

Partnership in Social Welfare  
: the British Experience

R.A. Pinker

The Professor of The London School of  
Economics and Political Science  
United Kingdom

## Introduction

In this lecture I will explore the ways in which the forms of welfare partnership between statutory, voluntary and private sector services have changed over time in the history of British social policy. Prior to the mid-nineteenth century most of the historical examples of effective welfare partnership were local rather than national in character and they developed as a result of adhoc arrangements that grew up over time on a basis of custom and practice rather than law or formal commercial contract. Partnerships, as planned policy enterprises, are modern phenomena.

Most contemporary social service systems are mixed economies of welfare. They are pluralist in their structure and functions. They included statutory services provided by central and local government paid for out of taxes and insurance contributions; voluntary sector - or non-profit making services - funded from charitable revenues; and private sector services provided either through the agency of occupational welfare schemes paid for by employers, with or without contributions from employees, or by direct purchase on the part of individuals.<sup>1)</sup>

All of these three main welfare sectors are what we call formal social services. They are run by large and complex bureaucracies, staffed by paid professionals and other employees and governed either by statute and trading regulations.

There is, however, another dimension of social service which finds expression in the many different forms of care and mutual aid that we, as ordinary citizens, provide for each other on an informal and largely unpaid basis as members of families and local communities. Without the services of this informal sector many welfare needs would go unmet.<sup>2)</sup>

Throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the outbreak of wars and epidemics gave rise to nation-wide problems of destitution and vagrancy. New statutes were passed in 1496 and 1531 prescribing severe punishments for persistent beggars. A statute of Artificers was issued in 1563, designed to check the free movement of labor and to compel able-bodied men to work. New poor law legislation in 1597 introduced a compulsory poor rate (or tax). Most of these early statutes were recodified under the Elizabethan Poor Law of 1601 which required the local parishes to build deterrent workhouses for the idle able-bodied and to give assistance to the genuinely sick and destitute poor.

The poor law was not the only provider of relief to the genuinely destitute in Tudor Britain. Prior to the industrial revolution the main providers of assistance were the landed gentry, the parish churches and countless local charitable institutions. Many labourers and their families were employed as tenants of aristocratic estates. Many of the families of this land-owning class accepted that the ownership of property carried obligations to the poor as well as rights to enjoyment of their wealth. They provided for their workers and families in sickness, adversity and old age from a sense of traditional obligations. These informal networks of support were essentially paternalist in character. They were rooted in traditional notions of authority and hierarchy and the institutions of a unified, organic model of society held together by pluralistic bonds of deference, obligation and entitlement.

By the middle years of the eighteenth century, industrialization and urbanization, were undermining the cultural and economic frameworks of paternalist welfare. And the new doctrines of natural rights propounded by popularisers of Enlightenment thought, as well as the iconoclastic events of the French Revolution, challenged the old values of deference and obligation that were intrinsic to a paternalistic social order.<sup>3)</sup>

An informal system of welfare based on status and custom was giving way to a new industrial order based on contract, competition and market forces. At

its best, paternalism expressed what was essentially a doctrine of partnership, albeit one that was grounded in traditional principles of hierarchy and community. Today the tradition of community still lives on in the search to preserve or restore the virtues of mutual aid and neighbourliness in the great cities of our industrial societies. What has changed in this search for a new model of partnership is its value base. In place of hierarchy we emphasise the virtues of equality. In place of traditional notions of obligation we talk about rights as well as duties.

But what happened to the institutional fabric of statutory welfare provision as the pace of the industrial revolution quickened and the dominant forms of enterprise became recognisably capitalist in character? The old Elizabethan Poor Law fell into decay and disrepute in many parts of the country. In 1795 a new method of providing out-door relief, known as the Speenhamland system 'after its parish of origin' was adopted in other parts of the country. Essentially it was a system of poor relief in which a sliding scale of allowances linked to the size of the family and the price of bread was used to supplement the low wages of agricultural labourers.<sup>4)</sup> Speenhamland was an early example of partnership between a local system of poor relief and local employers but it was a system in which wages were artificially depressed and labour mobility from rural to urban areas was discouraged. And the cost of poor relief rose dramatically.

The reaction came in 1834 when the English poor law was reorganised on strictly deterrent principles. Conditions of life and labour in new classified workhouses were to be made less attractive or 'less eligible' than those enjoyed by the poorest self supporting labourer outside. Relief was only to be provided in the workhouse. The prospect of hard labour, the separation of family members and the stigma of becoming a pauper, when taken together, constituted the 'workhouse test'. Only the truly destitute would accept help on these terms.

