

A POLICY PROGRAMME FOR SOCIAL SERVICES

1996:2

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Preface

Many public sector workers provide social services to the communities in which they live: services for people in personal difficulties; working with communities which have been robbed of or denied independence and dignity; services for the unemployed; assistance for migrant workers; housing services. The list would be longer in some countries - the needs often seem endless.

For many years, the work which Public Services International (PSI) has done on the social service arena has been dominated by work on health services. At its 1993 World Congress in Helsinki it was decided that work on social services should be boosted and given an independent existence. So, in June 1995, a world conference on social services was held in Geneva to explore the approaches which public sector trade unions could take to these services: approaches which would reflect the needs and aspirations of both the users of the social services and the workers who provide them.

As part of that conference, there was discussion on a draft policy paper to guide trade unions in their work on social services. On the basis of those discussions, Mick Carpenter from the Department of Applied Science at the University of Warwick in the UK, kindly offered to rewrite the draft paper in line with the conference debates. This revised version was then further discussed by the PSI Executive Committee and finally endorsed at its meeting in April 1996. I would like to thank Mick Carpenter for the substantial contribution he has made to our thinking in this area.

I will not attempt to summarise the paper here. Suffice it to say that, in identifying what we mean by social services, putting them in the context of a world seemingly dominated by economic globalisation based on a neo-liberal model and then examining the challenges facing both social services and the workers who provide them, the paper provides a solid basis for identifying what trade unions must now do.

And that is the next step: getting results. PSI will propagate this paper and will encourage its affiliates to use it in their educational and organising work among members and with NGOs which can often be allies in promoting and defending social services. But, to finish on a challenging note, this work is not about defending the status quo. That is sometimes not worth defending. What we need are dynamic social services, constantly changing to serve the changing needs and wishes of our peoples.

Hans Engelberts
PSI General Secretary

May 1996



Prologue: Hope or Despair?

It is possible to view the end of the twentieth century in either pessimistic or optimistic terms:

The century ended in a global disorder whose nature was unclear, and without an obvious mechanism for either ending it or bringing it under control. The reason for this impotence lay not only in the profundity and complexity of the world's crisis, but also in the apparent failure of all programmes, old and new, for managing or improving the affairs of the human race. E Hobsbawm, British historian. *

All tribes, all nations should celebrate their uniqueness. But a beautiful vision should direct our sense of a universal goal. And that universal goal could be the realisation of the human potential, the eradication of poverty, the enhancement of liberty, and the triumph of justice...As the millennium draws to a close we must not succumb to the notion that we have failed, and therefore must retreat into ever smaller spaces of self-definition. This is precisely the time to dream the best dream of them all: that no peoples will know starvation, that no nation will be oppressed by another, that tyranny will not be able to exist unpunished, that liberty be given a more glorious song, and that the human race - after so standing in shame at its failed possibilities - should now move towards a new millennium where, overcoming our pettinesses and our fears, we might begin to astonish even the gods. "A Time to Dream", Ben Okri - Nigerian born novelist. **

PSI believes that, without closing our eyes to difficulties and uncertainties, there are genuine grounds for optimism that workers can start to solve some of the seemingly intractable problems that beset us:

- The Cold War has ended and the possibility now exists to redirect the energies and resources that were tied up in it to a common search for pragmatic solutions to pressing problems;
- There is a growing international consensus that this should involve such measures as demilitarisation, sustainable development, an attack on world poverty, an enhancement of the position of women, and a democratisation of the world's international regulatory agencies.

PSI also believes that the obstacles which lie in the

way of realising these attainable possibilities are not particularly hard to fathom. They do not lie either in the inevitable failings of "human nature", or the inherent impossibility of exercising political control over a disordered world. Rather it is because although one war, the Cold War, has ended, two others are continuing. The "war against the poor", and the "war against the state", waged in the name of neo-liberal ideology since the early 1980s as the favoured solutions to the global economic crisis which had emerged in the 1970s, are the prime reasons for the deepening of the world's problems, and their apparent intractability. Yet though neo-liberalism's simplistic and dogmatic solutions are demonstrably failing, it is deeply entrenched at national and particularly international levels. It persists either by insisting that the medicine will eventually work or that, whatever the problems that may be associated with it, no better alternative can be imagined. So having failed throughout the capitalist world, it is therefore now being imposed on former state socialist countries.

It is only if we accept this dogma that we need to despair. Renewed hope lies in reversing the ideologically inspired wars against the poor and against the state. This does not mean a wholesale return to the centralised, monopolistic state of old, though it does mean acknowledging some of the strengths that were associated with it, while moving on to find innovative and pragmatic solutions to new problems. Above all it means reasserting traditional principles such as the universal rights enshrined in the UN Charter, while adapting them more to the circumstances of individuals and communities.

PSI believes that the renewal of society through publicly provided social services lies at the heart of the social, political, economic and cultural renewal which this will entail. This policy paper provides an outline framework through which this potential can be realised through national and international action.

We who live at the end of the twentieth century currently have an opportunity that is not likely to come humanity's way again, and future generations will judge us harshly if we do not act on the present possibilities.

**Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-91*, London: Michael Joseph, 1994, pp 562-3.

***World Goodwill Newsletter*, 1995, No 2.

PSI's Positive Vision

PSI has long articulated and campaigned for a positive vision of the global future in which the public services and utilities have a vital part to play in realising. It has resisted the monetarist assault on the welfare state and privatisation that has been mounted over the past fifteen years, and continues to espouse the social and political values that the public services represents in society. Inevitably, PSI's role and policy has evolved over the years. As the public sector spread, so did PSI's membership and function, and it now encompasses a vast spectrum of employment and services. The common factor is not simply that the members are paid from the public purse or employed by a public or analogous body, but that they are employed in carrying out a service to the public. In other words, PSI has grown from being just a defender of public employees (although that is still a necessary function) and is now also a principal defender and promoter of the public service ethic.

PSI is not therefore opposed in principle to change and recognises that public services can be improved. In the past services have often been over-centralised, not always responsive to the wishes of users, and have often failed to assess whether and in what ways they were being effective. They have also been slow to respond to new demands and aspirations. Indeed, as employed workers and users of public services themselves, PSI members and their organisations are often well placed to know how and why things go wrong, and how things can be improved, and have therefore been among the most vocal critics of existing public services. For this reason, one of the most deplorable features of many recent changes is the way in which this knowledge and experience is often wantonly disregarded by those who seek instead to impose change from above. Those employed in services are often regarded as an obstacle to getting things done, and easily replaceable, rather than as a vital resource. Yet rather than being needed to be "whipped" into action, to a large extent public service workers are people committed to principles of public service, whose skills and energies can be harnessed willingly and to much greater effect if reform of the social services is combined with fair and humane employment policies.

This policy document on social services outlines a

way in which this alternative approach can be realised, by finding ways forward which place the needs of users of public service at the centre, but in ways which also treat employed workers as people who also have legitimate rights and needs. It is based on a holistic and humanistic philosophy of social services which sees the "product" as an outcome of complex interactions between users, carers and front-line workers. It therefore rejects "transmission belt" approaches which simply see front-line workers as the instruments of higher management. This "user centred and worker friendly" approach is, in other words, based on a model of joint empowerment, which stands at the centre of the alternative PSI vision of caring public services which are accountable to those who use and work in them. It doesn't pretend to have all the answers. In fact one of the problems with monetarist and managerialist methods is that they attempt a "quick fix" to complex human problems, usually by targeting the more easily quantifiable aspects of public services such as costs and activity rates, and rarely by trying to conceptualise or tackle fundamental issues of effectiveness.

Because the social services deal with highly complex human problems, there will always be a degree of uncertainty about what effectiveness means which can only be finally settled at the point of delivery. However this uncertainty also means that the purposes and ways of working of social services should be open to public scrutiny and democratic debate rather than being left to either professionals or managers to decide. Since social services intervene in highly personal and intimate areas of life, among people who are often vulnerable, this means that though possibilities often exist to help people, there is also scope for abuse of power. This is another reason why the social services must be open to improved public view and scrutiny, including more effective complaints and inspection systems, as well as more positive forms of user involvement.

There is a need for change, but this will only partly involve changes in the organisation and structure of social services themselves. The possibilities of social services depend on the wider social, political and economic environment and whether this has a positive human impact.

