



## CHARITY BEGINS AT HOME

by Allan Carlson

Alice Roosevelt Longworth, when she was asked her opinion of her cousin Franklin D. Roosevelt, described him as "One third mush and two thirds Eleanor." The same could be said of FDR's creation, the welfare state: one third mush; two thirds Eleanor. The New Deal was revolutionary in its scope, and like every social revolution of modern times, it began as an effort to restore some form of precapitalist community. The architects of the welfare state saw their handiwork as an attempt to diminish *anomie*, to restore the grounds for community under modern conditions. As one advocate put it, the welfare state was a "manifestation of society's will to survive as an organic whole," in a world where natural communities of sharing and caring no longer functioned.

The family is among those communities said to be failing in their altruistic tasks. In its approach to the family, the Western welfare state has taken two forms. In the first phase, the welfare state applied the communitarian model, seeking to shore up a traditional family order. In the second phase, the more advanced welfare state has fallen back on a

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peculiar form of individualism which aims at a post-family order. In tracing this evolution of the welfare state, key questions become: Are these two phases historically independent, and the progression from the first to the second but an accident of change? Or did the second phase follow necessarily from the first? This discussion may also throw light on the prospects for a conservative welfare state.

The modern welfare state is more than an *ad hoc* collection of services and programs. It is also a set of ideas about the shape of the social order, about the family, and about the roles of men and women. The first welfare state, the communitarian state, had its origins in the 19th century and had certain "social conservative" impulses. The best-known of these sources was the conservative paternalism of Otto von Bismarck, who in the late 1880's linked the provision of social insurance, health care, and state old-age pensions to the promulgation of Germany's anti-Socialist laws.

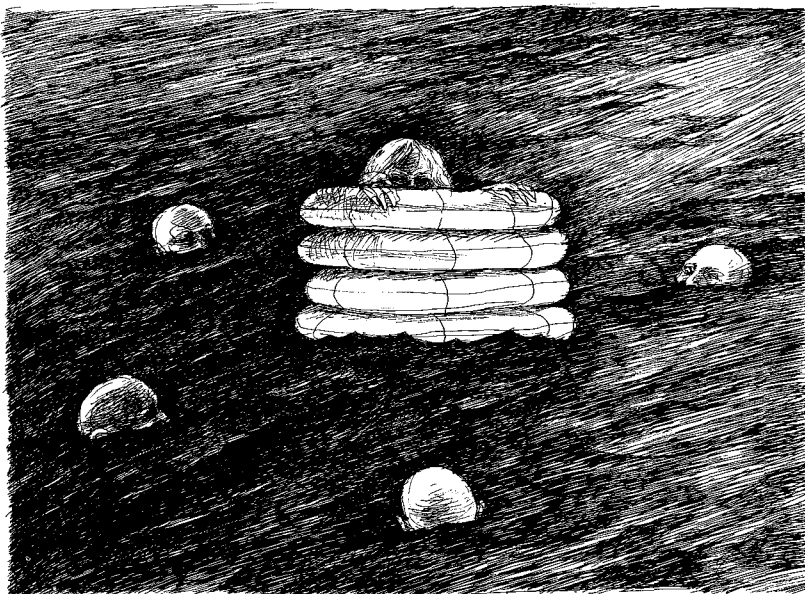
There were other sources: for example, the desire of labor leaders and reformers to protect family life from the logic of the marketplace. A primary cause of poverty, they reasoned, was the poor fit of employment income to family size. Labor called for a family wage for men, to be constructed through minimum wage laws, the tight regulation of female and child labor, and state benefits.

A third, related source lay in the religious sphere, particularly Roman Catholicism. In *Rerum Novarum*, Pope Leo XIII described in moving terms the pressures placed on workers by the industrial system and the need for governmental response.

A fourth and more progressive source with conservative roots was the "child saving" movement. Inspired by the ideas of the Victorian home, these early social intervenors used the power of the state to reform immigrants and the urban poor, to shape them in a normative social image. Children—said to be neglected, poorly supervised, or abused—were their point of entry into the home.

A fifth, still more remotely conservative source for the communitarian welfare state was social feminism. Unlike their sisters, the liberal feminists, social feminists celebrated the differences between men and women. Women, they said, were intended by nature as nurturers, and the task of motherhood should be protected by the state. Through figures such as Jane Addams, Barbara Armstrong, and Frances Perkins, social feminism was a particularly strong force behind the American New Deal.