The architects of this reformed poor law believed that their new system would allow market forces to operate efficiently and thereby create jobs for

everyone who genuinely wanted to work. This policy, however, was based on the assumption that able-bodied paupers were the main problem. It soon became clear, not only that competitive market forces could not ensure jobs for everyone, but that many applicants for help were sick, handicapped, old and infirm or orphans. The 1834 poor law reforms were, however, based on the explicit intention of fostering a complementary partnership between a new deterrent system of statutory assistance and a competitive market economy.

From 1834 onwards the Poor Law inspectors of the central government tried, with varying degrees of success, to hold the local Guardians firmly to the principles of less eligibility and the workhouse test. They were to find an unsuspected degree of support from a new movement in the field of charitable endeavour.

New forms of charitable aid had developed and grown steadily throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. By the mid-nineteenth century all of the most prestigious hospitals in Britain were charitable foundations.<sup>5)</sup> Other charitable societies provided care for orphans, fallen women, the poor but respectable aged, and many other needful groups.

This growth of charitable or voluntary services was largely unplanned. During the 1860's, however, a group of middle class philanthropists established a new voluntary association called the Charity Organization Society or the C.O.S. The leading members of this Society believed that the unregulated giving of charity demoralised the poor, and created what today would be described as 'a culture of dependency.' The Society decided therefore to follow two complementary policies. First, it supported the principles of the deterrent poor law. It thought, however, that it was possible to identify and separate the undeserving from the deserving poor. The undeserving should be left to the poor law. The deserving should be looked after by charitable agencies run on social scientific principles. Social workers would be trained in new casework methods to assess both the character of applicants and the causes of their

poverty. Poverty they argued was more often the result of weak character and bad habits than of bad luck and structural changes. Those who could be helped to learn how to become independent should be helped to do so within the voluntary sector.<sup>6)</sup>

Many C.O.S. members were elected as Poor Law Guardians where they tried to apply these new principles and methods. The Society's period of greatest influence lasted from the 1870's to the outbreak of the First World War. What accounts for their subsequent loss of credibility and influence? The dramatic impact of the economic booms and slumps of the late nineteenth century caused some sectors of public opinion to question the wisdom of relying on the free play of market forces. The findings of the great social surveys of Booth and Rowntree pointed to structural changes rather than character deficiencies as the main causes of poverty. Consequently, a broader constituency of political support for more state intervention developed and found its expression in the reforms of the Liberal Government that held office between 1906 and 1914.

In looking back, however, we can see that the policies of the Charity Organization Society constituted the first sustained and planned attempt at building a partnership between a deterrent statutory welfare system and the voluntary welfare sector. This partnership was founded on a shared conviction that statutory provision should be kept to the absolute minimum. The partnership eventually collapsed because public confidence in a deterrent poor law fell away and the Charity Organization Society eventually came to share the same public opprobrium that eventually brought an end to the poor law.

From 1905 onwards, the Poor law was gradually marginalised by new central government welfare policies. New statutory services based on insurance principles and notions of civic rights developed in the fields of health care, old age pensions and the care of children. In 1926 the poor law was replaced by public assistance but by the outbreak of the Second World War public assistance had ceased to be either an effectively deterrent or an effectively

supportive welfare institution.<sup>7)</sup>

## **The Beveridge Report**

The Beveridge Report of 1942 set out a war-time blueprint for the postwar reform of the British social services. Its institutional framework was held together by the prospect of a partnership between statutory, voluntary and private welfare. Beveridge proposed a dramatic expansion of statutory welfare service including a universal, comprehensive and compulsory scheme of social security provisions covering the contingencies of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, orphanhood and old age. These services were to be paid for from insurance contributions with a temporary assistance scheme for those people who could not be insured - either because of their age or their physical and mental infirmities. In addition, there was to be a National Health Service free and open to all paid for largely out of taxation as well as a system of family allowances which was also paid for out of taxation.<sup>8)</sup>

The main proposals of the Report rested on the premise that poverty could be abolished, that future Government would support policies of full or near full employment and that the use of social services would express both the rights and the duties of citizenship. These were the elements of what was to be a new partnership between the state and individual citizens. Beveridge envisaged the principle of insurance as being both an expression of collective responsibility and individual self-help.<sup>9)</sup>

