

Gender and the Welfare State: The British Feminist Critiques*

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Abstract : The important argument explored in this article is women's position in welfare regimes. By examining feminist critiques on the welfare state, we intend to look into whether the welfare state is designed to promote the equal status of both men and women. In the post-war period, it was believed that social provision, together with full employment and rising real wages, would improve the welfare of all citizens. However, women were inevitably treated as second class citizens by the new welfare legislation and were assumed to be economically dependent on their husbands. As a result, though welfare provision plays a significant and liberating role in women's lives in some ways, it may also serve to restrict women by defining them in certain ways. This contradictory situations is especially true in successfully developing third world countries such as Korea. This is because the western welfare state can be misconceived as an idealistic model in which men and women obtain equality in terms of social context.

Key Words : gender and the welfare state, women-friendly welfare policies, poverty, citizenship

I. INTRODUCTION

The key issue explored in this article is women's position in welfare regimes. By looking at feminist critiques on the welfare state, we intend to examine whether the welfare state is

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designed to promote the equal status of both men and women.

In Korea, women's emancipation and gender equality are quite out of line with the traditional female concept because Korea was traditionally a Confucian society where men dominated women. Women were not fully independent beings but subordinate to men. According to the traditional Chinese cosmology - which was a powerful ideology in both Korea and Japan, the world consists of two complementary elements: the yin, the female, stands for all things dark, weak, and passive; the yang, the male, for all things bright, strong, and active (Curtin, 1975, p.10). The yang is firmness while the yin is flexibility. In this cosmology, men are compared to the heaven and sun, while women are compared to the earth and moon. This cosmology reflected not only the truth of the world but also the dominant ideology that women were obliged to obey men. To be a good woman, one should learn how to submit.

The most noticeable problem in promoting equality between men and women in Korea is the fact that Confucian-based gender-biased roles are accepted even in the modern society. The traditional Confucianism still influences both men and women in spite of Korea's remarkably fast industrialization and economic development. Peter Ching-Yung Lee (1992) has noted that the newly industrializing countries in Asia - Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan - have embraced Western capitalism and are Westernized, yet the people of these countries pursue a private way of life that remains essentially Oriental. This blend of "Western capitalism with Oriental culture has had a significant impact on the socio-economic conditions of these societies" (p. 99). The influence of public/private division is very strong: women are encouraged to stay in the private sphere, undertaking women's duties - housework, child rearing, child care - while men remain active in the labour market (public sphere). Husbands may feel shame if their wives work outside the home, and making women may feel shame because they are not embracing women's genuine role in society.

Therefore, this article draws on feminist critiques to explore the relationship between gender and the welfare state. In other words, it attempts to take stock of some of the dilemmas encountered in the pursuit of a conception of equality which is genuinely inclusive of women as a differentiated category within the working of the welfare state.

II. FEMINIST CRITIQUES ON THE WELFARE STATES

From the feminist point of view, most conventional analyses of the welfare state have an inadequate theoretical base because they ignore the State's concern with maintaining gender hierarchy. In the scheme of the welfare state or in the area of social welfare, feminist argue, little attention has been paid to the sexual discrimination to which women have been subjected. To eradicate this misconception, feminist analyses emphasize that the welfare state is not just a set of services but a set of ideas about society, particularly in the way the State organises family life (Humm, 1989, p. 235). Their first argument is that the existing welfare state policies are fundamentally designed to preserve and perpetuate the institution of the family as we know it, specifically the family in which the man is the breadwinner and his wife is mainly responsible for child rearing, child care, and housework. The second contention is that the responsibility of caring for children, the elderly, and the sick in the family is assumed to be the woman's responsibility. Women are considered to be the primary caregivers. The third argument points out the exclusion of women in welfare policy making. For instance, Elisabeth Wilson (1977) has argued that the welfare state embodies a set of assumptions about women expressed in its ideology and manifested in its practices. One main assumption is that woman's role is principally that of housewife and mother. She has pointed out that in spite of the many social changes that have occurred, the Victorian ideal of womanhood still influences and is deeply embedded in the sophisticated ideology of the welfare state, "for capitalist welfarism needs it" (p. 26).

