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What's Happened To the Welfare State?, 1982.

What's Happened To The Welfare State?
Daniel Jeremy Silver
November 21, 1982

Jews have a reputation for generosity. One of the sages used the story of the Golden Calf to prove the point. The Bible reports that three months after the Israelites left Egypt they were brought to Mt. Sinai. God orders Moses to climb the mountain to receive the revelation. Moses is gone from the camp forty days and as the days pass the community of ex-slaves become increasingly anxious. There's no visible presence of authority among them. Finally, desperate, they turn to Aaron and ask him: 'make us a God who will go before us.' Aaron tells them to return to their tents and to bring back their wives' golden jewelry. He melted down this gold to make the molded image. Commenting on this hardly glorious episode, the sage was moved to say, 'what a wonderful people Israel is, generous among the generous, they give lavishly even to the most unworthy of causes.'

Generosity is not an inherited trait. You're not born generous. You're trained to be generous. Children learn to be generous by their parent's example. We train the students in the religious school by collecting a contribution every week. All of us are trained by the pattern of our community for whom the raising of money for various good purposes is taken to be one of the unquestioned responsibilities of Jewish citizenship. Sharing among Jews is a way of life.

Interestingly, the Bible spends little effort encouraging charity. Hebrew has no word for charity. The word we use, tzedekah, means justice. The underlying idea, of course, is that we don't really possess that which we think we possess. We are stewards of God's possessions and we're responsible to God for our stewardship. No one has fully earned his possessions. God provides the earth's bounty. Luck plays a role. "Let not the rich man glory in his wealth." Given this perspective, the Bible does not indulge itself with little homilies on the virtue of charity or publish sad stories of need in order to stimulate generosity. Sharing is a duty, not a privilege.

In Biblical times public welfare was a corporate responsibility. Every

third year the Israelite was to pay a tenth of assessed value of his property to the community as a ma'aser, ani, a tithe for the poor, which would be used to provide food, clothing and shelter to the needy. The Bible also stipulates that after the farmer had scythed his field he may not make a second pass. Whatever grain was left standing is to be left for the poor. A similar rule applied to the vineyard and the orchard. After these areas had been gleaned they could not be picked over except by those whose right it was to come out and take for nothing. There was more. On the seventh year all debts were to be remitted. A poor man was not to be endlessly burdened by his inability to repay what he had borrowed to buy seed for his field. Again, on the sabbatical year a man who had had to sell himself into slavery because of his debts was to be set free. Biblical man was obliged to structure justice - sharing - into his society. Public welfare was accepted as a public responsibility.*

Given this tradition, I am by conviction opposed to the claim of the present administration that the cuts which they have instituted in various welfare services will not hurt the poor because voluntary contributions will make up for these cuts. Biblical man knew that providing for the poor must not depend upon the unpredictable generosity of the wealthy. Voluntary charity is haphazard and erratic while the needs of the poor are constant and unremitting. Moreover, the needs of the poor are usually the greatest when an economy is weakest which is precisely the time when the wealthy begin to restrain their generosity lest their own standard of living be affected.

The lack of realism in the President's argument is shown up by his own actions. His tax record, which is in the public domain, indicates that only the smallest fraction of his income went to charity. His purse has not been open and shared even in prosperous times. When he was asked on the cut-public-services stance of this administration, he's been heard to say: 'the food companies will make up for it by donations for the cuts we institute in the food stamp program;'

or 'if every church would adopt ten poor families poverty would be eliminated because everyone would be taken care of.' Unfortunately, there is no evidence that this wealthy man has gone to his pastor and said, 'I will personally pay for one of those ten families.'