The importance of the social services and this wider context has been increasingly recognised by PSI in recent years. In 1972, PSI set up a Health and Social Services Section which has met regularly since, and over the course of these meetings a World Policy Programme for the Health Service was adopted, first by a World Health Seminar in 1982, and then formally by the World Congress in 1985. In 1991 the Health and Social Services Committee decided to integrate social services into the Policy Programme, and the World Congress in 1993 adopted three relevant resolutions (see Appendices):

- PSI World Wide Policy Programme for the Health & Social Services (Resolution No. 41)
- Health and Social Services (Resolution No. 42)
- World Wide Policy Programme for the Health and Social Services (Resolution No. 43).

To some extent, the debate had tended to focus on health services, possibly because the institutions and jobs that are part of the health care system are more easily identifiable than in social services, especially in an international context. However, these resolutions recognised that there must be close linkages between health services and social services so that both are geared towards prevailing needs, and involve an important preventative approach, so turning away from social control and towards poverty reduction and the elimination of misery. Not only does it make sense to tackle the root causes of social and health problems, but it also has wide implications for the sort of structures that are needed. Together with complementary trends in thinking about health care, the role of institutions has also been reviewed. Far more emphasis is put on a policy of community care than in preceding decades, albeit for different reasons. Unfortunately one of the major political motives for encouraging the decentralisation of care to the community has been to save money, and many breakdowns in community care can be clearly attributed to lack of resources.

This broad view of health and social services is important as it underlines their true role of providing security. Health and social services are not simply services to deal with the sick and the disadvantaged; they are the means through which many social objectives can be realised: equality of opportunity, the

provision of financial security for periods of sickness, unemployment, old age and child-rearing, housing, and employment services.

There are many areas of overlap between health services and social services, and these overlaps are very important. Social services, in particular, have a complex function of “networking”, in that they act as a conduit of communication between individuals and the different services that those individuals need at a particular time. Social services therefore have capacity to maximise the effectiveness of other services as well as to humanise them.

PSI therefore recognises that the time has come to give a more central focus on social services in their own right. Since health and well-being are only to a certain extent influenced by medical services, perhaps we should be talking of “social and health services” rather than, as is more usual, the other way around.

The method of this document, consistent with its broad approach, is to work from the “outside-inwards”. Since the national political economic context for social services is increasingly shaped by global influences, it therefore starts by examining policies which PSI and its affiliates should be pursuing at this level, before considering what policies affiliates should pursue at national level. First, however, it is necessary to clarify what PSI means by “social services” because there is not a universally accepted international vocabulary, and consider the political implications.

Defining Social Services

It is important to be clear about what public sector trade unions mean by “social services”, as sometimes the term is used narrowly to refer to certain welfare services, at others in a wider and inclusive sense of a broad spectrum of public services with a social impact.

In Britain, for example, it most often refers to the “personal social services”, in order to distinguish them from health care, and other forms of social provision such as social security, housing and education. The personal social services are particularly associated with social work, and particularly “case work”. In one of the few comparative surveys to date in this area Kahn and Kamerman* suggested that “case service systems” are a distinguishing feature of welfare systems in many countries. As welfare systems develop, they argue, they shift from their earlier function of dealing in a controlling way with poor people under the “poor law”, into a more universal and institutionalised service aimed at providing personalised help to all classes of the population. The key characteristic of case service systems is that they provide help and assistance to individuals. They do not “wither away” with the development of welfare states, but efforts are made to improve their organisation and change their role.

The major exception to this rule was the fact that in state socialist societies the personal social services, particularly social work, were often frowned upon. It was felt that they were a feature of

capitalist society which would be rendered unnecessary under socialism, once people had guaranteed collective access to jobs, housing, education, and income. This often prevented Soviet type societies from establishing adequate personal social services as it would mean admitting that such problems still existed under socialism**. Indeed one of the features of a transition to a market economy appears to be recognition of the need to establish social work and personal social services.

Despite these generally convergent trends, there is nevertheless considerably diversity, as “social work” is called different things (*Sozialarbeiter, assistante social*, etc.), and can mean very different things both within and between countries. The responsibilities and training arrangements (e.g., degree of professionalisation) can vary enormously. In some countries social workers have powers over housing and social security provision; in other countries they do not. In some countries, like Britain, social workers and social services staff have been predominantly employed by the state (though this is changing); in others, like the Netherlands, they are primarily employed by non-state private welfare agencies***.

It is important to realise also that there are different traditions in social work, some of which have acknowledged the existence of political-economic constraints on individual action more than others. There is also an alternative “community work” tradition which, rather than working with “cases”, has worked collectively with communities rather than individuals. More recently there have been calls to make social services more accountable to those who use them****.

PSI recognises that social services are a key element in a network of social provision, including education, health care and housing. In many contexts it will be necessary for PSI to address this broader area of social welfare; but it will be necessary to respond to the more specific area of ‘social services’ which for present purposes can be defined as: social care; community work; social security; and housing.

Such a definition would identify an area of activity for PSI, distinct from health care, but within PSI’s health and social services structures and organisation.

*A Kahn and S Kamerman, *Social Services in International Perspective*, US Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1976.

**A Hegelson, “USSR - the Implications of Glasnost and Perestroika?”, in B Munday ed.

***B Munday, “Introduction”, in B Munday ed., *The Crisis in Welfare: An International Perspective on Social Services and Social Work*. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989.

****P Beresford and S Croft, ‘Community Care and Citizenship’, in *Community Care: Provision and Practice in Community Care*, Workbook 3 of K259 course, ‘Community Care’, Milton Keynes: The Open University.

The Politics of Social Services

Not everyone would of course agree, and the growth of social services and their social impact can be interpreted in politically different ways.

THE FIRST, TRADITIONAL VIEW

First, their development can be seen largely in positive terms. According to this view, over the centuries, the State sector has tended to grow because economic and social life has become more complex and because democracy, as an ideal and a process, has been widely seen as the right path to take. Collective decision making, collective accountability and collective responsibility are an integral part of democracy, and this collective activity is most equitably carried out by properly accountable public bodies. Aspects of economic, social and political activity which over the decades were strategic or whose initiation or continuation was seen as being essential to progress, have often been taken under the wing of the public authorities. The reason was that, under a system of private enterprise, these activities were either ignored because they were financially unattractive or, conversely, were too attractive (and lucrative) to be left in private hands and thus rendered vulnerable to speculation.

THE SECOND VIEW: NEO-LIBERALISM

But there is another view, one which has been prevalent in many countries over the past two decades, which takes a quite contrary stand, namely that collective action does not empower, but stifles personal freedom and restricts economic growth. This view advocates a neo-liberal approach of monetarism, privatisation, deregulation, contracting out and the diminution of the State; one of its chief spokespersons and executors, Margaret Thatcher, went as far as to insist that “there is no such thing as society, there are just individuals”.

The climate that it has created, with break-neck competition based on sub-standard employment conditions, is difficult to escape from. Companies which try to take a longer-term view and maintain decent working conditions are at a short-term disadvantage which, in recession, could lead to insolvency. States in the industrialised world who seek to depart from monetarist orthodoxy by expansionary measures, or

generous welfare measures, are likely to be disciplined by the lack of “confidence” in such measures shown by those who play the globalised money markets. In the developing world, it is likely to lead to more overt means of intervention by the Bretton Woods institutions - the IMF and the World Bank - through “stabilisation” programmes and “structural adjustment” policies which demand privatisation, cuts in public expenditure and deregulation of labour and industry.

Neo-liberalism has caused immense economic harm and continues to do so; it encourages a fatally short-term perspective, and, on the economic front, makes short-term speculative profit its foremost objective, ignoring long-term growth. Some individuals and companies have made fortunes on the back of privatisation and the liberalisation of national and international economies. The majority of people have had to pay for that, not just in direct financial terms, but also in increased insecurity and the destruction of the jobs and services which have fallen victim. A monetarist dogma in the international economic institutions leads to a refusal to take measures to deal with the growing problem of global poverty and unemployment. More than a billion people are in abject poverty, and according to ILO estimates in 1994, there were more than 120 million people unemployed.

The consequences for social services are broadly threefold. Firstly, Reaganism, Thatcherism and their hybrids were to a large extent social and political objectives cloaked in economic terms, and this can be seen by the sort of sloganeering that they engendered, particularly “get big government off my back”. The “nanny state” was also an expression to get across the idea that public services encouraged dependence, even idleness. In focusing on individual attainment, it also sought to apportion individual blame, so the implication was clearly made that unemployment and poverty was the fault of the unemployed, that unemployment was caused by workers “pricing themselves out of the market”, that social security encouraged unemployment and, by extension, that those who received state help were basically parasitic. Neo-liberals set out to devalue the State and the agencies that work on its behalf, especially social services, which have been widely portrayed as creating and

perpetuating social problems rather than solving them.