Western feminists are critical of the welfare state, because they have explored the complex relationship between capitalism, statutory welfare services, and women's unequal position in the family and at work. Their insights have moved the debate on the welfare state forward in two crucial respects (Dale & Foster, 1986). Firstly, they have tried to develop theories of social conflicts that explain why women are disadvantaged in society, including in the welfare state. Secondly, feminists have exposed the inequalities of power within the home which is a key element in women's oppression. They have argued that "the personal is political" in order to reinforce the idea that women's emancipation depends on changing what have traditionally been thought of as purely private matters.

Most early twentieth century feminists in Britain were mainly concerned with the public sphere and tended to take the private sphere of the home for granted. Some women, however, did campaign for children's rights and against child abuse in the home. Feminists campaigned during the years between 1906 and 1939 on issues such as the inclusion of women in the developing system of national insurance, economic assistance to mothers through maternity benefits and some form of family allowances, and, finally, maternal and pediatric health. While there have always been feminists who have argued in favour of economic independence for all women, mainstream feminism, as it developed in the first half of this century, tended to extol family life and accepted the sexual division of labour in the home. This division designated the male as breadwinner and his wife as economically dependent on him while remaining completely responsible for child care and housework (Dale & Foster, 1986, p. 41).

The contention of liberal feminists is that the root of sexual discrimination against women can be found in the socialization process of women which requires them to remain economically dependent. Specifically, women are discriminated against in educational opportunities, and they are constantly exposed to a discriminatory set of social expectations and demands. If, liberal feminists argue, women were allowed equal opportunities in education and equality under the law, this change would overcome the discriminatory climate of the society. Therefore, liberal feminists strategies in the area of social welfare are first, without any general analysis or criticism of the social structure, to push for the revision of those welfare laws that are sexually discriminating and, secondly, through education to get rid of sexually discriminating attitudes in those officials who handle the administration of welfare laws and who are welfare providers (Williams, 1989, pp. 45-46). They also push for new legislation or reform of existing laws to grant women more opportunities and rights. Consequently, they attempt to organise women everywhere to pressure local governments for the institutionalisation of policies that favour equality.

Radical feminists, on the other hand, trace the roots of sexual discrimination against women to female physiology. To overcome discrimination, they argue, women ought to be liberated from the demands of biological reproduction. Men should find roles in child-bearing and child-rearing and share the responsibility equally. They further contend that the

traditional system of family, based on biological relationship should be dismantled because it inevitably gives rise to patriarchy. Dale and Foster (1986, pp. 51-54) have summarised the welfare strategy of the radical feminists who criticise every system of the state as created within the context of male dominance. First, radical feminists attempt to provide non-sexist alternative welfare services for women. Secondly, they aim to set a new trend in the current welfare system by giving women as much knowledge as possible about their own welfare needs and potential ways of fulfilling them. Thirdly, they try to develop a new relationship between service providers and clients based on shared knowledge and power within non-hierarchical, democratic welfare structures.

Marxist feminists argue that the welfare state supports the owners of means of production by reducing the reproduction costs of labour; the welfare state's function is to provide a healthy, educated and well-housed labour force (Jary, 1991, p. 701). However, they also suggest that there are aspects of the welfare state which are genuinely beneficial to the working classes, such as the National Health Service and rent subsidies. Marxist feminists see the welfare state as an arena of class conflict which is ambivalent in its operation, partially supporting the owners of the means of production and partially supporting the working classes.

Therefore, for Marxist feminists, the sexual division of labour stemming from the capitalist mode of production is the material foundation for the oppression of women. While men plot to accumulate wealth, women are oppressed by biological reproduction and repetitive of daily labour in the private domain. With this division in mind, Marxist feminists demand, for women's welfare, the full participation of women in the labour market rather than for welfare services that will inevitably be fragmented and somewhat reactive. When full participation is accomplished, then all women as workers will join male workers and work together to abolish capitalism.

Subsequently, Socialist feminists have played a crucial role in the reformulation of orthodox Marxist theory which, they believe, has two main deficiencies: it is gender-blinded- refusing to examine the specific position of women; and it presents virtually no analysis of the family (Dale & Foster, 1986, p. 54-55). According to socialist feminist analysis, patriarchy and capitalism exist independently of one another in two separate aspects, but

they form an alliance to produce the system of patriarchal capitalism that gives rise to the sexual division of labour in the home as well as in the labour market. Thus socialist feminists demand that the welfare state stop reinforcing the division of roles by gender, which promotes the dependence of women and sees the duty of caring as women's natural role, and that the state stop supporting the particular form of family in which the man alone, as the head of the household, is responsible for the livelihood of the whole family.

