

land and farming, small towns and small factories, roads, rails and bridges. At this point, where social policy is also economic policy, it seems to me likely that one would find the essence of New Zealand public action directed to the promotion of well-being, and that one would also find a strong aspiration towards an efficient and disciplined society behind that action.

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II. DUNCAN MACGREGOR AND CHARITABLE AID ADMINISTRATION 1886-1896

'Benevolence', 'charity' and 'pauperism' were terms only reluctantly admitted to the vocabulary of nineteenth-century New Zealanders. The grudging admission that New Zealand had not entirely escaped the blights of the Old World, that even in the new colony were persons unable (or, it was suspected, unwilling) to provide for themselves resulted in the early provision of localised charitable assistance and, eventually, in its extension and regularisation by the 1885 Hospitals and Charitable Institutions Act. The system established by this Act — if 'system' was not too generous a term — lies uneasily between the casual semi-public assistance of the earlier period and the less equivocal moves towards state financial assistance initiated by the 1898 Old Age Pensions Act. More remote still does it seem from the wider social policies embodied in the Liberals' land and labour legislation, especially if these are seen in terms of social regeneration and advancement. In this context charitable aid involves an apparently negative and piecemeal response to basic human need, embodying the concept of minimal assistance for those whose requirements could not decently be ignored. If, however, one accepts that these broader Liberal policies had elements of control and paternalism, even of coercion, then charitable aid fits more readily into their ambit and, it might be suggested, many of the attitudes elaborated with respect to charitable aid were not totally irrelevant to the broader question of state activism.

The purpose of this paper is therefore to examine in general terms views associated with charitable aid administration, most especially those emanating from Dr Duncan MacGregor during the period of his inspectorate 1886-1906. Passing reference will be made to the diffusion of these views down the administrative structure, with regard to the points of tension and obstruction which deflected efforts at a consistent policy. This is not an attempt at any elaborate description of the complex administrative structure issuing from the 1885 Act, but rather a reminder

that the climate of opinion which underlay the 'origins of the welfare State' comprised a variety of influences and individual assumptions, not all of them consistent, not all of them progressive.

Confusion and conflict were built into the 1885 Act. Since one of its main aims was to decentralize the administration of charitable aid, local boards were set up to administer hospitals and distribute charitable relief. In some cases the boundaries of hospital and of charitable aid districts coincided and a single board administered both functions; in others hospital and charitable aid authorities were kept separate and a 'United Districts Charitable Aid Board' would distribute relief. Superimposed on these bodies were the 'separate institutions', funded partly — in some cases almost wholly — from local rates and government subsidies, but administered by independent trusts.¹ The anomaly created here became one of the major points of tension within the structure, especially where these separate institutions concerned themselves with outdoor relief in the form of rent, rations and cash payments — always a controversial operation.

Finance for charitable aid came from three different sources: voluntary contributions, local rates, and government subsidies on the first two sources. A further aim of the Act was to secure equality in the distribution of government subsidies, which made up slightly more than one half of the revenue of charitable aid boards and represented a clear state financial commitment to the relief of the indigent. The principle behind local rating was that local financial involvement would be conducive to economy in both hospital and charitable aid administration, while the third source, voluntary contributions, was greatly emphasized and encouraged, from 1886, by a more generous subsidy than that given to compulsory rated revenues. The entire structure therefore represented an amalgam of local and central interests; the acceptance of a degree of state financial responsibility with a premium on voluntary effort; an unsound attempt, as MacGregor himself noted, to harness together contradictory tendencies.

But not least among the anomalies within the charitable aid system was the position of the inspector himself. At a time of bureaucratic expansion and developing administrative complexity the powers of the Inspector-General of Hospitals and Charitable Institutions were limited to inspection and advice. In this respect his position was not unlike that of his counterpart in Education, although it contrasted with his own position in relation to Lunatic Asylums and with the newer departments of Labour and, later, Health which avoided this local body pattern and therefore had ultimate control over officials. The restrictions which this situation placed on the inspector were undoubtedly a source of intense frustration to MacGregor who, like some of his more fortunately placed colleagues,

¹ Grace Neill in her 1899 report gives a summary of the distribution of authority for hospitals and charitable aid among various boards and trustees in the four main centres. Annual report on Hospitals and Charitable Institutions of the Colony, AJHR, 1899, H-22.

held decided opinions on the direction of social policy. This frustration soon found expression in a lengthy series of reports which gradually shifted ground from an analysis of the structure over which he exercised responsibility, to an elaborate statement on the deficiencies of contemporary social organization.