It's true, and a blessing, that over the last several decades the private sector has increased its level of giving. We've seen this in Cleveland in the substantial increase in the level of funds raised by the United Torch. Corporations have increased their giving, but these funds have, for the most part, gone to hospitals, cultural institutions, and universities rather than to direct support of the poor. I see nothing wrong with this pattern of giving. We need these institutions and the private sector simply cannot make up for the billions in cutbacks in aid to the poor, indigent, handicapped, aid to elderly, which our administration has already enforced or intends to enforce. John Bere, Chief Executive Officer of the Borg-Warner Corporation and a leading spokesman of the Businessmen's Council, has said it straight out: 'there is simply no way that business can replace a small fraction of what has been cut away by the government from the welfare support area.'

To look back at our past is to recognize that even a community whose religious tradition is sensitive to justice and need includes those who will not open their purses unless they are taxed. If for no other reason than the hard-headedness of some, public welfare must be a public responsibility. Only what was, in effect, tax money enabled the Jewish community to support that large number of social service institutions which it did. In Europe every community was organized as a kehilah. Each kehilah had a council responsible, among other duties, for the funds necessary for welfare needs. These services included programs to ransom captives, provide dowries for the daughters of the poor, medical care for the indigent and sick, and burial for paupers. Each council would evaluate once a year each household in the community to determine what its fair

share of the cost of such programs should be. Since the community never knew in advance what sums would be needed, each household was assigned a percentage which it was expected to give toward whatever goal was set. Public welfare was a public responsibility. Such an approach is both a just way and sensible, but clearly, it's not Washington's way. The Reagan Administration would like to transfer the public responsibility to the erratic mercies of private charity.

This administration seems determined to reverse the public welfare as a public responsibility principle that has been in place since the 1930's. Most of us have recognized that justice required that we transfer part of the nation's patrimony from the overprivileged to the underprivileged. This Administration's policy seeks the reverse: to transfer the miniscule part of the patrimony shared by the underprivileged to the overprivileged. Put less kindly, but no less accurately, the budget policies of this administration seem indifferent to the desperate needs of the less fortunate and eager to transfer wealth from the less privileged to the overprivileged.

The public welfare policies, begun during the Depression, were just and, to a large degree, effective. By 1947 only thirty-three percent of our society lived on or below what was then the poverty line. By the early 1970's that number had been reduced to eleven percent, a great achievement. If you ever wondered how the society was able to accept the trauma of the integration decision and the war in Vietnam without tearing itself apart, the answer is simple: each year more Americans were living with some degree of decency, if not of comfort, than in the previous year. Justice and social policy were being served at the same time.

Since the early seventies the number of American households with incomes which fall below the poverty line has slowly increased. At first the culprit was inflation, then the recession; now it's government policy. It's ironic that at the very time when we have daily proof of the value of public welfare legislation we are led by an administration determined to undo as much as it can of

the support legislation which keeps food on the table and a roof over the heads of the unemployed.

Proof. What proof?

Cast your mind back to the Great Depression. Then, too, millions of Americans were out of work, but a worker who lost his job in 1932 could not fall back on unemployment compensation, food stamps, Medicare or Aid to Dependent Children of the Unemployed. Farms were repossessed. Mortgages were foreclosed. Soup kitchens existed in every major city and there were long lines of sullen people waiting for a daily handout. Today nearly twelve million Americans are out of work, 10.8 percent of the work force, and there are hunger centers in Cleveland and in all of our major cities where the poor can get food, but today these hunger centers need to feed hundreds, not as in Depression days, thousands. In most unemployed homes there is still food on the table - there are food stamps. There is heat in the bedroom - there are programs which prevent gas shutoffs. There is money for necessities - there is unemployment insurance. These major pieces of welfare legislation, put in place over the last fifty years, have proved their worth during this recession as they have cushioned the shock of the economic turndown. What a cruel irony that at the very moment when Americans ought to be giving thanks that this legislation is in place, that misery is not widespread and that class divisions have not erupted into open confrontation, we have an administration determined to undo as much as can be undone of this welfare program and return to the 1920's with its philosophy of welfare as a responsibility of private charity.

This present administration is determined to cut the size of the Federal budget. It is concerned with the size of the Federal deficit, the amount of money future generations will have to pay for the services our generation has used. There's reason for this concern and most Americans agree with the need to cut the cost of government, but there are many ways to accomplish that goal.