To summarise, contemporary feminists have produced a large body of evidence and argument that reveals the importance of women to the welfare state and the importance of the welfare state to women. They have developed significant disagreements amongst themselves over how to explain women's negative welfare experiences and what strategies need to be adopted to help eliminate them. Nevertheless, their common argument is that women are suppressed by sexual discrimination in a male-dominated society, even in the welfare state where, ideally, both men and women should be treated equally.

The welfare state gives social meaning and equal worth to the formal juridical and political rights of all citizens. However, it also provides governments with a new means of exercising power over and controlling working-class citizens. Thus, feminists believe it is necessary to investigate the sexually divided way in which the welfare state has been constructed. Their critiques recognise the complexity of social relations of power and inequality as well as providing conceptual categories to clarify and explain them (Cockrane and Clark, 1993, p. 79). On the one hand, welfare states have provided women with material and social improvements such as family allowances and child benefits, access to safer childbirth facilities, more reliable forms of contraception, and employment opportunities. On the other hand, the assumptions behind welfare policies have often circumscribed women's lives, with the consequence that many women's needs have been overlooked or marginalised or existing inequalities have been reproduced (ibid., p. 79).

III. EUROPEAN WELFARE REGIMES

According to Collins Dictionary of Sociology (1991), a welfare state is "any form of state in

which there has been extensive state legislation leading to the state provision of support and services intended to improve the quality of people's lives". Lowe (1993) has asserted that the term "welfare state" was coined in the 1930s. It was first used in Germany as a term of abuse (Wohlfahrtsstaat) against the Weimar Republic, whose constitution was seen to have burdened the state with so many social responsibilities that it undermined the country's political and economic viability. With the subsequent rise of totalitarianism, the term was used in Britain as "an antonym for the 'warfare' or power state" (p. 10). A welfare state, Lowe argues, was initially conceived to be an organ of the community whose role was to serve the welfare of its citizens and respect international law, as opposed to the "warfare" state which imposed its will on both its citizens and its international neighbours.

Since its early use, the term "welfare state" has defied exact definition. In Britain, Derek Fraser (1984) has noted that a welfare state is a system of social organization which restricts free market operations in three ways: by the designation of certain groups, such as children of factory workers, whose rights are guaranteed and whose welfare is protected by the community; by the delivery of services, such as medical care or education, so that no citizen shall be deprived of access to them; and by the transfer of payments which maintain income in times of exceptional need, such as parenthood, or the interruption of earnings caused by illness or unemployment. Above all, the main purpose of a welfare state has been to achieve full employment; to this extent, Mishra (1990) argues that a commitment to full employment needs to be seen as a central component of mid twentieth-century welfare states. For example, the modern British welfare state emphasises a policy of full employment, unlike the older welfare programmes that provided public assistance before the First World War. However, some researchers would differ with this conception of the term "welfare state". Cochrane & Clarke (1993) have excluded a commitment to full employment as a defining characteristic of a welfare state while noting that "the general move away from full employment policies is so well recorded in all but a very small number of countries"(p. 3). And, Dominelli (1991) suggests a broader definition: "the welfare state comprises.... those public and domestic relationships which take as their primary objectives the well-being of people" (p. 9).

In *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (1990), Esping-Andersen examines the degree

to which social rights permit people to have a livelihood independent of market forces; the role of the welfare state as a system of social stratification in its own right; and the effect of welfare states on capitalist economies, particularly on their employment patterns. He argues that welfare states can be divided into three ideal types of regime: "liberal", "conservative" and "social democratic". According to his argument, the liberal regime has means-tested benefits, modest universal transfers, and modest social insurance schemes. Benefits are provided to low income, mainly working class dependents, according to strict rules and with associated stigma. He classifies the USA, Canada and Australia as liberal welfare regimes and suggests that Britain is closest to the liberal model. West Germany, Austria, France and Italy are designated as conservative regimes in which rights are linked to social status and social policy emphasises the preservation of status differentials. Social insurance excludes non-working wives and family benefits encourage motherhood. Wives are covered as the dependents of working men not as individuals. Social-democratic regimes provide universal benefits at middle-class standards. In contrast to the conservative model, this regime attempts to minimise the burdens of family life and to maximise individual independence. Thus, the state takes responsibility for child care and care of the elderly and disabled; consequently, it accepts at a welfare expenditure the price of allowing women to enter the labour market (Langan & Ostner, 1991. pp. 128-129).