While Sidney and Beatrice Webb dismissed these reports in 1898 as the querulous railings of an impotent official over a system he had no power to check or remedy,² some at least of the ideas contained in MacGregor's annual outpourings had a wider currency than they allowed for, and reflect values hinted at by both Hogben and Tregear. MacGregor's ideas were undoubtedly expressed in a more rigorous and uncompromising form — for such was his nature — but it would be wrong to view MacGregor as a sole reactionary element in a sea of progressive liberalism. Rather, he may be seen as approaching one end of a continuum of responses to social need, a continuum which ranged from the liberal and even sentimental humanitarianism which so infuriated MacGregor, to its quite punitive obverse. This was modified, even in MacGregor's case, by the need for some highly selective humanitarianism in the interests of sound social policy — state responsibility for neglected children, for example, was accepted as allowing a more rigid policy towards the less potentially productive elements in society.

MacGregor's views did not entirely result from his observations as Inspector-General, for in 1876 while still Professor of Mental Science at Otago University he published a series of articles in the *New Zealand Magazine* which showed him even then to have been an advocate of rigorous methods towards social undesirables.³ An intervening period as medical officer of the Otago Asylum merely intensified his beliefs and convinced him that the colony had by no means escaped the grosser taints of degeneracy he associated with the Old World. MacGregor's subsequent appointment in 1886 to the Inspectorate of Asylums, Hospitals and Charitable Institutions seems to have owed something to the influence of his former pupil Stout, but MacGregor nonetheless brought to the position his characteristic energy and zeal. Convinced, despite the recession then in evidence, that heavy expenditure on charitable aid signified laxity on the part of officials and the insidious pauperization of the masses, MacGregor commenced practical steps to root out wholesale imposition and to publicize the gravity of the problem through his reports.⁴

MacGregor's views on social policy as elaborated in these reports were

2 Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *A Visit to New Zealand in 1898*, Wellington, 1954, p.35.

3 See Duncan MacGregor, 'The Problem of Poverty in New Zealand', *New Zealand Magazine*, January, April, July 1876.

4 The following comments are based on MacGregor's reports, AJHR 1888-1905. These peak in 1898 when MacGregor seems to have over-reached himself — thereafter his reports decline in length and in generality. References in Parliamentary debates of the 1900s to 'the time when the Inspector-General had a freer hand' would seem to confirm this.

neither original nor particularly consistent — indeed the Webbs considered both MacGregor and Tregear, the two officials in whose departments they were most interested, equally muddle-headed. While Tregear's attention to developments in other parts of the world is evidenced in the variety of articles reprinted in the *Journal of Labour*, MacGregor also borrowed heavily, if selectively, from overseas sources. He showed himself thoroughly familiar with the workings not only of the English Poor Law, but with the responses of the various American states to welfare problems. Through the Colonial Secretary's office he ordered various books, journals and reports of conferences on charity, sometimes receiving scores of volumes at a time.⁵ Nor was this interest within the department wholly vicarious. Though MacGregor's expanding duties prevented the leisurely observation of overseas systems, he paid close attention to Australian developments and on at least one occasion visited Victoria to prepare a report on its relief agencies.⁶ His assistant, Grace Neill, had experience of charitable administration in England, Germany and Australia which was supplemented in 1899 by a visit to England on full pay to visit asylums and charitable institutions.⁷

Conversant though he was with the welfare systems of a number of countries, it was the New Poor Law and the precepts of the Charity Organisation Society to which MacGregor continually returned. Entirely sympathetic with the English Poor Law's struggle against 'the strong heresy of unscientific and sympathetic human nature',⁸ he allowed the principle of less eligibility a firm place within his own value system. In keeping with the recommendations of the 1832 Poor Law Commission, MacGregor placed the elimination of outdoor relief or at least of the state subsidies it received high on the list of his own official objectives. Institutional care, he recognized, provided the greatest opportunities for economy, order and discipline among the unavoidably destitute — his only concern was that the proliferating benevolent institutions might prove excessively attractive to persons struggling for an independent old age.

Equally impressed by the precepts of the Charity Organisation Society, by what he termed 'the alliance of charity with science', MacGregor also pressed for the maintenance of voluntary effort and the more rational use of all charitable resources. The C.O.S.'s stern insistence on

5 In his annual report for 1889, for example, MacGregor examined settlement laws and the division of responsibility between local and central government in selected American states — his information on this occasion was gleaned from a shipment of 152 volumes forwarded through the U.S. Legation in London; Correspondence of D. MacGregor, F.D. Bell and L.J. Phelps (U.S. Legation, London) September 1887 — April 1888, IA 1 88/1635, National Archives.