Although Beveridge wanted a comprehensive state social security scheme he also thought that it should provide for no more than a basic level of subsistence. This basic level of provision, he argued, would give citizens enough financial security to encourage them to save for their own welfare and that of their dependents, to take out private insurance policies and, more importantly, to take part in voluntary welfare either by giving cash donations or personal services.<sup>10)</sup>

## Critiques of Beveridge

Beveridge never advocated a unitary and monopolistic statutory welfare system. his entire report was pluralist in character. It was designed to encourage the growth of a mixed economy of welfare. The Beveridge Report, and the manner in which it was implemented, have been the subjects of much critical review in recent years. Beveridge's treatment of women has, for example, been criticized on the grounds that most of them were denied equality of status with men as contributors and as beneficiaries.<sup>11)</sup>

Nevertheless, the Beveridge reforms constituted a massive advance in collective welfare provision. Citizens were compelled to pay statutory insurance contributions but they were free to join private or occupational schemes. They could not contract out of the National Health Service but they were free to join private schemes if they wished to do so. Similar arrangements held in education. In housing the dramatic growth of statutory provision was more than matched by the increase in the number of individual owner occupiers. As for the voluntary sector, far from being marginalized by the extension of statutory services, it grew and flourished in terms of both formal welfare organizations and unpaid voluntary services.

The Beveridge Reforms of 1945-51 created the framework of a new partnership in which the subsequent debate about the ends of means of social policy have taken place. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s socialists like Richard Titmuss and other left wing policy analysts defended these reforms and sought to encourage closer links between the statutory and voluntary sectors while opposing the steady expansion of private occupational welfare schemes. They feared that the growth of the private sector would eventually create a new unequal division of welfare between an under-resourced state system and an over-privileged private sector.<sup>12)</sup>

At the same time, free market liberal and radical conservatives like Hayek,

Friedman, Seldon and Harris attacked the post-Beveridge welfare system. They wanted to reduce the role of the state and expand those of the private and voluntary sectors. Their pluralism was individualist, not collectivist, in character. State welfare, they argued, meant high taxes and high inflation. It was an impediment to economic growth and enterprise. Partnership in welfare, they argued, should be based on an ethic of free choice, not a compulsory form of state collectivism.<sup>13)</sup>

Two key points of difference can be identified in this debate which continues today. First, collectivists and individualists disagree over the extent to which social services should be agents of redistribution from richer to poorer citizens. Collectivists favour compulsion through statutory welfare in order to give the poor a wider and more authentic range of choice. Individualists argued that, in the end, compulsion reduces everyone's choices. Secondly, collectivists claim that by guaranteeing everyone a minimal but adequate standard of living they can become more independent and more able to look after themselves. Individualists argue, to the contrary that more state welfare demoralizes the poor and creates a culture of dependency. In their ideal model of a mixed economy of welfare the role of the state is reduced to a minimum and those of voluntary and private sector are expanded to fill the gaps.<sup>14)</sup>

## **Current Policies**

In Britain since 1979 successive Conservative governments have been committed to reducing the role of statutory social services and expanding those of the voluntary and private sectors. Within the statutory sector they have introduced policies designed to replace the old ethos of public administration with a new approach based on the business management techniques of private enterprise. These methods have inclined the promotion of market-testing under which all the major public services are required to compete with private and voluntary sector agencies by tendering for contracts and, hence, for their own jobs. In many sectors of central and local government the statutory agencies

purchase their services from the private and voluntary agencies who act as providers. This new arrangement is known as the purchaser - provider split. In summary, the government is committed to creating a network of competitive quasi-markets within the state system.<sup>15)</sup>

At the strategic levels of policy making the government has published a general Citizens' Charter, together with a number of derivative manifestos, laying down new performance standards with appropriate incentives and penalties. In a series of 'New Steps' initiatives the government has also created a devolved network of new executive agencies responsible for the management of all the major social services, with Chief executive officers in charge.<sup>16)</sup> The old public administration tradition of consensus management has given way to private sector style management, performance pay, and fixed term contracts and quasi-markets.

Prior to the mid-nineteen eighties there was, perhaps, less partnership between the statutory, voluntary and private welfare sectors than there is today and the statutory sector was looked on as the major funder and provider of services. Within the statutory sector, administrators and key professional staff, co-operated on a more consensual and egalitarian basis. Much was written about the importance of informal care but this was seen more as a supplementary form of provision than as an alternative to formal provision.

