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THE PHILOSOPHY BEHIND THE WELFARE STATE.

In order to understand what the "welfare society" has meant to the first generation which experienced it it is necessary to view it against the background of events preceding its introduction.

When I was quite young, I seriously considered emigrating to the United States of America, where close relatives were already living. This interest led me to read a book about America, written by a well-known Norwegian Conservative politician. The book carried the motto: "Swim or sink". This was intended as a panegyric to the then existing and rather harsh American Social system. Swim or sink - these were the hard facts of life which were supposed to release the vital energies of the by European standards young American society.

But these hard facts of life could also be said to exist in European societies, such as they were in my parents' time and in the earlier years of my own life. The individual was largely left to make his own way in life as best he could. If he "swam" forwards and upwards, this would benefit both himself and society at large. But if he was knocked over and sank, this was his own affair. Misfortunes such as these were, generally speaking, not regarded as a community responsibility.

Even this sketchy outline should bring home to us a realization of the extent to which the old society has been transformed into the form of society which we have seen develop in the course of recent decades.

Of course, when discussing the various aspects of social history one must beware of over-simplification. Society in its various forms is first and foremost characterized by incessant change. There are no distinct borderlines between the "systems" pertaining to the various epochs. For each such epoch we can trace roots going far back into the past, and we find new shoots foreshadowing the forms society will take in the future. This has also been the case with the long period of development which has led to the social system which has now, in many places, come to be known as the "welfare society". However, in order to understand some of its more important features, and the basic ideas of the policy which created it, it is to a certain extent necessary to present these features in schematic form.

Certain special impulses were already at an early stage responsible for speeding up this development. Major wars are primarily remembered for the material devastation and the mass-killings they occasion. This was also the case with the First World War. This gigantic life-and-death struggle between the world's most advanced industrial nations was, however, also responsible for encouraging major advances in technology and productive ability.

More glaringly than in any previous period of time,

become the tension which arose between the productive capacity which was created by the advances made in production and the ability of the old societies to make use of these new productive forces. This was demonstrated beyond any shadow of doubt by the fact that those countries which equipped with modern means of production - Germany and the United States of America - were, relatively speaking, the two very countries which experienced the worst forms of mass-unemployment and the greatest human distress. It is perhaps here that we find the root causes of the fateful history of ^{the} inter-war period, the roots which led to the forward march of the dictatorships and on to the Second World War.

All previous history, when it concerned itself with the large mass of humanity, tells the tale of toil, poverty and often of the hopelessness of human existence. But the great political dramas starts when taking from the poor even the little they possess.

This great crisis also speeded up debate and clash of opinions concerning fundamental ideas upon which the old society was founded. Old beliefs were shaken up and many fell by the wayside. People searched for new ways of extricating themselves from the mess. And one can trace in the course of those years efforts of a more systematic nature to form economic and social policies which, together with the powerful impulses created by the catastrophe of a new World War, would eventually lead to the creation of the welfare state. In the Nordic countries this chapter of events commenced in the 1930s and has continued right up

to the present time.

Let us here, however, pause to follow another and somewhat longer path which has also made a contribution in forming the idea of the welfare state in many nations, among them the Nordic countries. Far back in our history people have developed a strong sense of justice. In Norway this was expressed in such old adages as: "By law the land shall be built and not by lawlessness laid waste", or by the well-known constitutional provision: "No one must be convicted except according to the law, or be punished except according to judicial sentence." This strong sense of justice has a long tradition in Norway.

At an early stage coupled with this development came the struggle for equal political rights, for the right to vote and to be elected - first for all men, and also later on for all women.

Both the ideas and the results of the long struggle for equal protection under the law and for political rights are embodied in the fundamental precepts of that form of society which has come to be called the welfare state. In addition to these we have the new social and economic elements of this society, as well as the change of attitude towards the relationship between the individual and the community.

Corresponding trends in the development of many western societies form the basis of the demonstration by the English sociologist, T.H. Marshall, of the three stages which have led to the creation of the welfare state. The first stage he sees as the conquest of legal rights,

which may today be summarized as equal protection under the law for all citizens. The second as the democratic rights derived from the principle of universal suffrage. The third is the social rights which fulfill the precepts upon which the welfare state is founded. Here one may also trace the nucleus of an evolutionary, reformist social development. At all three stages the large mass of the population fought for participation and equality in rights which previously had been reserved for exclusive and privileged groups.