6 *Evening Post*, 21 October 1888.

7 During her visit Neill attended the International Congress of Women in London where she contributed a paper on 'Forms of State Relief in New Zealand', published in Countess of Aberdeen (ed), *International Congress of Women of 1899. Women in Politics, being the Political Section of the I.C.W.*, London 1899.

8 Annual Report on Hospitals, AJHR, 1888, H-9, 5.

individualism and self-help were well within the compass of MacGregor's value system while its emphasis on the categorization of the poor and the consequent need for painstaking, personalised investigation were objectives which MacGregor found truly admirable. This stress on classification it should be noted, crops up continually in the 1890s; in parliamentary debates, newspapers and official reports. Tregear, for example, distinguished between the 'helpful poor' who might profitably be directed to work, the 'helpless poor', fit subjects for benevolent aid, and the 'criminally-lazy poor', who should be compelled to work.⁹ Others were working towards the classification of children in industrial schools and of 'fallen women' in various stages of moral turpitude. While such attempts at categorisation did imply some preliminary recognition of the specialized needs of the poor, they had the additional advantage of enabling recognition of the recalcitrant elements among them — those over whom closer control might be exercised.

Despite his preference for voluntary effort, MacGregor did advocate State intervention at either end of a spectrum of 'deservedness'. For the intractable elements, those whose depravity precluded assistance in any positive form, MacGregor advocated state penitentiaries or workhouses where they could be forced to work for their own support. In this area MacGregor and Tregear had very similar views on such matters as classification and detention, not surprisingly perhaps in view of their overlapping clientele. At the other extreme MacGregor was willing to support total state provision for children whom he considered educable and still worthy of state investment, and for the deserving aged whom he likened to 'worn out soldiers, who have deserved well of their country'. Certainly these concessions cannot be seen as unequivocally humanitarian in intent — state guardianship would be accompanied by a sharp watch for 'the consequences of bastardy made easy', while the old age pension scheme most congenial to MacGregor was that of Denmark with its rigid moral qualifications.¹⁰ The introduction of old age pensions in 1898, very much along the lines recommended by MacGregor six years earlier, can be seen as a positive step in the separation of the deserving from the undeserving, and indeed one justification for the introduction of pensions (reprinted in the Parliamentary papers from an Australian source) stresses the salutary effect such differential treatment would have on the social strata from which the pensioners were recruited.¹¹

MacGregor's attempts to direct charitable aid administration along the lines of his own policy objectives were not of course confined to tirades in his annual reports. Greater knowledge and uniformity were foremost among his aims and to this end he instituted a very basic statistic form in

9 Annual Report, Department of Labour, AJHR, 1893, H-10, 2.

10 Annual Report on Hospitals, AJHR, 1892, H-3, 3.

11 Paper on Old Age Pensions read by Mr James Pullen at the Annual Meeting of the Insurance Institute of Victoria, 9 September 1896, AJHR, 1897, S2, H-18A.

1896, giving details of causes of poverty and relief decisions made.¹² Despite practical constraints on his authority he also used his inspectorial powers to the full, personally investigating local Boards' case lists and triumphantly exposing cases of deception and shameless imposition. But whatever his personal enthusiasm for these periodic forays into the homes of the indigent, they soon became heavily demanding of his time, and it was partly to facilitate such closer investigation that in 1895 he sought a female assistant.¹³ A woman was specifically requested, less as a concession to feminist aspirations than as a practical recognition that women featured heavily among charitable recipients and would, it was hoped, be more amenable to female control. Having proved to his own satisfaction the efficiency of the appointee, Mrs Neill, MacGregor pressed for the use of women as inquiry officers further down the charitable aid structure, and most of the larger boards did in fact have a regular female visitor by the mid-1900s. Once again, this development was not motivated by an unqualified desire to secure justice for women indigents — some sources stress women's sympathies and understanding of family needs; others temper this with an appreciation of women's supposed shrewdness and ability to discipline their own sex.

