set of rights and duties within which

citizens can live with freedom. It establishes the means by which diverse individuals can be both different and equal.

It also rejects chauvinism - citizenship is for all, not just the few. It rejects individualism - freedom is maintained and protected by citizens who look out for each other. And it abhors sameness - difference is the life blood of citizenship. For all these reasons citizenship should be central to how we think about society, how we secure each others social rights and how we design and defend the welfare state.

5. Rethinking the welfare state

Citizenship comes with a price. Citizenship helps us to defend the welfare state because, if we want to build a society of citizens, then we need to put in place collective measures to ensure that each person can be a full and active citizen. However, not all welfare states are equally competent at supporting citizenship.

For people with disabilities this is very clear. In the UK, as the welfare state grew, so did the number of people with disabilities incarcerated in large and abusive institutions. Increased public spending, powerful public services and increased professionalisation were no guarantee that people with disabilities would be treated as citizens - quite the opposite (Shapiro, 1993).

Too many people with disabilities have been excluded from the keys to citizenship. Their lives were defined for them by professional services, they had no freedom and little money, they had no real housing rights and could only get assistance from professional services that then restricted their access to the community. They could not contribute to the community and it was hard to form friendship, find lovers or sustain family life. Yet this life of non-citizenship was funded, sustained and directed by the welfare state.

This is not just a problem for people with disabilities. It is relatively easy to generate a long list of groups who face stigma, isolation, exclusion and lack the necessary means to take control of their lives and build positive lives of citizenship. For instance, if we look at the lives of some women in our communities we see them facing overlapping problems which the current welfare system simply is not designed to solve (see Figure 3). Often welfare systems seem good at providing standardised services, but they do always seem competent solve complex problems that require a more personal approach; instead it is often local community groups that are left to tackle the most difficult problems (Duffy and Hyde, 2011).

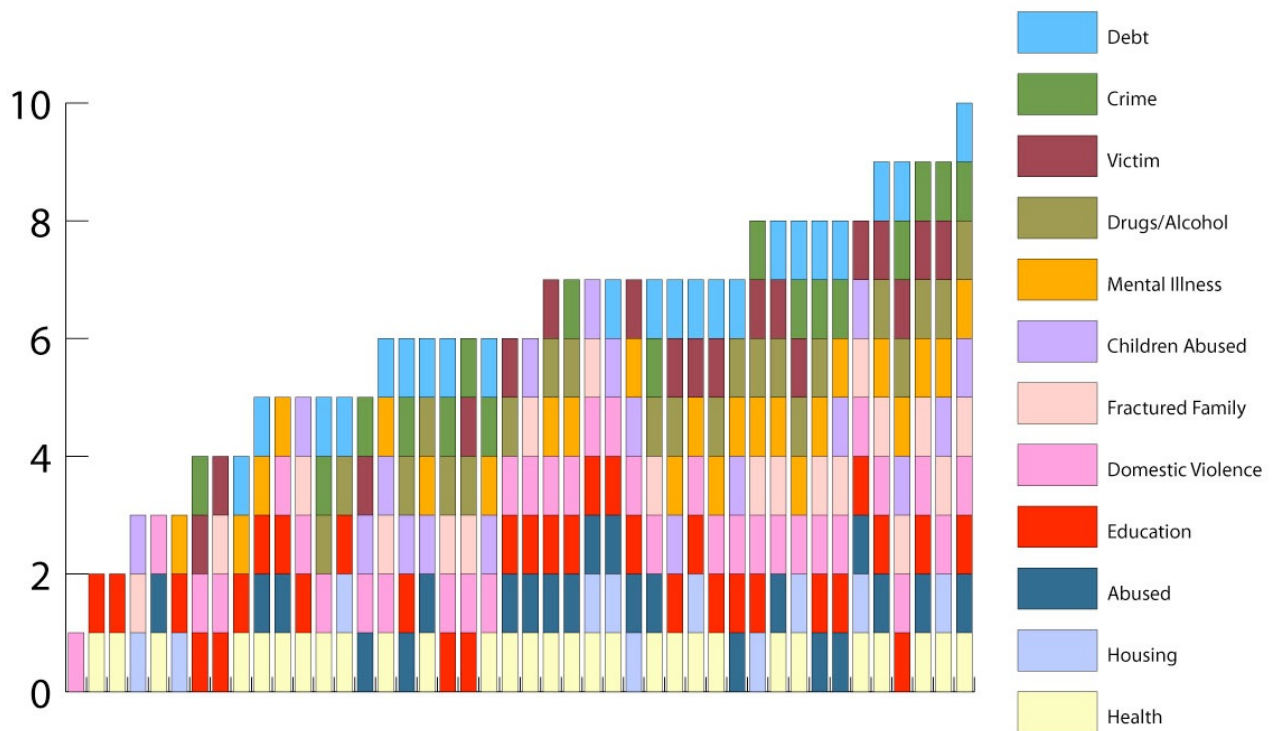


Figure 3 Pattern of overlapping needs for women with most complex need

Within the space of this short essay it is impossible to do justice to the range of possible reforms that might improve the welfare state’s ability to support citizenship. But in the spirit of my argument I have chosen to focus on just three areas, each of which reflects concerns of the three main political traditions.