Today, government policies rest on the assumption that non-statutory services are intrinsically superior to statutory ones. In the new welfare culture of market testing, open bids for contracts and fixed term employment contracts, welfare agencies much compete as well as co-operated with each other. For the staff involved, losing a contract may mean losing their jobs. The Government hopes that over time, the statutory sector will continue as the main funding agency but the non-statutory sectors will become the main providers of services.

The balance of power in the Statutory sector has shifted away from professional workers to a new class of executive managers, many of whom have been recruited from private industry. Within the voluntary sector, charitable organizations are also adopting the fund raising and management techniques of private industry in order to survive and prosper in the new contract culture.

Two paradoxes are becoming apparent as these policy changes gather momentum. First, the government wants to encourage more delegation, more decentralisation, more diversity and more consumer choice in welfare. At the strategic level, however, government agencies remain the key funders of social science provision. The growth of non-statutory services is increasingly dependent on transfer payments from central government exercises over all forms of local expenditure have greatly increased in their stringency.

Secondly, there is the issue of consumer choice. As the social services have adopted the values and practises of the private sector, both the statutory and voluntary sector agencies are beginning to lose their distinctive characteristics. The old mixed economy of welfare may have been dominated by the ethos of the statutory sector but within its framework there was much institutional diversity. There is now a real danger that under the new arrangements the ethos of the competitive market is beginning to dominate all of our welfare agencies. In place of delegation we are expecting more control from the centre.

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As for the relationships between formal social services and informal care - more responsibilities are being handed back to families and neighborhood groups. As the aggregate demand for all kinds of formal social services continues to grow within a framework of economic retrenchment and budgetary restraints, the rules of eligibility and entitlement are becoming more stringent and the scope of effective consumer choice is becoming more restricted.

High levels of unemployment and increases in the numbers of elderly people and one - parent families account for much of the increase in opposition parties

have worked on the assumption that, while voters may want more social services they are not willing to pay for them in the form of higher taxes. The government's resistance to increasing the level of public welfare expenditure is also grounded in the ideological conviction that encouraging business enterprise by cutting taxes is the best and only way to raise standards of living for everyone.

Nevertheless, if we look at the overall level of government welfare spending from 1988-9 to 1992-3 we can see that its share of GDP has risen from 21.4% to 26.4%.<sup>18)</sup> The standard rate of income tax that most people pay on their marginal additional earnings has fallen from 33p to 25p in the £. since 1979 but taxes on many goods and services have risen sharply, as have the levels of National Insurance Contributions (Glennerster, p.178).<sup>19)</sup> There have been major cuts in many welfare budgets but the overall level of expenditure has continued to rise because of the overall rise in demand for services.

## **Social Security**

In the field of social security, which accounts for 31% of all public expenditure in the UK, the government has struggled to keep down costs. In 1980 it broke the link between increases in benefit levels and earnings. Under the provisions of the 1986 Social Security Act greater reliance was placed on selective means-testing in order to focus help on those in greatest need. Members of the State Earnings Related Pension Scheme were encouraged to contract out and join personal pension schemes in the private sector. The cost of most short term sickness and maternity benefits was transferred from the state scheme to employers.

More recently the Government has responded to the increasing cost of supporting one-parent families by setting up a Child Support Agency. This Agency seeks out and compels absent fathers to support the wives and children of their first marriages. This year (1995) the government has decided to require

all recipients of the disabled living allowance to undergo periodic medical examinations. Unemployed workers are no longer entitled to automatic help in paying the interest charges involved in buying their own homes. Henceforward they must take out private insurance cover against the risk of unemployment. In addition unemployment benefits will shortly be replaced by a new 'job-seekers allowance' scheme which will be administered on stricter eligibility criteria.