The most powerful force behind this development was the democratic labour movement. The main task for this movement was to organize and lead the struggle to achieve and secure political and social rights for those groups which had been excluded from the society based on privileges.

But, in somewhat varying degrees, the development of the elements embodied in the welfare society was also supported by another political grouping and another philosophy. We are here concerned with social and political intermediate groups which, traditionally and from the position they held in society, considered it their main duty to bridge the gulf between the sharp antagonisms in society. In other words to pursue an active policy to even out social and political conflicts of interest and thereby remove the sources of social and political unrest. It was perhaps easiest for such notions to take root in the smaller countries with more transparent conditions. This policy aimed at the avoidance of many deeply distressing social conditions

and thereby solving the problems involved in the process of industrialization and modernization on a far more human basis than the examples to be found in the larger countries of Europe. This new political approach was indirectly strongly influenced also by the experiences and observations made in Germany, where altogether different political methods were used to promote a self-proclaimed effort to create social unity. But this movement was inspired by forces which were placed far to the right in the political spectrum.

The basic philosophy of the welfare state was to a large extent formed in the broad international debate which took place during the decade preceding the Second World War. In the Nordic and in several other countries this development also foreshadowed important changes to come. However, it was the conditions at the end of the War which really gave the impetus and speeded up the development of what eventually came to be known as the welfare state.

A brutal and catastrophic war had taught people some lessons which would be useful when peacetime societies were to be formed afterwards. A very useful impulse came from the articulate demands which the large bulk of the population put forward concerning the society which was now to take form. After the First World War many dreamt of "a return to normalcy", and "normalcy" meant the pre-war, conditions in all their lustre as they were fixed in people's minds after the horrors of a protracted war. After the Second World War the attitude was the

exact opposite. Never a return to the inter-war period - to the period of mass unemployment and dictatorship - this became the express demand of the people in the countries of the West.

In addition the nations in their hour of need had learnt another lesson. They learnt what enormous productive forces a modern industrial country could develop by resorting to a state-planned economy.

The situation was such that it did not encourage leaving the individual to "swim" as best he could. It became clearer than ever that the individual could only achieve security for himself through community action in a society systematically based on mutual obligations and rights. And this no longer applied only to equal protection under the law and political freedom. It applied equally to the fundamental conditions for man's social and economic existence. The hard school of life had mentally conditioned human beings to accept the new policies which created the welfare state. Crucial questions at issue during the pre-war period became post-war political aims which united the whole nation.

The essence of these new aims was the new role of the community. Only by means of an active joint effort by the community as a whole could the individual's existence be secured. It became the main function of government to secure full employment, economic growth and a more equitable distribution of the results of productive effort. From having been a flying banner for the democratic labour movement, these aims now became a common platform for

all the political parties in the Nordic countries.

It would be true to say that a revolutionary force lay behind these new objectives, which in their practical results have created the welfare state. It is still being widely debated whether this system in its Nordic form is capitalist or socialist, or whether it is a mixture with elements borrowed from both these systems. I shall here merely confine myself to emphasizing that it is in any case a very different society than that which existed after the First World War, with mass unemployment and dictatorships, and which ended in a world war.

The welfare state has accepted that it is the responsibility of the community to ensure that the primary needs of human existence are met, such as work and income, housing, education, health services, security during sickness and in old age. Each of these aspects represents whole chapters of the political struggle of the last generation, in fact, one might say, of our recent history. Although there are still differences of opinion as to the rate and extent of progress as well as to details, nevertheless, the main elements of the new social system are no longer seriously disputed except by smaller extremist groups.

The most important of these new features is the responsibility of economic policy to ensure for the individual employment and income. This is fundamental to the economic and social existence of the bulk of the population.

In most modern countries the community has assumed

the main responsibility for providing adequate dwellings in sufficient numbers. This has become a main responsibility for central and local government. The new housing policy has largely superseded the old system of private ownership of other people's homes. In varying corporate forms each family has, through common ownership of housing bodies, achieved full control over its own home.

