



## Understanding Social Change

*The welfare state - what is it?*

### Sarah Neal

I'm Sarah Neal and I'm a Lecturer in Social Policy here at the Open University. Today I am joined by Professor Heidi Safia Mirza. Heidi is Professor of Racial Equality at Middlesex University where she established the Centre for Racial Equality Studies. She's known internationally for her work on ethnicity, gender and identity. I am also joined by Rob Sykes who is a Principal Lecturer and Head of Social Policy in the School of Social Science and Law at Sheffield Hallam University. Rob's research is on comparative social policy with a special regard to the role of the EU and globalisation, and he's currently developing research on human rights' legislation and its impacts on UK social policy developments. Welcome to you both.

What we should discuss over the next twenty-five minutes are the transformations and changes in social lives in post-war UK. We will be looking at these transformations and changes through a focus on the welfare state, family and work, and what you will see from our discussions here is the extent to which all these three areas are intricately connected.

To start our discussion we should listen to three extracts from three key figures in the development of social welfare provision.

### William Beveridge

"The report proposes an all-in scheme of social insurance, providing for all citizens and their families all the cash benefits needed for security in return for a single weekly contribution by one insurance stamp. The benefits are to be adequate in a month and to last as long as the need lasts."

### Margaret Thatcher

"Without a healthy economy we can't have a healthy society, and without a healthy society the economy won't stay healthy for long. Mr Chairman, but it isn't the State that creates a healthy society, for when the State grows too powerful people feel that they count for less and less. The State drains society not only of its wealth, but of initiative, of energy, the will to improve and innovate, as well as to preserve what is best. But our aim is to let people feel that they count for more and more."

### Tony Blair

"The twentieth century was a century of savage slaughter, insane ideology and unparalleled progress. Progress won in the end. Governments used collective power through the State to provide opportunity for the masses. But in time the institutions of that power became huge interests in their own right, and the people became more prosperous, more assertive, more individualist. Eventually the 1980's saw reaction by the individual against collective power in all its forms. But now with globalisation a new era has begun. People are no less individualist but they are insecure. Modern prosperity may be greater but modern life is pressure and stress. Twentieth century collective power was exercised through the big state, the welfare was paternalistic, and everything was handed down from on high. But that won't do today. Just as mass production has departed from industry, so the monolithic provision of services has to depart from the public sector. People want an individual service for them. They want Government under them, not over them. They want Government to empower them, but not control them, and they want equality of both opportunity and responsibility. They want to know that the same rules that apply to them apply to all. So out goes the big state and in comes the enabling state. Out goes the culture of benefits and entitlements, in comes a partnership of rights and responsibilities."

**Sarah Neal**

You heard there first from Beveridge speaking in 1942. Beveridge is most obviously associated with the ideas of social citizenship. The second speech was from Thatcher talking to the Tory Party Conference in 1980. Thatcher is most commonly associated as a critic of the Welfare State. And the final excerpt that you heard was from Tony Blair speaking to the Labour Party Conference in 2002, and Tony Blair can be associated with an emphasis on social responsibility.