

Workfare: the Subjection of Labour

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1. Introduction

The policy of qualifying need based welfare benefits on the condition of work is the essence of workfare.[2] In this paper we contend that typically workfare is discussed too narrowly. Workfare is usually justified as a means of reintroducing the unemployed into the work force (recommodification) or on some notion of desert or reciprocity. Evaluation of the policy focuses on the incentives it creates for welfare beneficiaries, on their ensuing behaviour, on its effectiveness as a means of recommodification and on the reduced strain on the over-burdened social security system. Alternatively, when viewed as a question of distributive justice it reflects on the distribution of income exclusively: do the physically capable have a justified claim for state support, or is it fair to demand from those who do work to subsidise this support? To the extent that it is by their own choice that they remain unemployed, do they not lose any need-based claim for social security benefits? Doesn't the availability of (workfare) jobs attest to their responsibility for their financial situation? Perhaps unconditional welfare payments impose a difficult choice situation whereby it is inexpedient for welfare beneficiaries to forfeit their payments by going back to work (the so-called "poverty-trap")?

Rarely is workfare appraised in terms of how it affects other parties such as employers or other workers, and on the structural effects the pattern of incentives it generates brings about, or as an issue of distributive justice related to a more extensive range of objects of distribution such as access to pleasing jobs.

Hence we propose to evaluate workfare by looking at its effects more broadly. It is our contention that workfare works as a mechanism, whether intended or unintended, of preserving the privileges of one class of workers at the expense of another. Or, to put it the other way, the payment of unconditional welfare to the long term unemployed might be justified as one method of mitigating unjustified privileges.

In what follows we first discuss and dismiss on empirical grounds the two most common arguments in favour of Workfare, namely that workfare develops self-reliance among participants and is more economical in the use of altruism among taxpayers. (section 2) We then suggest that workfare focuses on work as a burden and as a means to income, ignoring other beneficial aspects that are conducive to the worker's self expression. These other benefits are distributed unevenly between two main groups: the privileged well off and the disadvantaged. (section 3) Finally, we argue that workfare functions as a mechanism to preserve these privileges to one class of workers at the expense of another. (section 4)

2. Workfare, self-reliance, and altruism

In his Tanner Lectures on Human Values, Nobel Laureate Robert Solow analyses what he regards as the two most important arguments raised in support of Workfare.[3] While Solow is rather critical of the way Workfare is practiced, he thinks it might be justified in principle by two considerations: to increase self-reliance among welfare beneficiaries, and to decrease the need for altruism among those who subsidise welfare, or, in other words, to make the use of the limited altruism available more efficient.[4]

The justification of workfare as a means of increasing self-reliance assumes that most members of Western societies indeed value self-reliance as part of their autonomy or on some other grounds. This assumption is partly confirmed by the empirical observation that welfare beneficiaries who get a 'job', usually value it more than simply receiving the welfare payment, and that it often contributes to their self-esteem. Solow cites several testimonial-based studies that support this assumption. Thus he points to one clear consequence that would favour workfare:

the welfare population will very likely be better off. It can achieve greater self-respect without loss of income. [...] people exposed to a mandatory work requirement quickly come to feel like regular workers, even a little resentful of the boss.[5]

However, if welfare beneficiaries keep enjoying welfare without working, and if this is done in a society that places a high value on self-reliance, then consequently this might lead to "unresisted dependency" thereby injuring the beneficiaries' moral health.[6]

The justification of workfare as a more efficient use of limited altruism is based on an aversion to freeriding, and the importance of such a widespread norm as the motivational basis of compliance. It is assumed, as a matter of social psychology, that taking advantage of a cooperative system without proper contribution will lessen the general social motivation to sustain this system further. Welfare recipients who are capable of work and yet choose to receive welfare without working are in fact freeriders. This generates a disincentive for capable people to work, doing their share of the burden. It thus entices them to violate the standard of reciprocity, or fair play, whereby one is expected to contribute to the cost of production and maintenance of the arrangement from which one willingly benefits. Thus, it is argued, tax payers' good will is eroded. By forcing capable welfare recipients to work, workfare reduces cases of freeriding, and thus preserves the good will and compliance of the tax payers: when tax payers see that their good will is not exploited they are more likely to comply.