Second, right-wing politicians have set about restructuring and demolishing social services, and cutting back the resources available to them. Alongside privatisation and contracting out has been the tendency to insinuate private sector methods and attitudes into social services.

A third aspect of the impact of neo-liberalism on social services is simply that the social services have been called on to take care of the casualties of unemployment, poverty and underdevelopment, as well as cope with demographic changes, structural adjustment and disease patterns. So, at the same time that resources were going down, the demands on social services and, consequently, the scale of individual workloads, have gone up.

With services stretched beyond their limits, it is imperative that a concerted international offensive be mounted to promote and restore fundamental ideals of collective social action. No organisation is better placed to initiate this campaign than PSI. Such a campaign needs to be waged within all the countries where PSI has affiliates, and it also needs to be waged at the regional and global level. This is because the attack on social services occurs at all these levels. However it is important to realise that behind the politicians and ideologues lie other interests - particularly those of the Transnational Corporations for whom the welfare state in the advanced industrialised world had become increasingly problematic by the mid 1970s for reasons which are explained later. Although it should not be exaggerated, it is also important to realise that right wing politicians were able to build alliances with ordinary people, who were alienated from aspects of the welfare state, or who had been convinced that the way forward lay through individual rather than collective progress.

Not only is PSI well placed to initiate such a fightback. The time is ripe for an alternative. The triumphalism which accompanied the end of the Cold War is becoming increasingly muted of late. For the first time for fifteen years, monetarism is on the

defensive. Essentially this is because it has not worked on the economic front, and as a result has produced a growing number of social casualties. Economic growth rates in the 1980s were half those of the period from 1945 to the 1970s. In the 1990s they are non-existent. Structural adjustment as a condition for debt rescheduling has not worked anywhere in the developing world, yet the same "shock therapy" is being imposed remorselessly on the former state socialist countries, with damaging social and economic effects.

THE THIRD, 'RADICAL' VIEW OF THE STATE

However, PSI should not seek to initiate such a campaign purely on the basis of defending the first, positive view of the state against the neo-liberal assault. Although there were many benefits associated with what has come to be called the "classic" welfare state in the industrialised world, it was in need of reform, if not the kind of dismantling which has been experienced. Similarly, the traditional strategies of development in the developing world, based on "import-substituting" growth to build up a national market for domestically produced products and finance a welfare state, yielded some progress by the 1970s. However their failure also helped to lay the basis for indebtedness, even if the unfair workings of the world economy were the main cause*.

PSI therefore seeks to campaign for the preservation of what was good about collectivised state action in the past, but also to move forward to a "third" vision of the state beyond both traditionalism and neo-liberalism, based on "radical social services".

This is consistent with PSI policy which has long criticised existing services, for example, for being too focused on amelioration rather than prevention, for being concerned with controlling people rather than dealing with their needs and wishes, and for not giving sufficient priority to the needs and wishes of women and other socially marginalised groups. While the "third" approach is based on a new relationship between the state and civil society, it is wholly opposed to privatisation and the contracting out of whole swathes of the welfare state to commercial and voluntary (third) sector organisations. It is also antagonistic to the so-called "communalism" proposed

most notably by the American sociologist Amitai Etzioni, which is about the state *abandoning* its responsibilities to communities.

It is also consistent with most recent trends towards a “new global politics”. In formal terms, this is most significantly represented by the 1995 Copenhagen Declaration of the 1995 UN Summit for Social Development, and the Report of the independent Commission on Global Governance, *Our Global Neighbourhood*. PSI is developing its own radical approach to the new global politics, for example through A Public Sector Alternative Strategy: the PSI Vision which was prepared for the 1995 Social Summit, which criticised the misplaced faith that still appears to be placed in free market economics, despite 15 years of unfulfilled promises, and the lack of full recognition given to the central part that public services must play in social development and new forms of global governance are to succeed. The “third” view of the state is also consistent with emergent forms of political activity and campaigning. While PSI continues to emphasise the need for strong public service unions able to bargain effectively with employers and, when justified, to take industrial action, it has also recognised the need to work with a broader coalition of NGOs and “new social movements”.

The prospects for success of this strategy are now greater than at any time during the last 15 years. It is clear that neo-liberalism is failing and, in the process, hurting and antagonising more people, and PSI can play a key role in turning it to constructive purposes instead of towards obnoxious forms of nationalism and ethnic hatred which are, unfortunately, the downside of the new global politics. The clearest message to emerge from the PSI Social Services Conference in Geneva in June 1995, was the need for PSI to develop such a global strategy to deal with current problems and possibilities.

Towards a New Global Politics of Social Services

It is increasingly recognised that we live in an increasingly globalised world. When people refer to globalisation they most often, consciously or otherwise, refer to the economic processes by which the world economy is increasingly interlocked into a single political economic system, driven forward by the industrial powers and the interests of Transnational Corporations (TNCs), the speculative finance capital of the computerised world money markets, and regulatory agencies like the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

Politically, this system is either inherently hostile to, or at most gives only grudging support to state welfare. It is associated with a kind of universalism, of the market plus liberal democracy. But the role of the liberal state is largely to provide the framework within which, according to the “end of history” ideologue, Francis Fukuyama of the Rand Corporation, economic “man” will pursue “his” individual self interest. However, even he recognises that the associated “decline of community life” resulting from the corrosive effects of economic individualism, poses problems for the viability of contemporary societies*. As he puts it, “we risk becoming secure and self-absorbed last men devoid of...striving for higher goals in pursuit of private comforts” (p 329).

Pictured in this way globalisation gives primacy to Western individualism and consumerism which, it is assumed, is sweeping the world because it is the most desirable and hence largely irresistible form of social behaviour. So the New World Economy and the institutions associated with it are merely an expression of this desirable state of affairs, which cannot be fundamentally challenged. As Jeremy Brecher and Tim Costello put it:

Just as the absolute monarchs defined themselves as performing God's will on earth, so the new system of economic governance defines

*itself as a tool carrying out the work of the “invisible hand” of the market**.*

There are two ways of challenging this approach: to get people to recognise that this situation has arisen from human political action and is thus not a “natural” state of affairs; to get them to see that the undesirable consequences are much greater than assumed, and cannot therefore be relegated to the margins.

Thus, moves towards the current form of globalisation can be shown to have been initiated in the 1970s as a response to perceived problems by international industrial and finance capital interests. Among these were:

- The challenge of labour movements in the industrialised world which ate into profit margins, and fuelled inflationary spirals;
- The rise of new social movements such as the rebirth of feminism and the emergence of green politics;
- The uprising of the South against the inequitable workings of the world economy, and the demand, at the minimum, for more favourable terms of trade and freer access to the markets of the North.
- The increase in anticipated social costs due to such factors as the growth of poverty and unemployment, and increased numbers of older people.

Although one should be careful not to construct a “conspiracy theory”, the New World Economy can be seen as something which emerged in the 1980s to deal with these problems in a way that suited the interests of elite interests, largely in the North. It sought to construct an international political-economic framework which was isolated from pressures “from below”.

Most dramatically, of course, this was through the policies of “structural adjustment” pursued by the Bretton Woods institutions whose functions changed from those of their original founders in 1944, from the helping agencies of global Keynesianism to the disciplinary agents of global monetarism. However, the international money markets have a way of bring even advanced industrial countries to heel. In the words of Morris Offit, head of a New York bank: “Countries don’t control their own destiny. If they don’t discipline themselves, the world market

*F Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, London: Penguin, 1992.

**J Brecher and T Costello, *Global Village or Global Pillage: Economic Restructuring From the Bottom Up*, Boston, MA: South End Press, 1994, p 63.

will do it for them”*. Even when this is only an implied threat it has served to discipline labour and sanction the attack on welfare states, limiting what can be achieved by mobilisation at the level of the nation state.

RESPONDING TO THE CHALLENGE OF GLOBALISATION

First, as PSI points out in A Public Sector Alternative Strategy, it is important not to exaggerate the extent to which globalisation has occurred. As a result we do not therefore simply have to fall into line with it and there is still much that can be done by political and industrial interventions at the national level. Second, it is important not to ascribe too much success to it. The apparent economic successes of global monetarism, notably the Asian “tigers”, are due to other causes, such as state intervention for investment, mass education, and political repression. Third, the negative effects of these processes are considerable.