The sixth and final source was nationalism, particularly of the pro-natalist sort. By the early decades of this century,



most West European societies had rapidly falling birthrates, which were attributed to the economic uncertainties of family living. Security for families, the nationalists argued, would restore national birthrates, building what Swedish Prime Minister Per Albin Hansson once called "the people's home."

The welfare state constructed on these impulses did have an identifiably traditional cast. The state took it upon itself to defend particular patterns of dependency within the nuclear family. The system of tax benefits and allowances assumed and helped to promulgate a social norm and a traditional division of labor by gender. Throughout the North Atlantic world, the triumph of the family wage ideal meant that most wage income flowed into families through the father and was distributed to others under his authority. Women, meanwhile, won control of the children.

The system reached its peak in the 1945-65 era. The Beveridge Plan in Great Britain, for example, aimed at rebuilding family life through policies assuming a return of women to traditional roles. The U.S. Social Security system reinforced the notion of a family wage for men and homemaker status for women. Sweden's Second Population Commission, active in the mid-1940's, charted out a pro-natalist program based on similar themes; and the approach seemed to work. During these decades, the modern nuclear family—monogamous, still patriarchal, and child-centered—reached a peak in influence and popularity. In the United States, England, Sweden, France, and elsewhere, the proportion of the population married rose to record levels; female participation in the labor force remained low; fertility climbed again. The communitarian welfare state appeared to be a triumph, a wonder of effective social engineering with traditionalist intent.

However, a second, intentionally antifamily model of state welfare was already gathering force. The impulses behind this new welfare state were less numerous but proved more successful in the context of the late 20th century.

The first impulse behind the new welfare state was a revived liberal feminism. At the turn of the century, Charlotte Perkins Gilman had laid out a prophetic vision of a world where traditional family life had disappeared, where men and women worked as equals in a market economy, with their children raised by professionals and their private homes replaced by "higher forms of association." In Sweden, Alva Myrdal moved this vision further to the left during the 1930's, reconciling social democracy with feminism and moral individualism. Traditional family structures, she said, were irrelevant to the modern world, while the housewife was an antiquated parasite. Women must no longer be economically dependent on men; nor children on parents; nor the elderly on their families. Universal dependence on the state was the only mechanism that could insure equality. The full cost of bearing and rearing children, she added, must be absorbed by the welfare state.

Myrdal's formulation faded during the 1940's and 1950's, the period of family renewal under the benign sun of the first welfare state. Liberal feminism, though, found new life in the 1960's, and its partisans soon turned their criticism to the inadequacies of the first welfare state. They demonstrated the ways in which the existing structure perpetuated inequality between men and women. They

blasted the notion of a "family wage" as a cover for economic exploitation.

Another and related impulse behind the new welfare state was a secular hunger for the labor of married women. State labor planners in the West began to adapt the view, already popular in the USSR under Stalin, that full-time mothers and homemakers were "a waste of human resources." In the mid-1950's, for example, the National Manpower Council—with the support of the Eisenhower administration—undertook a major study of *Womanpower*. The Council concluded that "the weight of tradition" cramped the life choices of women; that the trend toward early marriage was unfortunate; and that government officials must impart "the revolution in women's employment" to the young.

In Sweden, labor planners turned their hungry eyes toward married women in the mid-1960's. Before that time, the shortfall in Sweden's native labor supply had been met by immigrants. So long as they came from Scandinavian neighbors, the system seemed sound. Yet the complexions of the immigrants were darkening by the early 1960's: Turks, North Africans, and Assyrians. The socialists concluded that their wives would be a more assimilable source of new labor.

Finally, the first welfare state had created a large class of social workers and bureaucrats who were eager to expand their sphere of influence beyond policing the manners and morals of the poor. State power is like a drug: the more power it uses, the more it wants. Indeed, the mark of the modern state is that it can use any movement as a vehicle for increasing its own power—liberal, feminist, or even conservative. Inevitably, governments began reconstructing the welfare state to support the autonomous individual, independent of family status, in a regime of pure equality. For every social function from the cradle to the grave, the state would now offer a substitute for the family.

Where were the advocates and presumed defenders of the first, or communitarian welfare state? Social feminists had faded from the scene after 1940, apparent victims of their own success. In a still unexplained change, the labor unions were giving up their stake in the family and gender questions and embracing feminist egalitarianism with astonishing eagerness. Religious defenders of the first welfare state increasingly succumbed to liberal feminism's "long march through the institutions." Pro-natalists were silent, cowed by the so-called "population bomb." The "child savers" eagerly adapted to the new order, more than willing to turn the tools of their trade—the social investigation of families and the manipulation of children—against the middle class.