Langan & Ostner (1991) also point out that even though Esping-Andersen's identification of the different types of welfare states shows the potential for conflict between men and women as well as other social categories, "the question of gender is not systematically built into" his framework (p. 130). In particular, they argue that his use of the concept "decommodification" - "the degree to which individuals can uphold a socially acceptable standard of living independently of market participation" (Esping-Andersen, 1990, p. 37) - takes no account of gender differences. Women are not central to Esping-Andersen's theoretical framework and they only appear when the statistics make it necessary. Admittedly, Esping-Andersen does recognise the importance of women in relation to the labour market, but he does not explain how the labour market is gendered nor the factors which determine women's employment. Therefore, Langan & Ostner conclude that, as none of the welfare regimes have overcome the problem of treating women as resources, welfare

regimes imply dilemmas and tensions.

Naturally, the welfare state was welcomed by early and mid-twentieth century women, because the majority of feminists saw nothing inherently wrong in women being economically dependent on men so long as they received some protection. Wives who had “a legal right to a share of their husband’s income” were the solution to married women’s economic vulnerability (Dale & Foster, 1986, p. 9). However, nowadays, the welfare state is criticised by feminists who see in it gendered segregation. They have subsequently provided a framework for a cross-national analysis of welfare state regimes which pays due regard to the inequitable relationship of men and women to the welfare state. The next section, therefore, is an exploratory review of feminist critiques on modern welfare states.

IV. GENDER IN THE EARLY WELFARE STATE - FEMINIST CRITIQUES ON THE BEVERIDGE REPORT

The British welfare state in its modern form was founded in the 1940s because like other Western nations, Britain faced the major task of social and economic reconstruction at the end of the Second World War. Cockrane and Clark (1993) divide the period of emergence of the British welfare regime into two phases: the first from the mid 1940s up to the mid 1960s, during which the broad framework of the welfare state was established; and the second from the mid 1960s to the mid 1970s, when considerable expansion and modernisation took place on the foundations established in the immediate post-war period. The distinctive characteristic of the early post-war period was the “expanded role of the state” in providing benefits and services and in economic management (Cockrane and Clark, 1993, p. 19). Various social reforms in society were also introduced in this period as the state promoted the principle of “universal provision”.

The form of welfare state that emerged in Britain was the outcome of the particular balance of international and domestic social forces in the immediate post-war period. Free market economies had been seriously discredited by the world-wide slump of the 1930s and by the slide of much of Europe first into fascist dictatorship and then into war. Different

countries developed different solutions to these social changes by creating a variety of forms of welfare capitalism. Cochrane & Clarke (1993) note that the traditional British establishment was deeply tarnished by bitter memories of the long years of the depression, by the shame of appeasement, and by its early incompetence in the conduct of the war. After 1945, the leadership of the Labour party, experienced in earlier minority governments and in the war cabinets, stepped forward to implement a national revival programme largely drafted by two Liberals - John Maynard Keynes and William Beveridge. These legislative reforms inaugurated the welfare state met the social needs of economic reconstruction. At the same time, the terms of Britain's subordination to the USA constrained the development of the welfare state. In fact, in the late 1940s, "US economic pressure reinforced domestic political opposition to social reform and spending on social services" (Cochrane & Clarke, 1993, p. 22). These contradicting economic and political considerations, therefore, framed the internal reconstruction of the British economy and state. At the core was an acceptance that a level of government intervention in economic management was necessary to overcome the inherent instabilities of a free market economy and promote full employment. As a result, the state gained acceptance as the national co-ordination of both economic and social management (*ibid.*, p. 22).

From a feminist point of view, it is clear that the development of welfare is not simply a story of equality and full employment, but a story of the maintenance and modification of existing social divisions, particularly those of class and gender. For example, the Beveridge Report embodied a set of assumptions about gender relations and the family; women were seen primarily as wives and mothers whose main access to National Insurance and National Assistance benefits was via their husband's wage-earning skills (*ibid.*, p. 77). The guiding principle of the Beveridge Report, produced in 1942, was universalism, the provision of benefits to all sections of the British people. There are four different proposals in the report: a National Insurance Scheme, a National Assistance Scheme, Family Allowances, and Tax Relief Schemes.