... the work requirement may help to preserve the altruistic impulse of the majority by reducing both their tax burden and their general resentment at conspicuous violations of the norm of self-reliance.[7]

Empirical examination of arguments such as those advanced by Solow yields very little support. First, with regard to the self-reliance argument, we do not deny that self-reliance is a value, yet workfare doesn't make beneficiaries more self-reliant, and even if it did, it wouldn't contribute to their self esteem. Second, as to the altruism argument, we do not deny that workfare economizes on altruism, but this is achieved not by enforcing fair play, but rather by restricting the cooperative system of social welfare.

A sense of self reliance doesn't develop because workfare participants still see themselves as fundamentally dependent on 'the system' to provide them with a mock job as a condition for receiving payment that isn't in reality correlated with their contribution. What they do develop is a sense of playing a game according to rules set by the system in order to qualify. The very fact that Workfare workers work in exchange for their welfare grants rather than for a salary further injures the low regard with which these kinds of works are considered. In a way it is not a regular 'job' any more. These activities – cleaning the streets, shovelling snow, and the like – do not earn an entitlement for a wage. Instead, the work of these welfare recipients is thought by many as a toll that the welfare recipient has to pay in order to receive his or her benefit. But as Sherri Torjman notes: "If there is a real need to carry out some of these 'public good' jobs, such as

cleaning highways or sweeping streets, then workfare participants should be hired as municipal workers and paid a real wage rather than welfare benefits".[8] Thus there is very little hope that workfare participants will develop a sense of self-reliance. Naturally, self esteem is not gained because the jobs' initial low status is now even lower since they don't even entitle the worker to a wage, only to welfare support.

The idea that those working will be capable of supporting themselves and their families, ignores what we know about poverty. In the USA, for example, there are approximately thirty million people who are working full time but earning poverty level wages. More than one in four workers in the USA earns low wages, i.e. too little to lift a family of four above the official government poverty line.[9] So, since even some of those who work in regular, real jobs, fail to provide for themselves, fail to be self-reliant, how could workfare participants hope to? Thus a sense of self-reliance is unlikely to develop because: (1) the work is perceived as no more than an imposed condition attached to receiving welfare benefits rather than a source of earned income – failing to be *self-reliant*; and (2) the benefit itself is insufficient to cater for one's basic needs – failing to be *self-reliant*.

Workfare advocates might rejoin that even if the above is true, there is still a hope that workfare participants would develop from workfare to a real job. But this hope is groundless. In fact workfare can only help to recommodify a tiny minority of the unemployed and only on a provisional basis. Consider the following three cases. NYC operates the largest workfare programme in the USA, called the Work Experience Program. The city's policy has been that at least a quarter of adult recipients must work or participate in work activities for twenty hours a week. In 1996 21,000 people participated in the workfare programme, a year later the number rose by 60% and doubled in 1998.[10] If the case of NYC is representative, then the idea that any welfare recipient who wants a job can find one is nothing more than a myth.[11] Job seekers exceed available jobs. According to Abramovitz (1997) the NY State department of Labor predicted that NYC will have 91,170 new job opening a year until 2002. This is less than a single job for eight job seekers. According to the *NY Times* if every new job in NYC were given to a welfare recipient it would take 21 years for all recipients to be absorbed into the system of paid work.[12] In Washington D.C. it was reported that while there were 36,400 job seekers there were 3,000 job advertised. More interestingly, only 354 of these jobs were obtained by the low skilled poor.[13] Similar statistics apply to Wisconsin. According to a report issued by a group of researchers from the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee, only 1 in 6 families who left welfare by September 1996 earned more than poverty level wages by the year's end. Six months later that figure dropped to 1 in 12. Very few found jobs on their own.[14]

Many workfare programmes refer participants to work within non profit organizations, believing that they would derive satisfaction from their work within such organizations, and that it would prepare them for the job market. Alas, these two expectations are based on myths too.[15] While nonprofit organizations do indeed offer the prospect of a less unpleasant job, they often follow a personnel policy or unwritten norm, that make it very unlikely that workfare workers could qualify for promotion, managerial work, not to mention social benefits such as medical insurance, sick leave, unemployment insurance, and the like.[16] In fact, these workers are sent to workfare placements without proper assessment of their educational attainment, recent work history, literacy, and so on. Therefore, recipients who are sent to nonprofit organizations typically would not be eligible candidates for the jobs they are doing, had it not been for the workfare programme. Moreover, since workfare is compulsory, it has caused many recipients to drop out of evening classes, English as Second Language courses, and the like.[17] As a consequence these people become less 'ready for life' than they would have been without the Workfare programme. So not

only does the workfare job not make participants in the program self-reliant, it might even frustrate some the actions otherwise taken for becoming self-reliant.