The outright failures are becoming only too apparent and too numerous to fully document here, such as: the fact that structural adjustment and conditional debt rescheduling has simply failed to work in the developing world, even though such “shock therapy” is being repeated in the former state socialist countries; the global environmental degradation that is associated with unrestricted global capitalism; the nationalist and ethnic conflicts that are not due to history alone, but also to the damaging effects of the world market (e.g., the relation between debt, falling commodity prices and genocide in Rwanda); the appalling social costs and waste of human resources that arise from growing poverty, unemployment and falling rates of economic growth; the resulting social disintegration that leads to millions of refugees, and to crime, drug addiction, poor physical and mental health; finally, the spectacular and dangerous tendencies towards turmoil within the international money markets as evidenced in 1995 by the Mexican financial crisis and collapse of Barings Bank.

These negative consequences undermine the naive optimism that with the “end of history” the only major problem that people would have in the future would be coming to terms with their individual affluence!

THE RETREAT FROM MONETARISM

As a result of a dawning awareness of these problems, even monetarist-dominated organisations like the World Bank are slightly shifting their ground. For example, the World Bank now acknowledges that there is a need to protect poor and marginalised people as part of structural adjustment programmes if they are to yield economic benefits, through policies of “social conditionality”. It recognises also that investment in health, education, and particularly improving social conditions for women are economically productive as well as socially beneficial. No World Bank official has put this better than A Choski, Vice-President Responsible for Human Resources, when he told the 1994 UN Social Summit that “investing in people is not only the key to improving people’s lives, it is also good economics”**.

Although a full assessment of this shift is not possible here, a number of points can be made. First, the shift to social conditionality is more apparent in theory than practice on the ground, in Washington rather than Africa. Second, to the extent that it is occurring, it represents:

- a response to the combined pressure from NGOs and labour movement organisations like PSI;
- an attempt by the IMF and World Bank to marginalise more progressive and politically accountable UN agencies like the ILO and the WHO;
- a pre-emptive strike, aimed at preventing a more general shift to more progressive international policies and structures, particularly those advocated by the Copenhagen Social Summit and the Commission on Global Governance.

PSI welcomes the shift that has occurred, but will not to be deflected as a result from its campaign for a wide-ranging reform of the world economy and the international system of global economic and political governance. The commitments of the Social Summit and proposals of the Commission on Global Governance (see Appendix) are only a starting point for PSI. For example as far as the Social Summit is concerned, along with the NGO Forum it criticised the misplaced

**Business Week*, 20 March 1995.

**Quoted by *The Oxfam Poverty Report*.

faith that still appears to be placed in free market economics, despite 15 failed years. PSI would also draw attention to the lack of full recognition given to the central part that public services must play if social development and new forms of global governance are to succeed. PSI welcomes many of the proposals of the Commission on Global Governance proposals for democratising the institutions of the UN, and for regulating the world economy. It supports the expanded concept of global security, "broadened from the traditional focus on the security of states to include the security of people and the security of the planet"* . It welcomes the emphasis on "preventive diplomacy" and proposals for social and economic regulation of the world economy, but it is not yet convinced about proposals to expand the UN's peace-keeping role, given the dismal recent record.

Nevertheless, even if these commitments and proposals were implemented in their present form, they would represent a significance shift away from global monetarism and towards democratic governance of the world community. Campaigning for this shift while debating the details therefore needs to form a significant part of PSI's strategy for the global renewal of social services. Specifically, this means campaigning against reactionary responses to globalisation, such as economic protectionism and ethnic hatred, and for:

- the most progressive implementation of the Social Summit, working towards the People's Summit planned to take place in Chile in 1988;
- the ICFTU's "New Deal" and campaign for the Social Clause within international trade agreements, and for the levying of international taxation to finance sustainable and equitable social development;
- action against global unemployment, giving particular emphasis to the expansion of public service employment as employment creating, socially beneficial and sustainable;
- an immediate shifts towards releasing resources for social development, such as the "20/20" proposal to devote 20% of international aid and 20 per cent of national budgets to social purposes; as even modest changes like these can bring huge benefits;

- democratisation, equity between men and women, demilitarisation, sustainability and effective measures against corruption to be central to "conditionality" by international lending institutions - the key to "people focused" social development.
- measures to ensure that theoretical shifts towards more progressive forms of conditionality are matched by effective local implementation.
- political reform of international institutions, of which the proposals of the Commission on Global Governance provide the focus.

Over the coming period PSI will be considering how best to take this work forward through campaigns which build bridges with NGOs, labour movement organisations and other progressive forces, and which link global with regional and nationally based forms of action.

WORLD POVERTY IS THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE

It is clear that the most pressing issue which needs to be addressed is that of world poverty. The reason why more than a billion people across the world are in a state of abject poverty, is largely the result of a deliberately engineered increase in social inequality since the 1980s. A fifth of the world's people now share less than 1.5 per cent of world income. Within the 44 developing nations and 20 industrialised countries for which figures are available, the poorest fifth share on average hardly more than 5 per cent of national income, while the richest fifth commandeer between 40-60 per cent**. Nearly all the problems which the world currently experiences can be traced to the failure of this 'strategy of inequality'*** which it was argued would lift the floor for everyone.

PSI agrees with NGOs like Oxfam who argue that only a renewal of the UN's commitment to universal human rights, made originally after World War 2, can make a significant difference. Some, as we have seen, infected with a *fin de siecle* mood, are pessimistic about the possibilities of doing anything much to deal with the current situation. The world however is infinitely richer now than in 1945 when these universal commitments were made and the economic means to solve human problems potentially much greater.

As Juan Somavia, Chile's Ambassador to the UN and driving force behind the 1995 Social Summit, put it: "The problem is not resources, which are abundant, but priorities"****. What is more, as the Copenhagen Declaration of the 1995 Social Summit made clear, there is a widespread agreement on the *basic* measures that need to be taken (even though this still leaves plenty of room for disagreement). Also, even though developments like the Internet should not be over-romanticised, there *are* positive possibilities to be realised through a "people-focused" form of globalisation that does not divide the haves and have-nots or destroys the distinctiveness of local cultures through a homogenising "coca-cola-isation".

The Cold War has ended. If we can now also end the war against the poor and against the state, a significant corner in human affairs will be turned, with the prospect of a more beneficial future for the people and the planet ahead.

*Commission on Global Governance, *Our Global Neighbourhood*, Oxford University Press p 338.

**UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children 1995*, Oxford University Press, p 3. The sources they draw on are the UN's *Human Development Report 1994* and the World Bank's *World Development Report 1994*.

***A Walker "The Strategy of Inequality: Poverty and Income Distribution in Britain 1979-89", in I Taylor ed., *The Social Effects of Free Market Policies*, London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990.

****Quoted in "Getting the Priorities Right", *Focus on the Public Services*, 1995, No 1 (March).

Campaigning for Social Services at National Level

Combining a global strategy with national and localised campaigns are not incompatible objectives, but a precondition for success. For example “Agenda 21” of the UN’s 1992 Earth Summit in Rio provides many opportunities for locally based “global” campaigns embracing public service workers and NGOs, particularly because emphasis is placed on local government as a means of realising its objectives, and these are already starting to emerge*. The Ten Commitments of the Social Summit will only become a reality if national and local governments act on them, and in practice this means putting intense pressure on them to honour the commitments that were made in Copenhagen.

Of course, concepts of social services - like the Public Service as a whole - are many and various, reflecting national structures and traditions. Not only is the line between “public” and “private”, national and local, drawn differently between countries, it is also a line which has changed over time. Nevertheless there are many common problems which social services seek to deal with, despite different settings and traditions, and it is possible to establish some general principles which can then be tailored to national needs.

In many countries, the imposition of privatisation, contracting out and the importation of “business” methods into the public services - not least through more coercive managerial discipline - are often trumpeted as necessary to provide more efficient and effective services for the “consumer”, sensitive to individual needs and preferences. The reality however is more often rationing, means testing with the aim of controlling costs, and constraining public services from acting in their necessary role as agents of change in the wider society. In other words, fewer rights and less choice. Out of this “reality” a basis exists to develop broad based campaigns for genuinely alternative social services which are well-funded and truly

accountable to those who use and work in them - which are, in other words, “user centred and worker friendly”. PSI remains convinced that this is best achieved by services that are in the main publicly funded and provided. At the same time, where services have been privatised or contracted out it is vital that alongside campaigns to bring them back into public ownership, inefficiencies are exposed, and the pronounced tendency to sacrifice of quality, equity and effectiveness to short term private gain of higher management and shareholders.