The National Insurance Scheme was the main proposal. Those who were employed would pay into a fund to cover themselves against injury, illness, unemployment, and old age. However, from the feminnists, women were treated differently than men. Women

were divided into three groups; single women, housewives and widows. According to Beveridge's classification, single women were classified as potential labour power and they would contribute as much as men. Housewives would not be covered for risks in their own right, but through contributions from their husbands' earnings. Married women workers were to be offered a special married women's option; for reduced contributions, they were eligible for reduced benefits (Measor & Williamson, 1992, p. 60).

Beveridge(1942) was also concerned about the low reproduction rate in the British nation and about proposed Family Allowances. He stated that the "vital work that women had to do was that of raising children who would ensure the continuance of the British race and ideals in the world". On this point, Anne Davin (1978) notes that the Beveridge Report was founded upon the ideology of maternalism, just as it reinforced previous imperialist and racist discourse. She argues that the influence of eugenicist ideas upon Beveridge is clear; and these are linked to an assumption of male superiority and female dependence. Maternity was thought to be "the principle object of marriage" and "the attitude of the housewife to gainful employment outside the home is not and should not be the same as that of a single woman" (p. 13). Therefore, welfare policies for women always reinforced the woman's role as mother and caregiver in the family. Women were treated differently by the welfare state for this reason.

The family wage earned by men was also seen as the linchpin to the link between the labour market and the distribution of social roles and dependency by age and gender within the family. The notion of a family wage justified the differentials between male and female wage rates and reinforced the gendered division of labour. Men and women, in this context, were identified as either breadwinner or dependent. Even though a single woman works in the labour market, she is considered as a temporary worker because a woman's primary role is assumed to be a caregiver in the family. It is clear that this construction of breadwinner and dependent is a disadvantage to women, since they have no power to control economic forces and must rely entirely on their breadwinner-husbands or the state as a surrogate breadwinner.

The Beveridge assumption of full employment again reinforced the idea of the family wage, dependent and breadwinner, since it applied only to full male employment. Men

whose employment was interrupted by sickness or unemployment were paid state benefits but married women workers were paid reduced insurance benefits because they were not expected to claim benefits in their own right. It was assumed that their illness would not mean a loss in income. Women once again were discriminated against by this system. Although Beveridge welcomed the idea of companionate marriage, regarding it as a partnership; it was not an equal partnership. He also believed that husband and wife had strictly traditional, complementary roles to play, but the wife was always seen as the caregiver to the young and old.

Measor and Williamson(1992) also suggest that the Beveridge Report was based upon a number of assumptions about women, most specifically about their role in the family and the labour market. The first assumption was that most women would marry and the second was, once married, the majority of women would stop working and would remain at home (p. 62). However it is not only Beveridge's assumptions about gender roles that are highlighted for criticism. These feminists suggest that the Beveridge Report operated with a particular and patriarchal model of family (ibid., p.69).

Beveridge's conception of the family is based on the "normal" family that is composed of male breadwinner, female caregiver and their children. In fact, his conception of the family has continuously reflected on social policies and welfare policies even in the current welfare state. Many feminists have criticised the conception of "normal" family that Beveridge has assumed in his report and Beveridge's followers still adopt in the current policies. Concern about the family has usually been expressed in gender-neutral terms, but behind this facade lies a well-established and remarkably consistent set of assumptions is that the proper activities and behaviour of men and women. One assumption continues that the family consists of two parents and their children, while the never-married, one-parent family is considered a deviant family form. In this middle-class model of family behaviour, men enter the public world as breadwinners and officeholders and women stay in the home or do part-time work. The family that follows this model - male breadwinner and dependent wife - is considered the normal family. Jo Van Every (1991) worries that the contention that the family assumed by British social policy consists of a heterosexual, married couple and their own genetic naturally conceived children, and these underlying assumptions have

negative implications for anyone whose living arrangements deviate from this pattern, whether through conscious choice or for some other reason such as cultural difference.

In the early twentieth century, policy-makers had a firm idea about the kind of family they wished to support, ignoring the economic realities of the working-class family. And, Jane Lewis (1992a) claims that since 1945 professionals, especially psychologists, doctors, social workers and health visitors, have been content to exhort married women to carry out their duties as wives and mothers. As a result, women have experienced considerable contradictions in their relationship with the government and its policies.