In many countries the educational system has been completely altered, especially quantitatively, but gradually also qualitatively. It has provided the basis for the elimination of old class differences as far as educational opportunities are concerned, and constantly creates more equality of opportunity in this respect. This is perhaps the most clear indication that today's society is very different from that of my own youth. That this also creates new difficulties is a question I will revert to when discussing the problems of the welfare state.

Modern health services also represent a field where the community has taken on an ever-increasing number of new functions. These comprise hospitals and medicare, the organizing of doctors and dentists under the public health service, as well as the manifold measures which are embodied in the public health policies of our times. It has also become so extensive, that it is causing a certain amount of anxiety to the central and local authorities which are directly responsible for financing the new system.

National Insurance is by many regarded as the crowning

achievement of the welfare state. In principle as well as in practice Sweden has probably been the pioneer in the national pension field. But Norway and other countries are not far behind. The social pension scheme has been built up on a scale which has turned it into a dominating element in the national economy. At the same time the arrangements called for during the build-up period have proved to be something of a headache for those responsible for economic policies.

I have used these specific, albeit sketchily illustrated examples, to indicate the far-reaching differences in principle between today's welfare societies and the societies they have sprung from. Not many people today would consider it an ideal solution to leave the individual to his own devices, bearing sole responsibility for whether he sinks or swims.

We all have to accept belonging to and being dependent on human society in order to solve our personal problems, and we must all be willing to provide this society with the means for assuming responsibility for our existence.

But are we in fact ready to do this? Here we come to the welfare state's latest problems which are a distinctive feature common to all the highly developed countries of the world.

The surest supporters of the welfare state are natureally enough those who belong to that generation in the broad mass of the population who have lived through the developments which created it. Those who have followed the long road from the realm of toil and poverty to the

welfare state know what they have gained. And what they have gained they are prepared to defend. This is not to say that all problems are now solved, or that we have reached the best possible of all worlds. But the knowledge of the ground gained gives perhaps some of us the requisite patience to confront the new challenges as they arise.

This may be different with the new generations which have reached community consciousness in the course of the mature stages of the welfare state. They do not carry with them memories of past poverty.

Without any such ballast, they meet the problems which are revealed by the very societies created by modern industry in our time.

Permit me at this point to summarize a couple of the main features of the welfare state as it is now understood. It comprises a new and comprehensive ordering of society which has replaced individual helplessness by a system of community responsibility based on mutual rights and obligations. But, beyond this, it is based on traditions of the inviolability of the individual human being, the protection of the law and political freedom. And it further develops judicial and democratic rights in order to enable them to satisfy new requirements. It is the sum total of these economic, social, legal and political rights which constitutes the welfare state. Economic and social rights on their own do not add up to any welfare state. A state based on dictatorship and internal terror is no welfare state.

The course of development which I have outlined has been based on economic expansion of exceptional vigour and continuity, particularly remarkable in the historical context. This very marked expansion has provided the basis for tangible improvements in the living standard of large categories of society. But has this development at the same time been accompanied by a more fair distribution between the various categories and regions - and, some might ask today - between the countries and the continents of the world? While there is no doubt about the economic expansion, some doubt exists on the subject of fairer distribution. And there is gathering doubt on this score, as more and more people have not as a personal experience taken part in the great change in the general standard of living. Consequently attention is increasingly directed towards the problem of distribution in society. It is directed towards incomes and incomes policy, towards the distribution of inherited or acquired capital, towards the distribution of common burdens of the community and - not least - towards the distribution of power and influence in ^{the} community.

The gathering uneasiness attached to such problems will lead to the articulation of new demands for an acceptable welfare society.

This applies likewise to inherited forms of property seen in relation to, on the one hand, the enormous accumulations of capital in the advanced industrial societies and, on the other, problems linked to large-scale private ownership of real estate in a rapidly expanding industrial society.

Immediately after the Second World War the general tendency was for extremely liberal interpretations of the range and limitation of the right of private ownership. In recent years the tendency has been much more in the direction of a restrictive interpretation of the traditional concepts of ownership.