Traditionalists looked in vain for help from the business community. Karl Marx always maintained that capitalists would readily sacrifice family life to the quest for short-term profit, and the great captains of industry seldom disappointed him. In the 1920's, for example, the National Association of Manufacturers struck up an alliance with the National Women's Party, the radical wing of the American feminist movement. Today, they embrace state subsidized day care.

What have been the consequences of this new welfare state? First, we see the progressive eclipse of the family and the growing triumph of Rousseau's radical individual. The process is far advanced in Sweden, where state tax and

welfare policies have made traditional family life almost impossible. As late as 1965, 75 percent of Swedish mothers with small children were full-time homemakers; today, 90 percent of them are in the labor force. Sweden's marriage rate fell over 50 percent between 1966 and 1973. The proportion of cohabitating, unmarried couples did rise from 1 percent in 1960 to nearly 30 percent today. But if we combine divorce rate and the break-up rate of cohabitating couples, Sweden's overall rate of "couple dissolution"—a nice modernist phrase—rushes past that of the United States. Sweden has the lowest average household size in the world today: 2.2 persons, and falling. Indeed, living alone is becoming the new Swedish norm. In inner-city Stockholm, 63 percent of all households consist of single persons, a trend sustained by state housing plans. In short, Sweden is becoming a society of solitary individuals, independent of meaningful family ties, who exist in a dependent relationship with the state. This is, of course, the fulfillment of that two-century-old statist vision of man, alone and naked, at the feet of a gentle Leviathan.

The same process is well-advanced in our own country. True, the ideology is harder to pin down, the progression slower and more confused; but the results are the same. Our Census Bureau, with its wonderful sense of language, calls the process "the rise of the primary individual." Between 1790 and 1960, there was no basic change in the familial nature of the United States. Average household size did fall, but for all 170 years, the proportion of households containing five or more persons was much larger than the proportion of one-person households. Since 1960, though, the proportion of households with only one inhabitant has climbed from 10 percent to 25 percent, while the proportion of homes with five or more persons has fallen by half, from 22 percent to 11 percent. While young men and old women are overrepresented, a rising number of "primary individuals" are found in all age and gender categories. And the trend shows no sign of slowing. The result, again, is a deracinated population of free individuals, alone before the state.

The second consequence of the new welfarism is the progressive feminization of the state. I do not mean this in some literary sense: the degree of feminization can be determined by a nosecount of employees and beneficiaries. The new welfare state is woman's domain. The growth in state employment since 1960 has been overwhelmingly female. Today, 70 percent of nonmilitary governmental jobs in Sweden are held by women; in Ontario's Ministry of Community and Social Services, the same 70 percent figure holds.

Women, too, are the main beneficiaries of the new welfare state's largesse: cash and benefits flow primarily to those over age 65 and single persons raising children. The former group is roughly two-thirds female; the latter group, exclusively so. With the assurance of state support for an accidental or intentional child, women have gained, in effect, a new kind of husband: one loveless but symbiotic, one generous to its many brides but occasionally cruel as it exercises its power to take away the children "for their own good." As feminist theorist Frances Fox Piven explains, "the state is turning out to be the main recourse of women," the only alternative to "patriarchal dominion."

Perhaps the progression from the communitarian welfare state to the new welfare state was not inevitable. Apart from the problem of historical determinism, one can point to welfare states where residues of nationalism or religion have retarded the shift: Bavaria, Belgium, and France. Patriarchy, meanwhile, maintains its sway over the Swiss welfare state.

On the other hand, innate pressures toward the shift are strong. To begin with, the very intent of the welfare state—whatever its gloss—is to make public what was once private. When the welfare state turns its attention to the family, this inevitably means influence over human reproduction and control over the redistribution of money from the working to the nonworking population. The implicit assumption of the first welfare state was that the family no longer did either of these tasks well and needed help. The assumption of the new welfare state is that the family should not do them at all. Both views, though, see the family as the problem and the state as the solution.

Second, the very actions of the state disrupt family life. To create a state benefit relieves persons of the need to find private, family-centered, or voluntary solutions to the problem at hand. At the more physical level, state actions such as slum clearance have destroyed authentic, if sometimes degraded, communities and replaced them with social housing too small to contain or control the young or to care for the elderly.