As Ann Dally says, "There have always been mothers, but motherhood was invented" (Hirsch, 1989, p. 14). The notion of motherhood was reinforced in a special social, political, and economic context. In fact, the ideology of motherhood as the ideal of femininity coincides with the institutionalisation of childhood during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As the private sphere became isolated from the public under industrial capitalism, motherhood elevated middle-class and upper-class women into a position of increased personal status, if decreased social power.

Jane Lewis (1992a) notes that anxiety about the family first became rife at the turn of the century because of concern over the low quality of army recruits during the Boer War. The second period of public anxiety came at the end of the Second World War when professionals and politicians stressed the need to rebuild the family, and attention focused squarely on the issue of "adequate mothering" as the surest means of securing future social stability. Lewis (1992a) points out that politicians and policy makers always had in mind a particular family form they wished to promote and also made assumptions about the parts men and women should play in it.

At the turn of the century, the focus on the family was given additional impetus the current dominant view of how social change could be achieved. This view emphasised the importance of changing the habits of individuals. Additionally, these existed the firm conviction that the family should be the main supplier of welfare in society. These concerns about the habits or the behaviour of the family and its members stem from the belief that the nation's strength depends on the quality of individual families. The family is regarded as the bedrock of the nation.

The twentieth-century family has also had to carry the burden of official expectations regarding the welfare of its members, in particular the care and successful socialisation of children. This expectation is deemed necessary for the maintenance of social order as well as family stability. The crucial link between the public and private facets of the traditional family has been emphasised continuously. The socialisation of children and the importance of good mothering were the most frequent themes in this discussion.

Therefore, feminists assert that the Beveridge Report's assumptions about women allocated them to their role as dependents in nuclear families. Its provisions have had the "effect of enhancing the difficulties of women of living outside marriage and nuclear family structures" (Measor & Williamson, 1992, p. 69). Beveridge has also been criticised for treating the family as a single, individual unit and failing to recognise that there are different interests within families. Wilson (1977) argues that Beveridge denied the conflict between men and women in the family and upheld the structure of patriarchy. Above all, by basing his proposals on his assumption of what a normal family was, Beveridge had a tendency to exclude other forms of family such as one parent families. For these reasons, the Beveridge Report has been criticised by feminists.

The emergence of the feminist critique of welfare in the 1970s and '80s in particular illustrates that there has been a greater recognition of the complexity of social relations since the Beveridge Report was written. Much of the feminist work exploring women's experience of the post-war systems, such as social security, pensions, health care, housing, education and personal social services, found that policy, provision, and practice in these areas were undermined by the main assumptions about women's lives: that their primary roles were those of wife and mother, and that they would be financially dependent upon their husbands. Feminists, therefore, claim that Beveridge's report resulted in a wide range of disadvantages and inequalities for women in Britain in the post-war welfare state.

However, Measor & Williamson (1992) ask if it is fair to criticise the policies and actions of 1942 in light of the values and conditions of the 1990s. They argue that Beveridge's Report was written in a period that we would now consider the high point for the traditional family. It is also possible to argue that Beveridge's assumptions were shared in a genuine consensus in post-war Britain. Additionally, Measor & Williamson point out that when the

report's proposals became law, many of the most innovative were dropped. For example, Beveridge had proposed a marriage grant; its intention was to assist with the expense of setting up a home and it proposed to provide domestic help for housewives who were ill. Beveridge had also suggested a separation allowance to be paid to "deserted wives" if the breakdown of the marriage was clearly not their fault. However, these proposals ran into insurmountable attack by the opposition and were subsequently abandoned (Measor & Williamson, 1992, pp. 61-62). Thus, Measor & Williamson endeavour to recover some of Beveridge's integrity while turning their attention to his successors in government.

There clearly have been massive changes in welfare since 1942, but there has not yet been another "Beveridge report" commissioned to study people's changing needs. For instance, as noted earlier, Beveridge's National Insurance Scheme reinforced the practice of making social benefits contingent, in large part, on labour market participation. As a result, married women were dependent on their husbands for pension contributions. This remains the case; public law still treats the "couple as a unit" for benefit purposes and "aggregates their needs and resources" (Lewis & Piachaud, 1987, p. 35). A new report that reflects new social change, familial change and women's various status would help turn around problems regarding women and family in society.