The value of social security benefits, relative to the gross earnings of all adult male workers in full time employment has fallen significantly. The value of a basic state retirement pension has, for example, declined from 31% of average male earnings in 1981 to about 26% today. Greater reliance on means-testing has forced more of the poorest families into either a poverty trap or an unemployment trap.<sup>20)</sup>

The impact of government policies on living standards shows most clearly in the field of social security. Recent reports including those of the Social Justice Commission in 1994, the latest edition of Social Trends and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation Inquiry into Income and Wealth show that the gap between rich and poor in the United Kingdom is growing wider. The poorest 20 to 30% of the population have failed to share in the benefits of economic growth since 1979. Income inequality has grown faster in the UK since 1977 than in any other comparable country. The proportion of the total population receiving less than half of the average income has more than trebled.<sup>21)</sup> The proportion of households with no wage earner has grown from 3% to 11%. It has become harder for some people to find work, and periods of unemployment are lasting longer. Youth unemployment is a particularly serious problem.<sup>22)</sup>

Two aspects of these trends merit particular attention. First, the incidence of child poverty is increasing. There are now twice as many children in the poorest 10% of families than there are in the richest 10%. Secondly, the gap between the living standards of white and non-white citizens is growing wider. Only 18% of the white population falls into the poorest fifth of the population,

compared with over a third of the non-white population. Over 40% of the West Indian population fall into this bottom group along with 58% of the Pakistan-Bangladesh population. Indians, by contrast are disproportionately represented in the middle and second highest income group.<sup>23)</sup>

When we draw together the findings of all these recent surveys a consistent pattern of income inequality emerges. The incidence of both inequality and poverty is rising. After reviewing all the relevant evidence Hutton concludes that "The first 30 per cent are the disadvantaged" and "the second 30 per cent are made up of the marginalized, the insecure." Job insecurity has become more prevalent because of the decline in the number of fulltime jobs and the growth in the number of part-time workers, many of whom are women who earn less than the average wage for the work they do. Many of these Women have no formal employment protection or right to redundancy payments in the event of dismissal. Across the age range women are over-represented in the poorest 20 per cent. The majority of one-parent families who are dependent on social security payments have female heads of households and women are also over represented among the poorest of the elderly population.<sup>24)</sup>

Forty per cent of the population are privileged in both absolute and relative terms. Most of them hold relatively secure full-time jobs or are self employed. However, if current trends continue with regard to the deregulation of the labour market, full time employment "is set to become the preserve of a minority".<sup>25)</sup>

Much has been written about the rising costs of social security and the consequent growth of a "dependency culture" in which the poor and idle live off the taxes of the rich and hard-working. Such arguments, however, focus on only one aspect of the problem. Many of the poor work in low paid jobs and, taken as a whole, the poorest tenth of the population pay a higher proportion of their income in tax (indirect as well as direct) than the richest tenth, 43 per cent versus 32 per cent respectively.<sup>26)</sup>

## **Health and Welfare care for the Elderly**

Trends in poverty show a relatively uncomplicated process of change towards greater inequality. When we consider trends in the relationships between different formal social services and informal care providers as, for example, with regard to income support, health care and community care, the process becomes more complex. For purposes of illustration we can turn to the infirm elderly who use all of these services.

In health care, the government is still publicly committed to a free and universally available service apart from prescriptions, dental and ophthalmic charges. However, the old structure of funding and administration has been largely replaced by self-governing hospital trusts and fund-holding teams of general practitioners. When in hospital, however, the patient still does not have to pay for the care that is given. Local authorities used to be the main providers of residential and community care for the infirm elderly. With the growth of the purchaser/ provider split and competitive tendering they are still the main funders but more of the services are purchased from voluntary and private sector agencies. These services are subject to selective means-testing in which the elderly person pays a proportion of his or her income for the care received.

For many years, successive governments have encouraged the growth of non-residential care services and a greater use of services from relatives and neighbourhood volunteers. Relatives providing substantial amounts of continuous care receive statutory financial support either directly as carers, or indirectly from the elderly recipients. It is, however, still the case that the greater part of this informal care is given on an unpaid basis.

As economies in health and welfare budgets cut deeper and the number of long stay general and mental hospital beds is reduced more elderly infirm and

mentally confused patients are being returned as swiftly as possible to the community. Hard-pressed local authorities must of necessity apply existing means-test criteria with even greater severity. An increasing number of the elderly infirm are now house owners. If they require long term residential or domiciliary care, all of their assets as well as their income, are taken into account. They must pay the full cost of their care down to the last £8,000 of their assets. Thereafter they are means-tested down to their last £3,000.<sup>27)</sup>

Under current legislation, elderly people can avoid these payments if they dispose of their assets six months before they request assistance and the local authority cannot reclaim these assets. Alternatively they can spend their savings on themselves. Another option is for relatives to assume all of substantially more caring responsibilities. The relatives most likely to be involved are women and it is already a matter of debate as to whether these responsibilities should fall as disproportionately on women as they do.