BASIC PRINCIPLES

There is no doubt that in an increasingly uncertain and disordered world, many people are looking for the reassertion of basic principles which they can support. The fragmentation of their immediate environment - with unemployment, disintegration of family structures and uncertainty about the future - is compounded by the confusion that is apparent at the global level. This makes the role of the State very important; people who realise that, individually, they are limited, need and expect the State to protect them and to create a stable environment. The need for stability has also been echoed by industry, so that it can take a longer-term view of investment. On the other hand, there are also pressures in the opposite direction. There is a widespread feeling that, as Daniel Bell puts it, “the nation state is becoming too small for the big problems of life and too big for the small problems of life”**. People want to have more say over public decisions and services and more self-direction in their own lives. Although neo-liberals have used this as a means of gaining support for anti-state measures it can also be harnessed to revitalise the local state as more innovative and “people friendly”, with social services as an important means of realising this potential. This means striking a balance between the traditional “dependable” strengths of the state on the one hand, and the more “radical” and innovative measures associated with the “third” view of the state referred to earlier.

Despite these positive possibilities, the trend over recent years has been for State provisions to be diminished and for more emphasis to be put on individuals to take a greater share of responsibility for

*Jim Mullins, “The Planet’s Hidden Agenda”, and Stuart Hall, “Keeping it Local”, *Red Pepper*, No 10, July 1995.

**Quoted by David Morris, “The Return of the City State”, *Resurgence*, No 167, 1994 (December).

their own welfare (and that of their dependants). This has been manifest in pensions, housing, health care, social insurance, employment schemes, etc. Those political forces (including governments) which publicly decry “social engineering” have in many instances carried out the most blatant restructuring in society; for example, through the creation of a massive pool of unemployed and people in insecure employment, as well as by channelling social services away from those who do not fit their stereotypes; e.g., one parent families and cohabiting couples, and gays and lesbians.

This is one example of where new lines have been drawn in social services, but they can be found everywhere. Certainly there is need for reform, but not with the sole aim of diminishing social security so as to promote economic development. Privatisation of services is not a more efficient way of serving the client or society - far from it - but it is a way of producing a short-term cash inflow from the sale of public assets, as well as generating profits for the associates and friends of government. Not surprisingly, multinational companies have been quick to seize the opportunity of buying into the more profitable areas of social service provision, for example residential homes for the elderly.

CHANGE AND REFORM

The way that social services are developed in the future will be an important - possibly the most important - deciding factor determining the future shape of society; social services are a barometer both of society's problems and its commitment towards solving those problems.

Fundamental statements need to be made about the role of social services. To begin with, people must be clear about what they expect from the State in terms of social services and to do that they need unbiased information about the current situation and where it leaves them now and in the future; they must also be clear about the implications of present decisions for future generations. This must include reliable information on demographics, changes in the global location of production, economic and employment trends, opportunities for education and training, and changes in disease patterns. If individuals and communities

are really going to play a greater role in decisions about social services, then they must be properly informed and offered a full spectrum of choices, not just “sold” a political ideology. Individual choice must include the right to participate collectively as citizens and not just as solitary customers.

As a basic principle, social services policies must set out to prevent poverty rather than just treat its symptoms; policies must be comprehensive and universal, aiming to provide all those social services to all those people who need them. Provision should not be limited to providing the minimum, and systematically diminishing eligibility, access and range of services. Social services must be available as a fundamental right, not as the result of discretionary administrative decision. They must be organised democratically in ways that make services responsive to the needs and wishes of users and carers.

Social services should be closely linked with other services, and where possible be interdisciplinary. Only then will they realise their potential to deal with people's needs holistically, avoiding the tendency to fragmentation, and for marginalised people in particular to fall outside the net. Above all social services must be combined with a wider economic and social strategy that promotes sustainable growth and social development.

ENABLING INDEPENDENCE

Social services should be aimed at providing sufficient and appropriate “enabling” support to encourage self direction and independence. This is especially important for people with physical, sensory or mental disabilities who wish to live as “normal” a life as possible, including the possibility of fulfilling employment and a satisfying social life. People place enormous value on their independence and will place corresponding value on the help that they receive in being able to remain independent. This also requires firm measures, with legislative back up, to prevent discrimination in the wider society.

INDIVIDUALLY SENSITIVE SERVICES

In order to carry out their function effectively, social services must work with the individual, and try to understand and identify her/his needs and concerns.

Those needs and concerns differ greatly from person to person, depending not just on their physical or mental circumstances, but on their education and training, their personal history, their family situation, and their financial position. It is completely inappropriate to classify people solely according to identified disability or condition; this is just as true for those who are, for example, visually impaired, as it is for an older person, or someone with diagnosed mental illness (these are of course not mutually exclusive identities). One person may seek to share experiences with others in a similar situation, whilst others will want to get away from being grouped like this and want to enjoy the company of a wider range of people; others may simply want privacy, to have some time away from day-centres and be able to read or watch television on their own for a while. Some may want to look after themselves to the greatest extent possible, including looking after their own home and finances, whilst others would prefer these burdens taken off their shoulders, at least for a while. However, everything must be done to make the choice of independence an easy rather than difficult one, and opportunities must be provided for people to discuss their own situation and “advocate” their own collective interests.

CARERS

Social services must also be attentive to the needs of unpaid “carers” in society, that is to say, those who look after dependent friends or relatives, often without much outside support or understanding. They, too, need their independence and the possibility to have a social life, take holidays and enjoy social interaction. Overwhelmingly these carers are women who in many societies spend as much of their life caring for dependent parents as they did caring for their children. They are often “invisible” and are rarely included in the list of people who have a need for social services. Of course, they also need more equal relationships with the men who also have these children and parents. Furthermore steps should be taken to facilitate a more equal distribution of caring responsibilities between men and women.

Above all, carers need to be recognised as important producers who in fact shoulder more responsibility for welfare than the state. They should not be used as cheap labour, and means need to be found for

ensuring that they do not find themselves in poverty as a result of carrying out important responsibilities on behalf of society.

It also needs to be recognised that social services often need to play a mediating role between carers and users. Sometimes users themselves would prefer to receive care from someone outside the immediate circle. Sometimes users will want to assert their independence, while carers may tend to act protectively. The general principle should be that caring should be a freely entered relationship on both sides, in order to prevent resentment or even abuse.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

Needs and concerns also vary with time and circumstances, and social services must be prepared to be flexible in providing for those changes. Given the diversity of needs, it is likely that the services or support that a person needs may involve more than one department or provider. This could involve assistance with housing, transport, education, employment and so on. Clear lines of communication between different departments or providers of social services, as well as between social services and other agencies, must be in place. Experience has shown that people get a good deal of informal information about social service-related matters, so social service providers should make sure that reliable information on how to approach social services is available through other bodies and groups; for example, clubs and associations, charities, public libraries, the media - and increasingly through computer networking. With the increasing multi-cultural nature of many societies, it is important that information should be available in a form which is readily understood by non-dominant groups, including in multiple language versions, where this is relevant.

RESOURCE PROBLEMS

As with many other public services, there is frequently a problem of balancing quality and quantity of social services, which is exacerbated by lack of resources. A lot of emphasis must be put on spending sufficient time with individuals to assess their needs and to work out with them the kind of support that is appropriate and this is clearly resource-intensive.

Furthermore, those whose needs are the greatest are frequently those who cost the most to support in the community.

It is possible to do a great deal with few resources, as those who work in social services have amply demonstrated, but this cannot be considered an ideal situation or one which should be tolerated as a permanent situation. The “temporary slow down” of social services very easily becomes a permanent decline which, once started, is virtually impossible to reverse, as the gap between what is and what should be becomes ever greater. It is very important, therefore, that resourcing social services is not seen just as a short-term cost, but as a long-term investment, avoiding the economic, political and social consequences that inevitably erupt from an uncaring and brutalising society. Those who live in hardship can very soon find themselves sliding into abject poverty, and eventually marginalised from society. Social services must aim to build social cohesion rather than to exacerbate social divisions.

DISINCENTIVES

It may seem futile to identify needs if there are not sufficient resources to provide the appropriate facilities to match them, or if there are inadequate planning mechanisms to take account of changes in needs. In fact, it can create disincentives within social services, as staff may feel that there is no point making the public aware of their rights to services if there is insufficient resourcing to provide those services when they are sought. This can encourage providers to conceal rather than reveal what services are - in principle - available, in case the resulting demand over-stretches resources. It can also mean that services are provided strictly in accordance with current resource limits, causing waiting lists which impede access, and in practice taking away people’s basic right to services and creating the impression that public services are incompetent.

Another result of under-resourcing is that staff are forced into prioritising, which in itself is not necessarily bad, but it should not be allowed to deteriorate into a situation of permanent crisis-management, nor should it result in shifting the responsibility for shortcomings on to individual social service staff,

when the real responsibility lies with those who set overall targets and budgets, particularly politicians.