As far as I am concerned, it seems beyond all doubt that if private ownership of large concentrations of capital or real estate is to avoid a fateful clash with the legitimate needs of an expansive welfare state, then property rights will have to be substantially modified. If old forms stand in the way of new life structures, any direct confrontation is hardly likely to be to the advantage of the former.

Proceeding from the question of the distribution of power and influence, we also have to face up to several clear tendencies going beyond the status which the welfare state has held up to now. I have in mind the further development of democratic forms of management. This aspect of the question manifests itself partly in the broad movement in favour of industrial democracy, including employee representation and participation in decision-making bodies of economic concerns and institutions of many types. The same trend may be noted in another field in the greatly increased interest in local democracy, with the idea that as many people as possible should exercise direct influence on the circumstances affecting them personally. Trends of this nature which aim at extending and deepening democratic influence may be

expected increasingly to determine the character of the future development of society.

Another interesting problem is created by the cultural and social effects of the new system of education. In time, when the whole population has been educated under this system, the effects on different sectors will be considerable. When every member of the population receives a good education, it may be expected that the demand for equality of status in other spheres of social existence will also be strengthened. The new system has already substantially affected the relationship between the older and younger generations - sometimes negatively. The long - and for more and more people even further prolonged - period of education is clearly responsible for the isolation of various age groups. Teenagers and even mature young men and women are in their work confined to their own age groups and own generation's experience. This seems to me to be a far from happy solution for the younger age groups, and no more happy for the older age groups who in their working day, through no wish of their own, are similarly isolated from the oncoming younger generation. We have no means of being able to predict all the possible consequences of introducing such a fundamental innovation as the new system of education into the existing social structure. It is something we have set our hearts on, and we are going forward with it in the hope and belief that the overriding results will be to the advantage both of the community and of its individual members.

At all events it is an extremely interesting feature in the formation of the welfare state.

The welfare state has been formed in pace with the great expansion which has taken place in industry. We have enjoyed the incomes derived from its greatly expanded productivity and we are now to an increasing degree faced with the bill: the ruthless exploitation of natural resources and, in many cases, disturbances of the environment. These are now coming to the form as the vital problems with which the welfare state has to contend. The whole world is debating this problem. Opinions are so sharply divided that the available facts may easily be distorted to the point of confusion. The one fact that is certain is that we must in some other way than hitherto make ourselves responsible for the proper management of the world's limited resources. This applies most particularly to resources which are not renewable and on which the drain is especially heavy by the technology which forms the basis of the welfare state's economy. On the national and the international levels alike, we must obtain an insight into and a knowledge of the overall aspects of the world's resources in order to ensure their proper management. This applies above all to future supply of energy which is one of the pillars on which the further development of the welfare state will be based.

Disturbances of the natural environment have now become so frightening that they have given rise to increasing efforts to counteract them. Effective solutions are necessary here if future societies are to exist in which people may enjoy

a sense of well-being. The reduction and elimination of the pollution and the befouling of nature and the environment must be one of the main tasks facing us. It will have to be solved as a natural stage in the process of production in which pollution originates. It will cost us something - may be a great deal - but it will cost less than the consequences of an general pollution of the entire industrial society. I believe that man has great ability to solve problems when forced to do so. That is our situation to day. The sources of pollution are international and their elimination is an international task in which all countries must participate. There are countless encouraging results from the efforts now being made in this respect in many parts of the world. I have no doubt that mankind will be able to secure this prerequisite for his future welfare.

For the individual member of society the environment which is most important is the one in which he spends the greater part of his life, that is to say his home and his working environments. It is on the latter that the interest in environment protection of large categories of wage-earners is now centred. And in this respect, a great deal remains to be done, not least in industries which up to now have been regarded as health hazards - on account of gas, dust, noise or accident risk. To make today's working environment safe is one of the vital concerns in the further development of the welfare state.

Modern society has advanced much further in sectoral planning than in overall national planning. When a community task is recognized and approved a sectoral effort is organized for solving it as effectively as possible.