While this aspect of MacGregor's policies had a definite response further down the charitable aid structure, the effectiveness of his intentions was in the last resort constrained by limitations inherent in his position and by the self-perpetuating pattern of local body administration which pulled against central control. Most of his recommendations were in fact embodied in the 1889 Hospitals and Charitable Institutions Bill, including the provision of state refuges for 'drunkards, idlers and tramps'. That it was not proceeded with was due less to its punitive provisions than to its restructuring of local representation and the removal of subsidies for outdoor relief. A local government bill introduced by Seddon in 1895 also included provision for the restructuring of charitable aid, but this met a similar fate and it was not until the 1909 Hospitals Act that separate institutions were abolished and closer control over the use of subsidies given to the Department of Health.

This suggests that any overview of social policy must consider the possible diffusion of policy objectives in their passage to the consumer; and whether a specific social ideology may not assume more ambiguous properties when confronted by institutional constraints and the variability of human need. Further research into the effectiveness of social welfare policies will doubtless show a gulf of varying degrees between the objectives of legislators and administrators, or between the assumptions of these two groups and trends in wider public opinion.

¹² These were expanded by MacGregor's successor Valentine who sought additional information on sources of revenue and expenditure of boards and institutions, and nationalities of those aided. See A.H. Truebridge, 'The Preparation of Charitable Aid Statistics', *Journal of Public Health*, (September 1918) 252-63 for an outline of the difficulties experienced in compiling such statistics.

¹³ MacGregor to Reeves, 4 April 1895, 30/54/10 Health Department.

Unfortunately space precludes any detailed considerations of these factors as they operated with regard to charitable aid in New Zealand, but certainly such diffusion of intent operated at the local level and operated all the more acutely, of course, because of the lack of departmental control over officials.

Whatever the pressures from above, local charitable aid boards were unsuccessful in transforming general paternalistic belief and discrete disciplinary practices into coherent administrative policy. This was due as much to the points of tension built into the 1885 Act and its amendments as to contrary assumptions about the cause and extent of social distress — the unworkable settlement clauses, the provision for separate institutions, the composite monetary input and resultant conflict between state financial commitment and local autonomy. When to this was added the sheer diversity of the problems faced by the boards, the complexities of the individual case, most boards found themselves driven to a less discriminating policy than their own members, many of the public, and certainly the Inspector-General favoured.

Closer examination of this area of welfare activity would, it is suggested, illustrate with some clarity the gap between administrative policy ideal and a more disparate social reality. The Liberals inherited a 'system' which was viewed with much dissatisfaction but which, in the long run, they accepted. That no sustained effort was made to achieve total restructuring or a wider measure of state investment in the recipients of charitable aid (be it punitive in intent, or otherwise) possibly owes as much to the Liberals' major concern with the productive or sub-productive elements in society as it does to contradictory local pressures. The consequent survival of charitable aid well into the twentieth century might in itself be seen as inhibiting the development of a more comprehensive or preventative approach to welfare concerns. Certainly, groups seen as 'deserving' — the aged and widows initially — were gradually taken off, but even then charitable aid remained to discourage sufficiency in pension levels, since additional aid could be given by the boards. And it is not unlikely that the equivocal attitudes associated with charitable aid administration carried over into these welfare extensions, possibly even reinforced by the expansion of bureaucratic functions and more sophisticated investigatory procedures.

The question of charitable aid provoked less discussion after the late 1900s, being subsumed in the expanding technical and administrative functions of hospital boards. MacGregor's successor Valintine was soon heavily involved in the organization of a combined Department of Health and Hospitals characterized by growing specialization and an expanding staff. Officials such as Valintine probably had less occasion than their nineteenth-century predecessors to think in terms of wide-ranging social policy, and indeed, it is likely they were given less latitude to publicly express such views. MacGregor, Hogben, Tregear and other leading officials of the Liberal period had the opportunity to stamp their

own personalities on young or developing departments. MacGregor, because of the constraints built into his position, was probably less successful than either Hogben or Tregear in instituting extensive policy initiatives within his area of responsibility. The importance of his inspectorate should not be underestimated however, if only to remind us that altruism and progressivism were not necessarily the only inputs into the nascent welfare state. MacGregor's philosophies were echoed in the qualifying clauses of the Old Age Pensions scheme, and in its administration under Eman Smith in the 1900s; they correspond closely with those of Tregear in relation to the management of the workforce; further research might show their affinity to a much wider pattern of paternalism and disciplinary activity during this period. And it may be that even today the spirit of MacGregor looks over the shoulders of our social welfare administrators.