The Federal budget provides for repayment debts of defense, entitlement programs, and human and community services. The administration can do little about the cost of servicing the national debt. It could have cut defense costs but decided, instead, a crash program to significantly increase that part of the budget. Mr. Reagan and his advisers feared we were losing the arms race to the Soviet Union. There are many reporters who say that Mr. Weinberger, the Secretary of Defense, simply took the entire wish list of his department, all that the generals or admirals could dream of, and sanctified that entire list as essential to the national security. What is certain is that the 1983 budget provides for an 18.5 percent increase in defense expenditures, 10½ percent above the inflation rate. The increase is so high that many experts question whether that much money can, in fact, be spent. I am sick at heart at the contrast between the lavishness with which money was spent on arms and the pennypinching which has been going on in the welfare area. No serious evaluation of the cost benefit of various spending programs seems to have been made. Russophobia is costing us dearly and will cost us more. This year 25.8 percent of the Federal budget is designated for defense. The Administration five-year projection assumes that in 1987 38 percent of the federal budget will be spent on defense. I'm neither a pacifist nor opposed to an adequate defense, but surely this cavalier tossing around of billions is neither the way to adequately defend the nation nor the way to help the nation regain its economic and social health.

Forced to maintain debt service and determined to increase defense spending, the administration suddenly cut costs in the area of entitlement, Social Security, old age and military pensions or the area of human and community services. Mr. Reagan's folks, the people who voted for him, draw on these entitlement programs and the administration has so far shied away from reducing these benefits. Where to cut? There was only one place left - the area of services to the poor, the handicapped and the unemployed and the impacted cities in which they lived.

Billions of dollars were cut from the Food Stamp program, Aid to Dependent Children of the Unemployed, legal services for the poor, Medicaid, all programs which support the indigent and the unemployed. From those who lack much was taken; and, incredibly, to those who have, much was given. A recent report by the Congressional Budget Office points out that 40 percent of total savings from benefit reductions made during fiscal 1983 will come from benefits received by those who have incomes below the poverty line, and 70 percent of the savings represents reductions in benefits from those whose household incomes are less than \$20,000. The income transfer stands out in even starker contrast when you consider the implications of the new tax laws. For fiscal 1983 those who earn less than \$10,000 a year will lose nearly \$300 in benefits, and those who have taxable incomes of over \$80,000 will enjoy a net gain of over \$10,000. Justice to the Administration seems to be defined as taking from the poor to give to the rich.

The poor are being used as cannon fodder in the war which this administration is waging against big government and to increase capital formation. The war itself is not unwarranted, but surely there could be other strategies. Billions and billions of dollars could be cut from the Defense Budget. Defense spending is notorious for its waste. This is the area where sweetheart contracts and cost plus contracts are routinely signed by officials who will in a few years be working for these defense contractors and where whistle blowers are routinely pillaried and fired. Surely, all Americans could have been asked to sacrifice benefits.

Plato once observed: "wealth is the parent of luxury and indolence; poverty is the parent of meanness and viciousness; and both are the parents of discontent."

I consider this Administration's budget proposals immoral and unjust, and imprudent. There is a policy guaranteed to open deep and bitter divisions within the society. If we continue to demand sacrifices of the poor in order to advantage the wealthy, then as sure as day follows night the poor will become the many and the angry and will shake off their lethargy and take what they

should have been offered in the first place. This process is already beginning. Erratic and haphazard crime is a consequence of erratic and haphazard generosity. I can think of no greater tragedy than that this country develop the ideological and class divisions which characterize and destabilize most other countries. Class conflicts almost always are a prelude to autocratic governments and a loss of freedom.