This may easily lead to lopsidedness in the overall solutions especially in regard to environmental questions. Take for example the students' need for accommodation which has now been discussed in almost every country. Complete student "towns" have been built in which these young people remain as isolated in their leisure time as in their working hours. The increase in life-expectancy and the more affluent economy led to the question of providing old age pensioners with better living accommodation. Thus one sector goes to work building blocks of flats and town precincts purely to house elderly people. The large-scale residential development of huge building sites will often mean that many young couples move into these areas at the same time. This too creates a uniform age distribution in many areas. The ideal objective for an overall housing pattern should be the greatest possible mixture of the generations, from old age pensioners to young children, right down to the smallest individual residential environment. For a variety of reasons, this would create a greater sense of well-being than isolating each generation on its own.

The comprehensive schemes for social insurance and other forms of support have created a broad network which everyone comes into contact with. Together with the other institutions of the welfare state this requires a very large administrative apparatus and an army of civil servants. Viewed from one angle this may be said to create extensive facilities for contacts between the individual citizen and the welfare state. But the existence of extensive contact facilities also mean that sources of friction increase correspondingly. And unfortunately

the build-up of the administrative apparatus intended as a convenient service arrangement has not kept pace with the enormous build-up of major social innovations. Thus necessary and useful measures of social policy often lead to a feeling of frustration and not to a sense of welfare. The development of a welfare system intended to provide better contact on a more human basis must become a task of major importance in our super-organized and over-administered society.

Of late there has arisen in the leading welfare states such as the Nordic countries a crisis phenomenon in politics which is quite serious. I have emphasized that the welfare society is based on an arrangement between the individual and the community with mutual rights and obligations. The generation which has lived in the shadows of the old societies based on class distinction, are more willing to accept both the obligations as well as the rights. But in a stale and to a certain extent neo-reactionary period it appears that considerable groups are attracted to the idea of accepting the rights, while protesting against the obligations. To be more explicit: In several countries it has proved possible to rock the political boat by means of protest votes against such taxes and other charges as are the inevitable consequence and a prerequisite for maintaining the relative security of the individual in the welfare state system. For my part I think this phenomenon is of a passing nature. If anyone were to be given the opportunity of doing away with important features of the welfare state, both its obligations and its rights, this would undoubtedly raise such a storm, as would make the anti-

tax protests of today seem like a summer breeze.

The development which was to end in the welfare state, was initiated during the years of the great crises around 1930. It was interrupted by the 6-year catastrophe of the last War, which paralysed all progressive social developments. It was then given a powerful boost when the nations, as a protest against the disaster they had just experienced, made a major effort to create a better world. By contrast with other unifying and divisive ideologies, the welfare state has hardly formed any sort of comprehensive social theory. The welfare state grew up by the establishment of those elements of which it was later to be composed. This process came into being long before it was even given a common designation - after all, strictly speaking it has not got one to this day. Therefore the welfare state is no doubt a recalcitrant object for any students who may feel called upon to give it their historical-ideological label in the sphere of ideological systems.

Nor does the welfare state concept provide us with any blueprint for ascertaining whether the welfare state has reached its final stage of fulfilment. The endless process of change taking place in a society will of course never lead to any state of final fulfillment. Each generation makes its own demands and articulates its own aims. In its most advanced forms the welfare state has more than fulfilled many of the targets which alert young people aimed for 30-40 years ago, or even earlier. For the young of today this is no more than a starting point. And future generations will be busy indeed when it

comes to fulfilling their aims: To bring the resources of the world under proper management, to protect the natural environment and to create new forms of cultural environments, to prevent pollution at source, by means of our modern technology to create an ecological balance which will grant the human race the means of existence for all time, to bring the population explosion under control, to secure human rights throughout the world, to continue building up welfare systems able to provide better contact in an increasingly complex society, and to ensure dignity and equality for all. Speaking for my own generation, the fact is that if we could capture this moment of time in a sort of still-life snapshot of today's most advanced welfare society, we would be prepared to acknowledge it as our creation - indeed we are proud of it. But as soon as we take our eyes off this still-life picture, we see that everything is still in living motion. The society people will create in the next 10-15 years will differ considerably from our snapshot of today's welfare society. We do not even know whether it will continue to bear its present name: the welfare state.