Therefore programmes to identify needs must go hand in hand with commitments to ensure that they are met.

VOLUNTEERS

The growth of NGOs, and their increasing political power and importance at local, national and international levels is one of the most significant developments in recent years affecting social services. PSI affiliates need to give careful thought to ways of joint working which are mutually beneficial.

The role of volunteers and voluntary or non governmental organisations (NGOs), has therefore to be carefully evaluated. In many countries they play an important role in helping particular groups, both directly and through fund-raising, and they can sometimes act as a special interest lobby and as a raiser of public awareness. Some organisations may even receive public funding to carry out some of their activities, and enjoy special fiscal status.

However, there are drawbacks. The essentially voluntary nature of these organisations means that their continuity is not secure and their public accountability is doubtful. They are selective in the groups that they assist and this inevitably leads to some groups being left uncatered for. For these reasons, they should not be allowed or encouraged to replace formally accountable, publicly funded providers. The more progressive organisations themselves recognise that they need to work in partnership with the state rather than replace it, and have resisted attempts by neo-liberal politicians to use them to undermine the welfare state. Many have also sought to make themselves more accountable to those who receive their services. Voluntary organisations are highly diverse and some have more praiseworthy aims and working methods than others.. Ways have to be found to harness the altruistic potential of volunteering to the needs for social equity and democratic accountability.

PRIVATISATION

A clear distinction must be drawn between those organisations which operate out of charitable or altruistic motives and those which operate for profit. Increasingly, shortages in social services are becoming institutionalised, with the gap being met by private

bodies. This can include user fees, contracting out and privatisation.

There is no justification for hiving off public responsibilities for the provision of social services to private companies, especially when so many are only able to compete because they pay low wages, offer little job security and frequently use part-time, temporary or casual staff who do not have the proper training or experience. These workers are also much more difficult for unions to organise, service and defend.

MONITORING

Private service companies which are out to make profit have very little incentive to carry out services other than those which are closely defined within the terms of their contract. They often manage to negotiate let-out clauses to allow them to avoid serving difficult or expensive clients; these people are liable to fall through the safety net as a result. This, combined with mistakes and poor quality work, means that there has to be careful monitoring of the performance of private companies, which adds to their cost and to the frustrations of both clients and staff. However, in the drive to reduce costs, all too often there is inadequate provision left for proper monitoring and it is frequently devolved to users to fulfil the monitoring function by standing up for their rights and complaining.

Whilst an efficient complaints and review mechanism is important, covering the statutory, commercial and voluntary sectors, the emphasis should be placed on preventing poor service rather than reacting to service failures after they have occurred.

One of the most important ways by which unions can fight to regain public social services is to insist on effective monitoring and, indeed, to monitor private contractors themselves, drawing attention to contractor failures and insisting that public agencies impose the proper sanctions. Wherever possible, privatised social services should be taken back into public hands and carried out by direct labour.

INEFFICIENCY

Studies of privatisation have shown that savings which were initially targeted have failed to materialise over time, and that the recipients of services, as well

as those involved in the delivery of services, have suffered; some of them have been pushed out of the system altogether, and the community as a whole is poorer as a result. Yet the private provision of elements of social services is increasing and will probably continue to do so, at least in the short term, as political and economic circumstances have been created which make a variety of forms of privatisation more possible, for example, through compulsory tendering.

FIGHTING CONTRACTING OUT

In order to protect social service workers, unions have taken different forms of action, including negotiating no-contracting-out agreements, guarantees of no job-loss, advance notice of contracting out plans, and the right for staff to put in their own bid to keep the work in-house. Having a say in the terms of the contract is also important, so as to ensure that private bidders are having to provide at least the same level of access, eligibility and service, and that private bids include the cost of monitoring and supervision - and, where necessary, rectifying mistakes. Unions should also insist that terms and conditions of employment, including social welfare benefits, are maintained, and that all those who work for the potential contractor have the right to join, or remain members of, a union; unions should co-operate to see that, whatever happens, workers are organised. When contracts are put out to tender on this basis, it will often be very difficult to find private sector bidders and it will slow down, if not prevent, the privatisation taking place.

PRINCIPLES OF FUNDING

The State and public agencies not only have a role in budgeting and monitoring expenditure, but also in how the revenue for funding is raised; voluntary organisations do not have the same degree of control over their funding, which is, by definition, not compulsory and is dependent on the largesse of individuals, companies and others. There is no equity built into voluntary financing, so a relatively poor individual may contribute, whilst a rich company may choose not to.

Social services work best when their system of financing is compulsory, and the level of contribution

takes into account the wealth and income of individuals and commercial undertakings. In other words, an important aspect of social service provision is the maintenance of an equitable and effective taxation system.

As well as being socially desirable, there are sound practical reasons for putting the financial emphasis on *setting up and providing* services, rather than on *pricing* services and regulating them according to market forces.

People turn to social services when they need assistance, so obviously they are not in the best position to be able to pay for them at the point of need. This is not only true of groups within society, but also of individuals. It makes sense for an individual to contribute to the financing of social services when s/he is in employment rather than in retirement, unemployed, disabled, homeless or destitute.

At some point in their lives, everyone will have need of social services, but it is wholly unrealistic to promote the idea that the individual should be responsible for making their own personal provisions. Firstly, many people would not do it and so the State's role of being the final "safety-net" is certain. In any case, no one's life goes according to plan and it would be impossible for all but the very rich to make personal provision for every eventuality based on accurate risk assessment. One of the many virtues of a publicly, collectively financed system is that the risk is spread as widely as possible, so the risk to the individual is minimised. It also means that, where there are fundamental demographic changes - such as that now being faced because of growing numbers of older people, particularly in industrialised countries, both the financing and the planning of social services can be reviewed.

Specific Social Service Issues and Problems

By their nature, social services deal with diverse sets of issues and problems and in a policy document of this kind it is not possible to be comprehensive. Nevertheless it does seem worthwhile to discuss one or two key issues.

GROWTH IN NUMBERS OF OLDER PEOPLE

In present circumstances, it is inevitable that a lot of attention is focused on the short-term. But it is crucial to the continued relevance of social services that sight is not lost of the long-term horizons. Provision of social services for older people is one issue that can and should be planned in advance.

Even those countries which are economically powerful have fears for the future; to begin with, not all of them have comprehensive social services - most notably the USA - and those that do are concerned that more older people will significantly increase social costs, as older people - especially the very old - have more need of social services (retirement pensions, appropriate housing, community medical care, domestic help etc.). At the same time, the funding base will be smaller, firstly as the proportion of people of working age will be less and secondly because, if present trends continue, many people of working age could be either unemployed or in part-time or temporary employment.

The increase in numbers of older people, which is particularly a feature of industrialised countries, is not something that has been suddenly discovered; birth and morbidity rates give decades of advance notice of a process like this, and the increased disintegration of the three-generation family has been steadily charted. Despite this, very little has been done to respond to the challenges that this presents. Proposals have been put forward to raise the age at which people are entitled to retirement benefits and pensions, to extend minimum qualification periods for pensions and to reduce the real value of pensions. None of these options is acceptable, as they treat ageing as though it were socially undesirable. In fact,

applied in any other context, they would be seen as disincentives. The fact remains that few countries have introduced any major changes to the way in which their pension systems are financed.

One of the most important issues to consider is the means by which people's need in old age for community and residential care can be assured in advance. At present older people are often becoming victims of policies to exclude them from expensive health care and transfer them to cheaper, increasingly rationed and means-tested social care. A trade union response to this needs to be twofold:

- Assert the continued right of older people to good primary and secondary health care;
- Recognise that good social care will sometimes be more appropriate, but that it should be provided on the basis of need alone.

Some countries are seeking to deal with this need appropriately by providing in advance through taxation (Denmark) or social insurance (Germany). In principle PSI would prefer the former to the latter, but either is better than the favoured neo-liberal "solution" of individual insurance.

However, as Anne Howe explained in a paper to the PSI Conference on Social Services in June 1995, older people are likely to need social care intermittently, at least until later old age, and the most important political challenge is to provide adequate health care, income and housing for the duration of old age, as well as prevention of disability in working life, which can also do much to prevent or limit the subsequent need for social care*.

Though the demand for social provision for older people is a major issue for industrialised countries, it is important to remember that it is also becoming an important policy question for developing societies. Structural adjustment policies, migration from the country to the towns, and wars are all factors which bear heavily upon them. At the moment, however this is often offset by the fact that older people are often regarded as an "asset" rather than, as in many western countries, a "burden". One illustration of this given to the June PSI Conference was the fact that, in many African countries, when an old person dies, it is felt that a library has been burnt down.