V. GENDER AND POVERTY

Jane Lewis (1992b) points out that the most significant social changes of the post-war period have affected women especially. She highlights three important social trends: "first, the increase in the percentage of married women in paid employment; second, the dramatic increase in the divorce rate, especially during the 1970s and 1980s; and third, what has been called the amazing rise of illegitimacy which began in the 1960s and has increased rapidly again from the late 1970s" (p. 2). The last two trends have obviously resulted in a steady increase in one-parent families (90 percent of which are headed by women) and a correspondingly high incidence of female and child poverty.

A turning- point in the number of one-parent families became evident in Britain's 1968

census. Death continued its decline as a major cause of one-parent families and became a relatively minor one (although it is still the predominant cause in father-headed families). And “from the late 1960s onward there was an accelerating growth of one-parent families resulting from separation, divorce, and motherhood outside marriage”, explains Baker. (1991. p. 112). So, it is certainly the case that “lone parents have become more ‘normal’ in modern British society” in a straightforward numerical sense (Hardy & Crow, 1991, p. 5). However, as Hardy and Crow have noted, lone parents still occupy a more marginal position in contemporary British society. Their marginalisation is most immediately apparent when their disadvantaged economic position is considered. The majority of lone parents have to manage on incomes barely sufficient to cover basic requirements. Additionally, their marginal position in social life has been effected by lack of income as well as by the couple-centred family ideology which permeates the social structure.

Though there are many variant forms of lone-parent households, the majority of lone parent households in modern Britain are headed by lone mothers who have become so through the processes of separation and divorce; single (never-married) mothers are the next most important group in numerical terms. Widows and lone fathers make up a relatively small group by comparison. However, the common experience for all categories of one-parent families is likely to be poverty or, at least, relative economic disadvantage.

In reality, as Jane Lewis (1989) notes, the number of lone mothers on long term supplementary benefit (or social assistance) has doubled during the 1980s. Indeed, “the level of poverty amongst lone parent families together with an increase in their numbers from 570,000 in 1971 to 940,000 in 1984” (p. 595) should be noted. The gradual development of state benefits has provided a means for some women to escape the humiliating private dependency on the family, as well as a more adequate level of income. But “state benefits also serve to structure and support female dependency in the family” (Lewis & Piachaud, 1987, p. 32).

As far as women’s poverty is concerned, attention should also be focused on particular groups of lone parents rather than on lone parents as a whole. Amongst the variant family forms, “never-married, single, adolescent parents” were the poorest group (ibid., p.5). Never-married mothers are also disadvantaged because they are portrayed as different

from other lone parents to the extent that they may have positively chosen motherhood outside marriage. Their situation can be seen to be particularly vulnerable compared to the less disadvantaged position of widows, single fathers, and divorcees.

Lewis (1989) argues that the reason for women's poverty is the continued assumption that the family consists of two parents (breadwinner husband and dependent housewife) and their children, making the one-parent family a deviant family form. In addition, the assumption of the family wage model continues to fuel women's poverty. Because of this model, women's paid work is considered subsidiary to their private domestic role. This construction of women as secondary earners is crucial to understanding the low wages women earn for their work and their unequal opportunities in the labour market.

Hardy & Crow (1991) suggest three possible routes out of poverty open to lone parents. The first solution, increased benefits, presents a host of obstacles, not only relating to cost but also to the mechanics of delivering the payment. The second solution, a route out of poverty via employment, has been pursued in recent years. The third solution, ceasing to be a lone parent and entering into new household arrangements through cohabitation, marriage, or remarriage, depends on individual circumstances and opportunities. However, as Hartmann (1987) notes, many women may prefer lone parenthood to marriage because, although lone parenthood is linked to poverty, it is also associated with greater autonomy and less housework than a conventional marriage entails.

Whether women should be regarded as either mothers or workers, therefore, can be an important issue in solving the problem of women's poverty and their unequal treatment in the welfare state. The modern European welfare states have tended to recognise women, for the purpose of social entitlements, either as mothers or as workers. In France, both roles are equally recognised; in Sweden, in the late twentieth century, recognition as mothers has been grafted onto their recognition as workers. However, in Britain where "the male breadwinner model still has the major purchase", women find that their position as paid workers is, at best, a matter of secondary concern (Lewis, 1993, p. 15). Consequently, the tensions between women's two roles, mother and worker, have probably been greatest in Britain, where at one and the same time government has promoted women's freedom to engage in the labour market while increasing the burden of their unpaid work as caretakers (*ibid.*, p.5).