Some months ago the President was watching the news on television. That evening the program included a report on an elderly couple who were in danger of losing their home. The man had worked all of his life. All they had was this little home. An unexpected tax assessment had been leveled against it and the man couldn't pay. A government agency was foreclosing on his home. The President was disturbed. This was his kind of family. He picked up the phone and called the reporter. He wanted to know how the Federal government could help. The reporter told him that this case had been brought to his attention by a Federal agency which provides free legal services to the poor, an agency which the President had just eliminated from further funding.

I'm not arguing that the public welfare legislation the last fifty years is perfect or free of abuse. Too much has gone to administration. Some have taken advantage of the system, but I'm convinced that the cost to the nation of welfare crime is but a small fraction of monies we've paid out unnecessarily to defense contractors or the monies lost to the Federal Treasury because special interest groups have lobbied and gained tax loopholes. The poor have no lobbies in Washington to even secure their benefits. Wealthy or poor, people are not saints. Any program will be abused. Any program will be misused. But decency and prudence require a broad-gauged public welfare program. Yes, we will pay higher taxes. Every bill has to be paid. Yes, those with capital will not be able to take as liberally from Social Security as we thought. The middle-class and the wealthy are going to have to tighten their belts. The belts of the poor are

already tight. There's really no alternative and I remain convinced that this country, prosperous even in recession, can find the will to care for the economy without neglecting its social needs.



ON THE ONE SIDE: INEQUALITY KNOWN BY PARADOX;
ON THE OTHER SIDE: BY VULGARIZING AND DEMORALIZING.
A SYSTEM FOUNDED ON IT IS AGAINST NATURE, AND,
IN THE LONG RUN, BRINGS DOWN,

MATTHEW ARNOLD

MODERN IS NO PARAGON OF LUXURY AND INDOLENCE
FOURTH OF ~~MEANS~~ ^{MEANS} AND VULGARIZING, AND BOTH
OF DISCONTENT.

D.I.B.

407.4 TOTAL SAVINGS FROM BENEFIT RELEVANT
COPY (21) LOSS FROM BENEFIT RELEVANT BY
LOSS IN CASH CATEGORICAL, FROM 2/18/68
NO SAVINGS AND REDUCTIONS IN BENEFITS OF
THOSE WHO HAVE PARTLY INCURRED LOSS OF
DOT

Now LOSS THAN LOT - LOSS 276 } FY 68
Now OVER 800 - GAIN 15,180

THE POOR ARE BEING USED AS CANNON FODDER
IN A WAR AGAINST INFLATION AND BIG
BUSINESS

Having said that, I better to add the government
is not a private virtue - we're not even near a
copy of the government, but not even - only a
few times not even - - Johnson has not
been unable to cause real change many of
an not best example charitable institutions -

The books received and not even even
not subjected to change clarity or
to more to conclude - - To be more clear
are encouraging private the best

He that is gracious to the poor lands to
the land

and challenging plans

SEEK Twitter, HELLO no opinions,
TOO no attention, phone for the
WISDOM

The books received as not needed additional to
ENACT
support institutions and to provide
a degree for the taxation and
legislation. The total numbers to TA

community as a lot of continued rolling in and out of the place
in the face of all circumstances, at best functioning in a
haphazard manner and the poor need
constant support - and the needs increase
in the face of a very growing adult in the area
the need to begin to improve the way we are not doing
enough -

Yet the community has been providing the same level of support
that the poor must be able to live with it
have been able to improve the quality of the life
provided the community will be able to play an
active role in the future and the community has
been able to do it



Now we are going to improve the quality of the life
provided the community will be able to play an
active role in the future and the community has
been able to do it

a great deal of the support needed
not only by the community but also by the government

~~additional program - the cost - increased
 the more opportunity - the more of income
REPORT ABILITY - - and it has been seen that
 to give more to the poor - least the poor
more to the rich~~

One scenario - 40% of total - 20% from a
 study released earlier for year by the
Comptroller Budget Office

Q About 40% of the Total Savings from
 benefit reduction - in the 1983
 budget - have just benefit received
 by the LOWEST income group - 20% of
 more than 2/3 of the savings plan from
 reduction in budget of low quality
 as one of the 20% -
 within the 1983 - the amount received by
 the Negro program - under the average for
 \$1200 / household - in one state 10%
 and as many families as 15,130 to household
 under one