### **The meaning of welfare partnership.**

These new trends in British social policy pose major questions about what ought to be the balance of welfare partnership between the state, civil society and individual citizens as well as across the generations. It has always been a cardinal tenet of government policy that, in a truly competitive market economy, wealth will trickle down from rich to poor and from older to younger generations. All the available evidence on poverty suggests that this is not happening. As for inter-generational transfers of wealth, current policies are more likely to result in wealth being transferred from older citizens to the state than to their children and other relatives.

Welfare partnerships are more than administrative arrangements. They are institutional expressions of trust that ought to cross the frontiers of class, gender, region, race and age. Most of the British population aged 65 and over have paid taxes and insurance contributions all their working lives on the

assumption that they would be cared for by government agencies in their old age should they become sick or infirm. Current policies are making a nonsense of this assumption.

Under present legislation the adult children of elderly inform parents are not legally responsible for their financial support and care. In the years ahead, however, it is not inconceivable that some future tax-cutting government will introduce a new retrospective family means- test on adult children in order to claw back the money that their parents have already given them or spent on themselves. If and when that happens, British social policy will have come full circle and resurrected the old household means test that brought the old poor law into such disrepute.

In the comparative analysis of models of welfare partnership we must take account of the relationships which holds between the worlds of work and welfare and the different sectors of formal and informal welfare services. But the quality of these partnerships must be judged, not only in terms of their administrative efficiency, but by reference to the principles of justice and fairness that they embody and the extent to which they foster social solidarity in the broader political and ethical meanings of both concepts.<sup>28)</sup>

With regard to the relationship between the worlds of work and welfare it is obvious that without economic growth and the continuous creation of wealth we will not have any welfare services to speak of because there will be no money to pay for them. If we tax people too heavily we may undermine the institutions of wealth creation. If we tax too lightly we may undermine the institutions of welfare support. Britain, however, is not a high tax economy. Tax receipts currently account for 37 per cent of GDP - almost the lowest in Europe and "only some 4 per cent higher than Japan. As Hutton services, if low taxes were a guarantee of prosperity, Britain should now be growing like an Asian tiger".<sup>29)</sup> Most people want to work because they want to be self-supporting. If they cannot work, or find work, they cannot pay their direct taxes and insurance

contributions.

High levels of unemployment inflict a number of penalties on our economic and political institutions the loss of taxes and insurance contributions that unemployed people cannot pay; the cost of the benefits they receive; and the other costs that arise from the loss of social solidarity, the growth in inequality and the personal distress experienced by most of the unemployed and their families.

Outside the world of work another partnership based on trust between government and the governed and between the generations is also beginning to fall apart. At the other end of the age scale, the promises which older generations hold out to their children are not being fulfilled with regard to the substantial minority of young school leavers who cannot find their first job. A recent survey of the values, attitudes and expectations of young school people aged between 18 and 34 years of age provides evidence of increasing alienation, anger, and anti-social behaviour as this generation faces the prospect of unemployment, low pay and job insecurity.<sup>30)</sup>

Finally, it should be noted that, as these policy changes have gathered momentum, responsibility for an increasing proportion of the welfare budget has been transferred from democratically elected local authorities to quasi-autonomous non-Governmental organizations or Quangos that are not directly answerable to the people who use them. In democracies, accountability as well as trust ought to underpin the structures of welfare partnership. The introduction of various Citizen Charters for different social services by no means compensates for the loss of electoral accountability that has taken place over the last decade.

## Conclusion

Partnerships in welfare are a central element in the networks of shared values that hold democratic societies together. They must be based on trust, accountability and the equitable treatment of all the citizens concerned. As one of Britain's greatest political philosophers wrote over two centuries ago "society is indeed a contract. ... but the state ought not to be considered as nothing better than a partnership agreement in a trade of pepper and coffee, calico or tobacco ... to be dissolved by the fancy of the parties ... It is a partnership ... in all perfection. As the ends of such a partnership cannot be obtained in many generations, it becomes a partnership not only between those who are living but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born."<sup>31</sup>)

These words were written, not by some early socialist or collectivist reformer but by Edmund Burke - one of the founding fathers of modern conservatism. Burke understood the need for both continuity and change in political life. He recognised that the continuities would endure only if change came through co-operation as well as competition and the pursuit of common as well as sectional interests. And that, in my view, is the real meaning of partnership in welfare.

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