For the most part, British social policy has assumed that women would continue to carry the burden of caretaking while remaining unequal in the economy. It has therefore ignored the structural causes of female poverty within the welfare state. Recent policy developments in the UK have, in fact, been geared only indirectly to encouraging lone mothers into paid employment. They have instead concentrated on the maintenance obligation of fathers (Lister, 1993, p. 5). So, it is not surprising that women remain the principal victims of poverty (Lewis & Piachaud, 1987, p. 51). Between the ideal and the reality, women who do not fit into the ideal family are disadvantaged and this tension has helped create the “feminisation of poverty”.

VI. CITIZENSHIP

The classic view of citizenship describes the development of three fields of rights - legal, political, social - established between the state and its subjects. These rights promote a formalised system of equality. However, in practice, the post-war welfare state fell short of establishing universal access. For example, in the Beveridge Plan, it was explicit that a married woman's claim to social citizenship was attached to her roles as mother and wife. This condition gave her only indirect social citizenship rights through her husband, thereby reinforcing her inequality and her economic dependency upon men. Since the Second World War, on the whole, social policies have preferred to treat women as potential or actual mothers; thus, the post-war settlement gave married women social rights as dependents of their husbands. This meant first, that women's substantial contribution to welfare, both paid and unpaid, was ignored; and second, that women's needs were defined “in terms of motherhood as a social function rather than on the basis of individual need” (Lewis, 1992a, p. 114). Since the war, the concept of social citizenship within the modern welfare state has remained profoundly gendered with no effective pressure to put a value on women's unpaid contribution to welfare through their work as caretakers. This means that women are, for better or worse, in a contradictory relationship with the welfare state that often sustains them.

In Britain, citizenship, which should be a genuinely gender-neutral term, is based on two different assumptions about men and women. Men are considered as first-class citizens whose duties are performed in the public sphere and women, whose roles are displayed in the private/domestic sphere, are treated as second-class citizens. Therefore, Lister (1993) points out, the “public / private” divide undermines the very meaning of citizenship. If woman’s citizenship is to be equalised, the “public / private” divide has to be emphasised, as a number of women are either excluded from the economy of paid employment by the care of young children and the elderly or they shoulder the double burden of domestic labour and paid work. Feminist analyses have shown that welfare provision, to a great extent, has been established within a two-tier system. There are benefits available to individuals as public persons by virtue of their participation in the market, but these are usually claimed by men. Other benefits are available to the dependents of individuals, usually women (Pateman, 1988, p. 241). Like Lister, Pateman also argues that historically and theoretically, only men have been seen as possessing the capacities required to be considered as individuals, workers, and citizens; this is why women’s citizenship in the welfare state is full of paradoxes and contradictions. Even in the workplace women are still perceived primarily as wives and mothers, not workers, and this supports the common and widespread view that women’s wages are a supplement to those of men.

VII. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, one of the important points to emerge from the debate around women and welfare is that women stand in a contradictory relationship to the welfare state. On the one hand, it can play a significant and liberating role in their lives providing material and social services. In fact, the provision of public welfare services has provided jobs for women, and it has enabled them to “go beyond the home and private relations, to enter the world of work and new areas of civil society” (Sassoon, 1987, p. 172). On the other hand, the welfare state may also serve to restrict women, to define them in certain ways as it cements the existing divisions that separate women from men. Cochrane and Clarke (1993) offer some examples:

Financial dependence on the state, while giving women the freedom to leave an oppressive or unreliable relationship, also throws them into poverty and reproduces existing economic inequalities between men and women.

Wilson (1977) also argues that while solving problems, the welfare state has also created problems for women. She points out that welfare provision operates in a subtle fashion to keep women to their primary task which is the task of reproducing the work force. That the work force should be reproduced is obviously essential to the continuation of society itself. In addition, it is difficult to perceive women's role as a 'job', because it takes place in the family. Wilson suggests that a heavy emphasis on the reconstruction of family life in the post-war period implied a return for women to their traditional role. Therefore, women were considered primarily as mothers and dependants on the male breadwinner

Finally, though welfare provision plays a significant and liberating role in women's lives in some ways, it may also serve to restrict women by defining them in certain ways. In a sense, feminists' critiques on the welfare state is not for only women-friendly state, but for gender-equal state. If a welfare state reinforces the traditional women's role through welfare policies, it would not benefit for its subject in terms of gender equality.

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