Then you have been somewhat misled by the
word F.B. by which we have just never
lost the poor and very much to suffer the
most - the greatest economic measure -

Then to read also - the next

Answered at the top: "NO FOUR MORE
BEING USED AS CANNON FODDER IN A HOLY WAR
AGAINST INFLATION AND BIG GOVERNMENT"

~~We have economic freedom
then have to be economic freedom
But the administration is not finally
restored. -- When it came into office received
Defence Budget 15.17. F152 £10.5% over expected
- and it said as if unusually also the normal
pursuing of disorder and confused confusion used
therefore has a warped DD budget Cost
We have some measures - the measures
DD "unlike rest" - and described at highly
- so much as still more knowledgeable defence
speculated unusually measures of Porter used~~

over all 1875 allocated - 2nd day was - not (10)
 a one was budgeted just - 5 y in private
~~needed before~~ ~~known for~~ 2676 y for
 released Budget to 37.27 - FY 37

To make up a part for the day - school
 land program are being used - The unsub. project
Capital program readily provided fuel for 20
years present needs - added cost - needed
Cost -

AFDC	cost	16.77	FY 73
Ford State		18.67	
Capital		16.76	
Low Income Energy		25.57	
Community Ed.		37.5	
Job Training		76.2	
Community Development		56.7	

(10)
 In 1975 I can see how to present needs & staff -
 - The Project was initiated was near the
night - Project was 1 year ago ago
have to see of an expanded Top management - The
phase status to find all have released first

Super War - Peace - at

(13)