This is clearly an important area of PSI general

*A Howe, "Integrating Health and Social Services for Older People", Paper to PSI Social Services Conference, Geneva, 1995.

campaigning on social services, and a specific focus will also be provided by the UN's International Year of the Elderly in 1999.

SOCIAL SECURITY AND EMPLOYMENT POLICY

Some governments are hoping to supplement state pensions by encouraging occupational and vocational pensions, but linking pensions to employment will only help those who are employed; those who are unemployed will not benefit.

Employment-related benefit systems also tend to put women at a disadvantage, as they are more often in forms of employment which do not qualify them for social security or have spent, not always by choice, many years out of the paid workforce to care for children. Employers deliberately try to exclude staff from pension and other social insurance rights by diminishing job security.

Furthermore, the days when people could expect to stay in one job for the whole of their working lives are gone, and existing pension arrangements do not perform well where employment is not continuous. A major difference would be made to older workers and to the job flexibility which employers say they want if it was made possible (or compulsory) for these employment-related benefits to be portable from job to job.

Trade union demands for full employment and job security are therefore central to the issue of funding future social services, including retirement pensions. This raises bigger issues than can be adequately dealt with in a general paper of this kind, but a few pointers can be made about this fundamentally important issue:

- Policy needs to adopt a pragmatic mixture of both demand and supply side measures. However excessive fear of inflation at national and international levels is preventing the implementation of such a balanced and "broad spectrum" approach.
- Investment in manufacturing is likely to eliminate rather than increase the number of jobs;
- The shift from manufacturing to services has led to some increase in jobs, though not sufficient to replace those lost, and they are typically part-time and low paid;

- Many service and white collar jobs are now being wiped out by investment in new technology and associated managerial changes.

Strategies for full employment need to take these trends into account. One priority is to reduce the working week without reductions in pay. However, precisely the opposite is happening, as neo-liberal policies and global pressures are forcing "core" workers to work longer rather than fewer hours. Second, employment creation is most likely to come through the expansion of inherently labour intensive public services, and this will also provide the opportunity to reduce increasingly intolerable existing workloads. Third, in an era when the traditional work-ethic has diminishing relevance, the case for continuing to tie social security benefits to participation in paid employment makes increasingly less sense. Thought therefore needs to be given to the pros and cons of basing social security systems more on a guaranteed minimum income paid to adult individuals than on work incentives, and shifting employment policy towards the provision of access to publicly useful activity, whether as paid or voluntary activity, or a combination of the two*.

Such radical solutions should not of course be embraced lightly, as they have risks attached to them. However the failure to think of imaginative solutions to the current global employment crisis may be very high, in terms of crime, social disintegration and even wars. Nevertheless it underlines the point made earlier in this paper, that employment policy should be thought of as a social service and not just in economic terms.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Children and young people are important assets of a society, and there is abundant evidence that they have been adversely affected by neo-liberal policies. It is important that social services deal with children and young people as people in their own right, and take their needs and wishes into account. Too often services deal with the effects of poverty and oppres-

*J Rifkin, "The End of Work?", *New Statesman and Society*, 9 June 1995.

sion rather than prevent them at source. This is a major reason why child care services often seem to fail.

Child labour is a major scourge in developing and even industrialised countries. It is a major obstacle to sustainable development, and a denial of a child's right to education. Improvements will often come from the enforcement of existing ILO standards, and through devising social service solutions which are beneficial to child and parent alike.

It remains the case that one of the best ways of helping children is by helping their parents and particularly their mothers, financially and by other means; e.g., through family allowances and day care. Children as well as adults suffer when particular family forms, such as women-headed single parent families, are stigmatised by policies devised by the neo-liberal right. Women are the major producers and users of social services and the most important way in which they can be improved is by making them more "women friendly".

An international consensus has now emerged, since the UN Cairo Conference on Population and Development in 1994, that empowering women in relation to their reproductive choices is the key to dealing with poverty and population pressures. Policies such as China's one-child policy are unnecessary as well as being a violation of human rights.

As far as young people are concerned, social services - including social security and employment services - have an important role to play in easing the increasing difficult transition to adulthood, as represented by youth unemployment, AIDS and increased risk of suicide in young men. Yet recent policy trends by some governments have made the situation more difficult, for example, by cuts in benefit, student grants, etc.

Unions and Social Services

Unions are critical of the shortcomings of social services, and many support reform. However, they do not agree that the answer lies in making social services behave more like private sector businesses, which is the direction that neo-liberal policies are taking. Cut backs and fragmentation are not going to take away the problems, still less are they going to promote the solutions.

In conformity with the approach of seeking to engage preventative rather than simply curative measures, unions want to take part in an in-depth analysis of the problems which social services are called upon to tackle so that their root causes can be identified and dealt with. A serious attack on poverty and unemployment are central in this process as, without doubt, many social problems are compounded, and often caused, by poverty and unemployment. In recent years, economic policy has accepted, and sometimes even promoted, unemployment as a consequence of fighting inflation. Unions have consistently warned of the dangers, but both national and international financial institutions have been intent on strict monetarist measures being introduced, even in the poorest countries of the world. Tackling the root causes of social problems demands a strong political will; a sense of collective responsibility must be engendered if tax payers are going to support fiscal measures which would put the concept of social solidarity into practice.

COALITION BUILDING

As with the provision of social services themselves, good participatory relationships must be built up so as to achieve the necessary consensus. Diverse groups in the community, often representing interests which at first sight are conflicting or at least in competition, need to be brought together to identify problems and solutions and to campaign to secure the means to support them. Unions can play a very important part in coalition building, as they tend to have a broader social view than many single-interest groups, and they represent experts: the workers in the services themselves. These workers must not only campaign for increased funding, but must demonstrate that they know how funding can be most effectively deployed and where potential savings are located. Political

support is important and focusing on issues of quality is essential in building up coalitions, as this is most likely to respond to the particular needs of their constituents.

Not only must social service unions work with community groups, they must not neglect the rest of the labour movement, for if other organised workers - who are also citizens, tax-payers and recipients of social services - do not support their demands, they are unlikely to have enough backing to win. This is important at a local level, but crucial at a national level, where changes in government policies are needed and where divisions in the labour movement are most likely to be exploited.

Neither should social services management be excluded. Although there has been a growth of anti-union management attitudes, including even union-busting in some instances, some managers are in an unenviable position of having to implement cuts against their own better judgement, and their co-operation should be sought. Where restructuring has been introduced without union involvement, the effects have often been lost jobs, contracting out and service reductions. But, where co-operation is possible between unions and management, there is a better chance of identifying savings whilst protecting jobs and services, as well as promoting more cohesive labour relations in general.

WORKERS AND QUALITY OF SERVICES

The main asset of social services is the people who work in them. Improving quality in social services depends to a large extent on investing in human resources, in terms of pay, conditions of work and employment, training and qualifications and the promotion of equal opportunities.

CASELOADS

The number of clients of social services has increased dramatically in many countries since the onset of economic recession, whilst the number of jobs in public services has tended to decrease. That said, given the diverse nature of social services, it is sometimes difficult to quantify caseload on a comparative basis as for one worker a "case" may be one person, for another a family and for another a claim

form or payment transfer. Additionally, individual needs vary greatly, so it is misleading to compare caseloads on a wholly quantitative basis.

Experience has shown that, because of the commitment of social service workers and the nature of their work, there may well be overload that is not immediately apparent, as staff may be using their own time and resources, taking work home, not registering overtime, etc. so as to work within the prescribed budgets. Some may also be overworking so as to avoid losing their jobs. Thus the first indications of overload may be the deterioration of the health and/or morale of the worker. The effects on social service workers have been serious, and the incidence of overwork, burn-out and disillusionment are increasing. Many know that they are not doing the job that needs doing and that they have been trained to do. Furthermore, as so many aspects of social services involve referring clients to other services, they find that this is an ever more difficult exercise, as other public services have also been subject to cuts. So, in addition, social service workers may well find that they are getting the blame for cuts or overwork in other services.

Putting in place controls on caseload levels is therefore important for the workers as well as for the client. The legal position of workers can also be affected if they are doing unauthorised work which exposes them - or their client - to a hazardous situation. Understaffing causes long delays or impersonal treatment or, where workers are having to implement cutbacks, denial of benefits; clients may well become angry or even violent. Injuries and even death inflicted by clients are becoming more common among social service workers, in all kinds of work, and security of staff is becoming a pressing issue in many countries.