Third, the welfare state is afflicted by a demographic contradiction. In traditional, family-centered societies, young or middle-aged adults have moral and legal responsibilities to support their own parents and bear children, partly as insurance for their own declining years. Yet the communitarian welfare state severs these bonds and transfers intergenerational care to the state. Indeed, in this new order, the value of children is reversed: they become expensive items of consumption for the Yuppies—and would-be Yuppies—who would rather let other people bear and rear the children who will later pay for their retirement. A new international study confirms that any increase in state old-age benefits results in fewer births, and fewer births mean even larger Social Security benefits, without any apparent stopping point. No manner of child benefits, of whatever size, seems able to reverse this linkage.

Fourth, the equality principle cannot be easily contained: the pursuit of "economic" equality easily slips into areas more closely bound to family dynamics. Feminist writers are quite right to be amused by the contradictory goals of political conservatism: the simultaneous pledges to "preserve the integrity of the American family" and to "expand and protect the rights and equal opportunities of individuals." These goals, quite simply, work at cross purposes. There was once, of course, a rival school of thought which said that market forces would interact with cultural heritage and innate human sentiments to produce a relatively decent and humane society. This was the social message of Adam Smith and David Ricardo, but for them it was more a leap of faith than a matter of objective evidence.

In our time, though, new hybrid disciplines have begun to offer empirical data in support of these claims. The so-called "new home economics" (often identified with Gary Becker) testifies to the economic logic of the traditional family resting on a gender-based division of labor. To defend the



family, it appears, is to defend natural, voluntary patterns of dependency that are unrelated to, but threatened by, the state. At a deeper level, "social biology" reveals the family as natural, innate, and biologically derived—an institution that can generate powerful emotional and economic forces that defy the social engineers. Indeed, the family still survives today because of that power: through its ability to block the egalitarian goals of government by passing on to children the inequalities of class, taste, and culture; and through its power of reproduction, the family's trump card over the ambitions of princes and ambitious bureaucrats whose numbers are growing out of all proportion to the nation's birthrate.

Assaults on the new welfare state—both the relatively timid moves of the Reagan administration and the more hearty efforts of the Thatcher government—also take on the quality of "pro-family" acts: efforts that would reprivatize the relations between state and family, men and

women, parents and children.

The other side, certainly, understands what is at stake. Take this report on a 1983 rally protesting a proposed budget cut in British Columbia: "An extraordinary range of individual women and representatives of women's groups converged on . . . the Budget meeting room. . . . Public sector unionists, teachers, lesbian rights activists, long-time general-issue feminists, church women, artists, writers, left-wingers of gaudily-varied stripes, day care activists, rape crisis workers, students, librarians, old women—all came to argue and act."

That's a fairly good contemporary list of society's enemies, all of whom are making good livings out of the state's war on the family. It's also a good indicator of how the politics of the family has merged with the politics of the welfare state.

## HARD LIVING ON EASY STREET *by Dan McMurry*

With the falling leaves and falling temperatures, hordes of newpeople looking for the hungry and homeless descended on the missions and the shelters. Now collectively called Street People, Streetniks (my term) became the "darlings of the press"; every day, in every paper, we are brought up to date about them. *USA Today* for example, recently featured a run-down of their problems, including a photo and a quotation from a "representative" of the homeless from each state—subjective photo journalism and human-interest stories were substituted for objective investigation.

As a teacher, I could not critically discuss the topic with my students, lacking reliable data, reliably collected. As a social investigator, once again I hit the road—or better said, the street.

Easy Street? There were at last count 41 meals served every day to Streetniks in Nashville. If they care to, they can spend all day eating. All you do is line up and eat. No questions asked. No one who wants a warm place to stay is turned away. Easy living? Here is a list of things I got, saw, received, or are advertised as available free for the asking: food, snacks, food to go, clothing, shelter, towels, blankets, soap, personal items, gloves, ski caps, razors, aspirin, cold tablets, Band-Aids, eyeglasses, medical care, prescriptions filled regardless of issuing doctor, emergency medicine, stitches, X-rays, crutches, false teeth, dental care, alcoholism treatment, sermons, sing-alongs, friendship, companionship, opportunities for exercise, walking and strolling, Christmas carols, writing materials, pens, envelopes, stamps, Christmas cards, fruit cake, daily newspapers, magazines, diapers, sanitary napkins, baby food, neck braces, Ace bandages, etc.

Hard living? In a single week, two street people were stabbed to death within four blocks of each other. One stabbing occurred in the *chapel* of the Mission, in the corner



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