~~and understand the peace - and~~

~~and~~

peace and understand

peace and understand the peace

peace and understand the peace

peace and understand the peace

peace

UN

2364

peace and understand

peace and understand the peace

1944 33% peace and understand

1971 11%

1971 15% peace and understand

1971: peace and understand the peace

peace and understand the peace

**CONTINUED ON
NEXT ROLL**

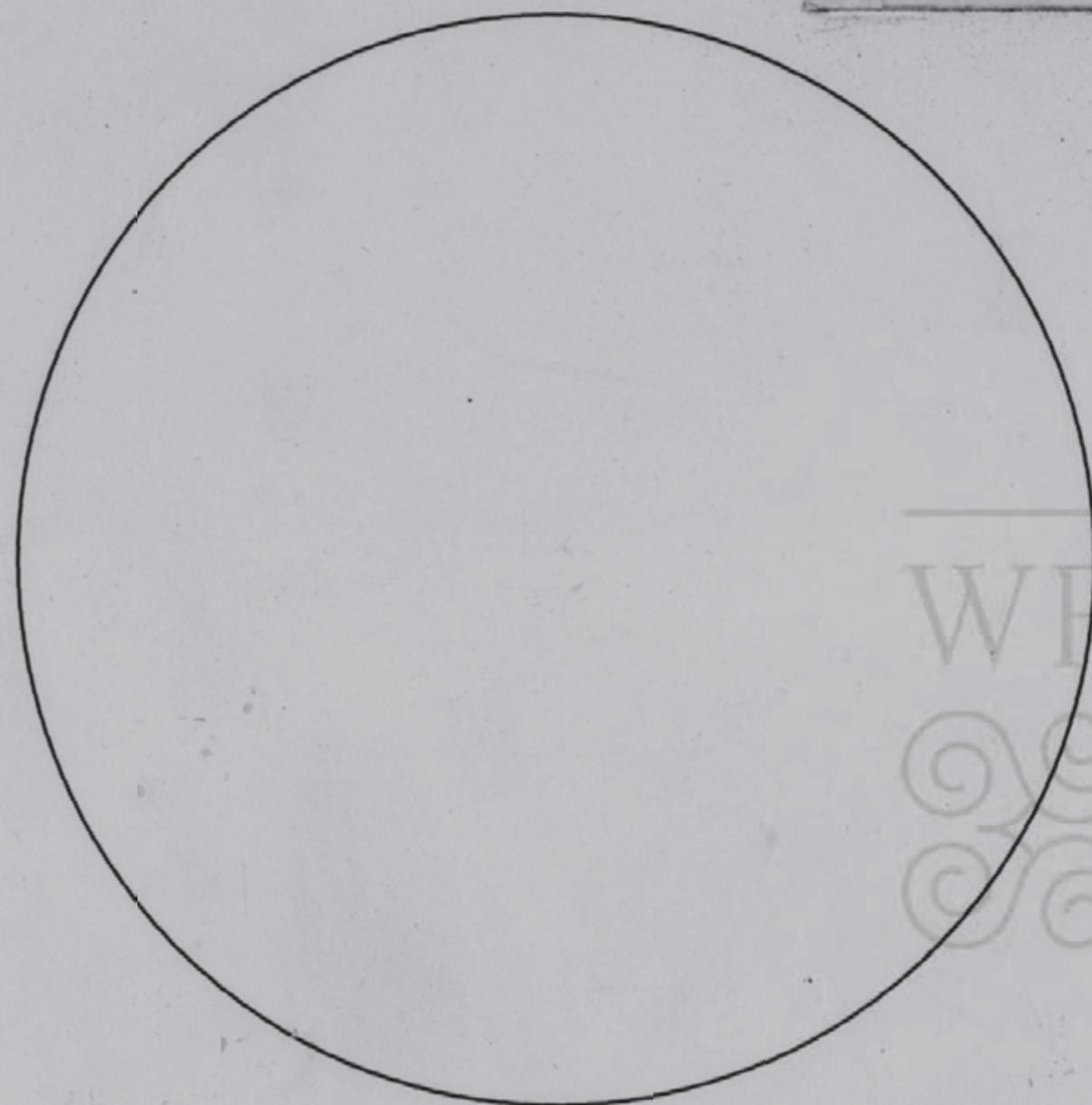
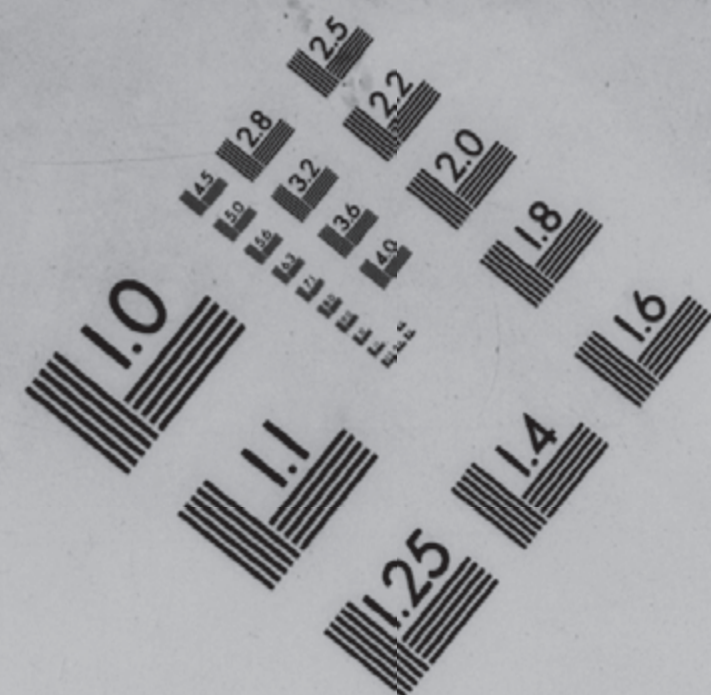


THE WESTERN RESERVE

HISTORICAL SOCIETY

10825 East Boulevard

Cleveland, Ohio 44106



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SHOULD MEASURE .25" AT REDUCTION

REDUCTION RATIO:

**REDUCTION
RATIO 13X**