COMPARABILITY

Unions must work steadily to improve the situation of social service workers. Some of the means to do so have already been referred to, such as building coalitions, but in mounting a successful campaign, the importance of getting across to the public the inextricable link between good working conditions and high quality, cost-effective social services cannot be over-

stated. There is no reason why social services workers should be remunerated at a lower level than workers in other sectors of the economy with similar training and responsibilities.

PAY AND CONDITIONS

Negotiators should ensure that they have up to date information on the composition of social service employment, particularly the numbers in each job and grade and the breakdown by gender, race and disability. They should know the proportion of union members in each group and the history of previous claims and settlements. Unions must be able to demonstrate to the public and to the employer that pay and conditions must be good enough to attract and retain staff with the right qualifications, experience and commitment.

Where morale amongst workers is a particular problem, it is important to establish the key factors that are important to them. Whilst pay is important in denoting the value that is placed on their work, it is not the only factor. Working conditions and unsympathetic management attitudes may be just as important in terms of morale.

TRAINING AND QUALIFICATIONS

Given the enormous and increasing scope of the problems that social services have to handle, it is important that employees have the appropriate qualifications and training. Excessive case load, staff shortages, and use of private contractors or temporary staff should not result in clients being handled by people who have not been adequately trained.

Training must be organised to permit refresher courses and further training as a basis for career development, so that valuable knowledge and experience gained over the years is not lost. Initial training must prepare employees for this type of lifelong learning and enable them to work both independently and as part of teams, including co-operating with staff from other agencies. In order to promote co-ordination between different parts of social services, as well as to maximise career development, there should be uniform initial training for similar professions, with specialisation occurring later on; this would more easily enable workers to retrain and move between

professions, without having to start from the beginning. It is very important that training should equip employees with the skills they will need for dealing personally with clients, to be able to help them express their concerns and, where possible, identify their needs. The social service worker can then help the client to solve her/his problems either directly or by referral to other agencies. The employee should be able to inform the client of the services that could be made available in their circumstances and how they can be obtained. Staff should be able to help clients to take preventative actions to avoid new or further problems. This should include passing information about services so that they can make those services better respond to their needs.

Social service staff must be given full training to help people who have been marginalised, people in crisis, children getting a raw deal, to work on change and to acquire knowledge of the structures and laws of society.

The increasing prevalence of community care and de-institutionalisation places greater concentration on social services. Staff must receive training which is appropriate for the sort of situations they will have to deal with. They are increasingly the first contact with clients who would previously have been in hospitals or residential care and so communications must be established whereby they can participate to a much greater degree in decision making. The employer must have a clear policy on matters such as the administration of medicines; home helps and carers should know the tasks that they should and should not undertake and the support they can expect. Staff should be informed of the procedures to take when clients have adverse reactions to medication, or when they refuse to take their medication. They should know how to report suspicious circumstances (e.g., health hazards in the home, signs of abuse, special concerns of clients etc.).

WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Many social service workers are involved in “processing” clients’ information. As already stated, this can be seen by some as potentially intrusive, and some people will find it demeaning, especially if it is dealt with “over the counter” in front of others. Managers

of social services must be trained to structure reception and interview areas so that clients’ feelings and dignity are respected; at the same time, staff safety must also be promoted. Local social service offices themselves should be based in, and accessible to, the local community, providing a full range of information and services. Good working conditions for social service workers should translate into a more user friendly environment and better service quality.

NEW FORMS OF DELIVERY

Amongst the new forms of delivery systems which are being introduced is that of “one stop shopping” which means that a person has only to see one representative of social services to explain their situation and all the necessary contacts with specific branches can be dealt with by that one social services representative. Too often, where clients’ situations necessitate action by several services or providers, it has been necessary for the client to deal personally with each aspect of the problem, involving visits to several offices. This is making the client fit the system rather than the services adapting themselves to clients’ needs, and such a procedure is not only time-consuming and often expensive for the client, but it can also be demeaning and discourage them from claiming all their benefits.

Abundant evidence exists that divisions in responsibilities between health and personal social services on the one hand, and between personal social services and other responsible agencies on the other, are major sources of service failure, and strenuous efforts must be made to overcome them through administrative and professional unification or co-ordination. This will include efforts by professionals to develop a common rather than, as too often at present, competing “knowledge base”.

User movements represent one of the most significant developments in social services in recent years, giving rise to exciting innovations such as “independent advocacy” and “user-led” services, which have enormous potential for improving social services delivery in future.

New and more beneficial forms of service delivery are most likely to emerge when the security of employed workers is not threatened by change. It is

also more likely to occur when there is a shift from hierarchical forms of organisation which subordinate both users and front-line workers; in other words, when there is a shift to “user-centred and worker friendly” services.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

In promoting equal opportunities for clients and users, social services should not lose sight of their own responsibilities as employers in this respect. Gender stereotyping in recruitment and training, as well as in career development and mobility should be vigorously opposed.

People with disabilities should not suffer discrimination. Obstacles to recruiting, employing and training workers with disabilities must be removed, including modification to buildings and the provision of appropriate aids. Neither should race or sexual orientation present barriers to employment in social services. Indeed, a multi-cultural service workforce can be a distinct advantage when dealing with clients from particular sections of the community, for example, minority language groups.

Social Service Objectives

Social services should:

- Prevent poverty rather than only relieving poverty once it has arisen;
- Provide genuine security against contingencies such as unemployment, sickness, old age, disability, and homelessness;
- Meet the needs of everyone, on the basis of adequate benefits paid as of right;
- Act as one of a number of means of sharing out resources more fairly by distributing income both between social groups and over the life-cycle of individuals;
- Be part of an overall social provision, combined with policies to tackle unemployment, low pay, health care, education and housing;
- Treat people as individuals, recognising and respecting their particular needs;
- Recognise society's collective responsibility for children and others in need of care;
- Allow equal access and provide equal treatment to everyone regardless of race, marital status or sexual orientation.
- Be administered efficiently and courteously;
- Provide benefits which are easy to understand and to administer;
- Be accountable to users and to those who work in them at both service and strategic levels;
- Act as model employers, treating their own staff fairly on the basis of the above principles where relevant.

Trade unions in social services should:

- Campaign for social service clients to be provided with a high quality delivery system;
- Participate alongside users in decision-making on improvements needed in delivery systems;
- Work with coalitions to generate public support for adequate governmental resources targeted to social services programmes;
- Oppose cuts in resourcing, including those imposed as part of structural adjustment, which would have negative consequences for clients and for society as a whole;
- Ensure that programmatic changes are made where relevant, and that social services staff are provided with the opportunity to participate in

training programmes;

- Ensure that social service workers can participate in education and training programmes which facilitate career development and mobility;
- Work with management in developing innovative service delivery systems, such as “one-stop shopping”;
- Secure terms and conditions of employment for social service employees which are at least comparable with those in other sectors of the economy;
- Campaign for working arrangements and a work environment which promote health and safety, paying special attention to the increasing incidence of problems related to violence;
- Negotiate acceptable caseload levels which do not induce undue stress, overwork or “burn-out”;
- Fight for equal opportunities in social services, both in terms of the services provided and in terms of the social services in their role of employer;
- Achieve the highest possible level of union organisation amongst social service workers, with particular attention being paid to the needs of special groups, including the disabled;
- Defend the fundamental trade union rights of workers in social services, in conformity with ILO principles and standards;
- Work with other unions, including those in other countries, and with PSI to promote social services in public hands.

Appendix- The Social Summit and the Commission on Global Governance

THE TEN COMMITMENTS OF THE 1995 SOCIAL SUMMIT

1. Development with people in focus.
2. Attack poverty.
3. Fight unemployment.
4. Foster social integration.
5. Achieve equality and equity between men and women.
6. Equitable access to education and health care.
7. Help to Africa.
8. Social Goals in structural adjustment.
9. More, or more efficient aid and assistance.
10. Co-operation for development.

KEY PROPOSALS OF THE COMMISSION ON GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

1. Restructuring and enlargement of the Security Council, with no permanent members, and an end to the power of veto.
2. Creation of a UN Council for Petitions of 5-7 people, which could receive petitions from any group of people, and refer issues to the Security Council.
3. Strengthening of the General Assembly and creation of an annual Forum of Civil Society Organisations (their term for NGOs).
4. Reinforcement of the power and standing of the World Court and creation of an International Criminal Court.
5. Dissolution of the current Economic and Social Council and creation of an Economic Security Council with powers equal to that of the Security Council to oversee the workings of the world economy.
6. Thought given to means of raising global taxation to finance the UN's work.
7. Increased resources for UN peacekeeping.