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COMMENTARY

It has traditionally been assumed that, whatever the origins of Liberal social legislation, it was progressive in intention. Professor Oliver challenges this assumption by postulating that the whole gamut of Liberal social legislation from welfare, land settlement and labour measures to those dealing with penal, tariff and agricultural policies was prompted instead, to a large extent, by a desire for social efficiency, discipline and order. Certainly his arguments give a more balanced picture of Liberal social legislation; many of the attitudes quoted by him and Ms Tennant undoubtedly lay behind what have generally been regarded as wide-ranging reforms based on a new concern for social justice. Whether they can completely overturn the 'progressive' viewpoint, however, must depend as he acknowledges on more detailed research into the origins of individual measures.

It seems likely that the degree to which motives of social efficiency underlay the legislation of this period will depend on the type of legislation examined: one would expect penal policy, for example, to contain overtones of paternalism and disciplinarianism. Although Professor Oliver discards the narrower concept of a 'welfare state', his definition of social policy for the purposes of this argument seems a little too wide to be useful. The assumption that social efficiency has no common ground with social justice is another point for dispute. The label of paternalism which is attributed to the former could also at times be applied to motivations of social justice, especially in the case of reforms which were imposed from above rather than demanded from below. Reeves's espousal of Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration might be one example of this.

A further problem is the separation of reality from the rhetoric of those introducing the Liberal social legislation. Much of the rhetoric of the initiators of social policy would naturally tend to stress the humanitarian side of their

measures, rather than the social efficiency and order that they hoped might result. Conversely the rhetoric of efficiency might be used by social reformers to persuade their more conservative colleagues to accept a measure. In the field of labour reform, for example, there were often two distinct strands of thinking at work within the Liberal party: the desire for social justice, if tempered by some paternalism, felt by Reeves and the labour faction of the party, and the arguments of social efficiency and order which led the country Liberals to a more grudging acceptance of the same reforms. It is significant that the 'investment in the future' rhetoric quoted in connection with the Infant Life Protection Bill of 1907 is found especially in the Legislative Council debates — a place one would most expect to find it.

Finally, when applying an overseas model to events in New Zealand, it is important to remember the points of difference as well as the points of similarity. While it may be true that New Zealand took warning from the plight of Britain and other countries in putting through some of the social legislation of this period, the needs and problems of its colonial and agricultural economy and society in many ways differed from these countries. Many of the factors said to have led to a desire for increased national efficiency in Great Britain — deep-rooted poverty and unemployment, a declining birthrate, anxiety about the deteriorating physique of the population and a heightened international competition for industrial markets — did not, despite the depression of the 1880s, exist to the same extent in New Zealand. If a desire for social efficiency and order is to be put forward as a prime motivation for the social legislation of the Liberals, the social and economic problems pertaining to New Zealand that demanded such an approach will first need to be identified.

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GENERAL DISCUSSION: The extent to which social policy did bear an authoritarian and/or paternalistic cast, rather than the more familiar humanitarian face found in New Zealand historiography, occupied the bulk of the discussion.

It was pointed out that the early history of mental health treatment was very disciplinarian — hospitals were usually in isolated areas, and run along prison lines. Social workers in the 1930s were recruited predominantly from the ranks of two professions with strong authoritarian traditions — teaching and nursing. There was debate about early policy towards the aged. The Old Age Pensions Act 1898 had a humanitarian cast, but even this was considered to be oriented toward the deserving poor rather than to alleviating poverty amongst the aged, as such. And the limitations of policy in this area were evident elsewhere: MacGregor wanted the indigent aged placed in old people's homes so that they would not become a charge on the state; old people were frequently sent to country districts where they would not get into trouble, for example, by frequenting pubs.

Another context for examining social policy was seen as the colonial 'New World' wish to avoid British experiences. This involved certain ambiguities, however. On the one hand it meant a repudiation of the pauperizing and stigmatizing effects of the poor law. But this reflected an unwillingness to recognize that New Zealand had anything approaching the problems of the old

society and reinforced the view that individuals were primarily responsible for their own plight. The significance of the temperance movement in moulding — or reflecting — attitudes to the causes of poverty was referred to.

The discussion moved more tentatively into other areas. The relationship between intentions and actions was mentioned in connection with difficulties in establishing the motives of the liberal legislators. Did they present humanitarian arguments without necessarily holding them? And at the other end of the continuum, the poor themselves: was there any way of establishing what their concerns were? British research suggests that hostility towards welfare policy, with politicization occurring on race and religious issues, was a common pattern. Would the same hold true in New Zealand? Although there was a lumpen proletariat here, it seemed that it was not simply a migrated version of the British one.

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