5.1 Increasing local control

It seems hard to believe that citizenship is strengthened by the centralisation of public services - whether in the hands of government or business. A welfare system that gives more control to local communities would seem more likely to open up more opportunities for citizens to be involved - at every level.

Local control is also likely to increase local diversity, innovation, collaboration and learning in ways that are very difficult for centralised systems to mimic. Local systems are also more likely to pay closer attention to working in harmony with other civil society institutions. It is not possible for a nationalised and centralised industry to understand what a local women’s group might do to help keep women out of prison (Duffy and Hyde, 2011).

Hostility to local control is probably fuelled by the vested interests of powerful professional groups and by the mistaken view that a high level of national consistency in service delivery is a good proxy for equity. A more localised welfare system, subject to an appropriate national framework of law, seems more consistent with the goal of promoting citizenship.

5.2 Strengthening social rights

While the welfare state and citizenship cannot be reduced to a set of social rights, social rights are still essential. In fact in many areas it is the lack of well framed social rights that seems to be one of the greatest weaknesses of the current welfare system.

Many public services were set up to provide help, but did not establish the rights of those who were to receive that help. Even when there are underlying rights, captured in law, these rights are often obscure or badly framed. For instance in the UK you may think that, if you have a disability, you would be entitled to help to live an independent life of citizenship. However the reality falls far short of that. The law is vague, eligibility thresholds are high, standards of support (or care) are low, means-testing is rife and you often cannot direct the support you receive (Duffy, 1996). So, even if it turns out you are entitled to help, it may well be that this help interferes with, rather than supports, your effective citizenship.

One of the natural outcomes of a greater focus on rights might be to explore when and how it is appropriate for citizens to take more individual control of their own destiny within the welfare state. Rights should provide people with opportunities to shape one's life, to take control of any resources that are necessary to one's life and to be able to demonstrate creativity (Duffy, 2006).

A decent welfare state would seek to clarify social rights and to put them on a constitutional footing. Within this framework individuals and communities could be free to meet rights in different ways, but the fundamental guarantees would be in place in order to challenge or correct unjust forms of welfare provision.

5.3 Promoting collective action

It is unlikely that a welfare system can support citizenship unless citizens are actively engaged in challenging, designing and running it. Unless citizens are active it is much more likely that society will slip into a complacent acceptance of elite decision-making and professionalisation. It is also much more likely, when times are difficult, that few will be ready and willing to defend the welfare system from attack.

It was Titmuss who demonstrated in *The Gift Relationship* that markets are sometimes much less efficient than collective social action; with the right structures in place citizens can quite properly see themselves as having wider duties to society and acting from a sense of shared citizenship (Titmuss, 1970). In the same way, some people with mental health problems are now coming together to provide each other with high quality support and are able to challenge the existing mental health system as people who are not unduly dependent on the system itself (Duffy, 2012).

There is currently a grave danger that organisations, charities and businesses, that are now dependent upon funding from government, will lose their ability to speak freely when cuts are threatened. This is where the dominant idea of state 'commissioning' can become so dangerous; not just because it may lower standards, but also because it reduces the accountability of the state to local citizens (Duffy, 2013c). A reformed welfare state would

pay particular attention to ensuring that there were many opportunities for independent collective action and wider accountability.

Conclusion

The welfare state is under attack, but perhaps we misjudge the nature of that attack. The malign influence of large-scale commercial companies is only part of the problem. Some of the problems we face are the result of making the welfare state too much the play-thing of competitive party political systems that only need to focus on a limited range of socio-economic interests in order to win power.

In this sense the welfare state is a victim of its own success. Being owned and controlled by the political class means being subject to the hazards of party politics. Developing a more balanced and disciplined system may take a very long time and it is unlikely to be achieved simply by hoping that our preferred ideological position will eventually defeat all its competitors - nothing in human history suggests that will ever happen - political debate and theoretical conflict is inevitable, and proper.

The welfare state cannot step outside politics or democratic control. What is required is constitutional thinking. We need to explore how to achieve a balanced and sustainable structure. We need to pay attention not just to the obvious policies and organisational structures, but also to the underlying processes of decision-making, accountability and creativity. The welfare state should be a human institution, not a politically-directed machine.

The welfare state can be defended, but this defence must build new understandings and new alliances. At the heart of a decent and defensible welfare state must be the notion of citizenship - citizenship helps us define both the means and the end for the welfare state. But our notion of citizenship must be founded on real human experiences and aspirations, not empty rhetoric.

People with disabilities, and many others, have already done much of the necessary work to define the kind of citizenship that is important to them (Campaign for a Fair Society, 2012). It is everyday citizenship - citizenship that helps people live good lives, in companionship with others. These aspirations are realistic because, while they demand changes, these changes only serve to release and strengthen the contributions of everyone for the enrichment of the whole society.

If new forms of alliance and consensus can be built around this 'stuff of citizenship' then Marshall's hopes for the welfare state may come true. However if we continue to fall back on meritocratic and manipulative ways of thinking then we may see the welfare state fall further away from its proper end.

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