Solow's second claim, that of being economical with altruism, is more difficult to empirically assess. It might be the case that indeed, as Solow argues, tax payers are more amenable to pay their taxes once they know that the recipients work in order to receive them. However, or so we want to claim, the more efficient use of altruism does not arise due to a fuller compliance (by welfare recipients) with the system, but rather due to a shrinking of the system imposing less demand (on tax payers). On the basis of testimony by many non profit organizations[18], there is a strong impression that the state throws the ball into the ground of civil society, charities and non profit organizations. They are now expected not only to employ workfare workers and to deal with them administratively, but also to finance all expenses beyond their 'salaries', and to raise the sources for these, from donations and charity money. Thus the state actually retreats from its duties. If this description is true, then workfare is a method of dismantling what used to be a cooperative scheme of mutual support, rather than a method of enforcing compliance or fair play.

Hence, though the policy of workfare is depicted as a government attempt to live up to its responsibilities, in actual practice the state divests itself of responsibility to train and prepare the unemployed for getting a job, by offering them work at non profit organizations and expecting these institutions to bear the financial and organizational costs of this training themselves.

To conclude this section, two widespread arguments in support of workfare, that of developing self-reliance and a more efficient use of (the limited) altruism were analysed, and were rejected on empirical grounds.

3. The nature of work

Before we move to discuss what we take to be workfare's distributive function (section 4), we need to explicate the broader context of distribution and work. We claim that (i) work may be seen both as a means of livelihood and as aspect of self expression; (ii) two kinds of incentives operate in the job market: one positive (drawing on the workers' desire for self expression through work) and one negative and punitive (deriving from the threat of withdrawing the worker's source of income), and (iii) workers can be roughly classified into two groups: well-off and disadvantaged; for the latter work is mostly a means of livelihood, and they are therefore subject mainly to punitive incentives.

3.1 The job market and punitive incentives

Bertrand Russell once remarked: "Work is of two kinds: first, altering the position of matter at or near the earth's surface relatively to other such matter; second, telling other people to do so. The first kind is unpleasant and ill paid; the second is pleasant and highly paid." [19] This perceptive observation, made over 70 years ago, pretty much holds today.

Jobs can be roughly classified into two kinds: meaningful, high-paid, high-status jobs, and drudgery, low-paid, low-status jobs.[20] By meaningful jobs we mean non-routine jobs, challenging to some degree, requiring the implementation of multiple skills, and so on. Low-pay can be defined by some standard such as hourly wage below two thirds of the wage of the median employee.[21] Status is categorized according to the degree to which one is more on the side of giving orders than on the side of receiving orders, in Russell's terms.[22] The two kinds of jobs produce two classes of workers: the well-off and the disadvantaged.

Accordingly, the job market is regulated by two kinds of incentives. People are motivated to work by the intrinsic value they attach to their job, the kind of satisfaction they derive from doing their job, spending time at the workplace, engaging in their work, the interaction with co-workers and managers, and so on and so forth, as well as the pay they receive for doing the job. These are all affirmative incentives and they can be manipulated by the employer to lure sought after employees. The employer can offer higher wages, she can make the job intrinsically more rewarding, or the workplace atmosphere and relationships more pleasant, or any mix of these.

But there is also another kind of incentive that operates in the background for all workers. It is the negative incentive of not having the level of income attached to the specific job. It is the worry of being unable to acquire all the necessities and conveniences that such an income can allow. For some this negative incentive is coercive. For one whose choice is between working at a particular job with a certain pay and remaining unemployed with no pay, the incentive is coercive. For he has no reasonable alternative to accepting the job offer, even at very low pay and with minor intrinsic rewards.[23] We can say that the effective incentive in such a case is *punitive*, in the sense that it punishes one for refusing to work, rather than rewarding one for working.

Now, it seems fair to say that well off people are driven by affirmative incentives in the job market, whereas disadvantaged are driven almost entirely by negative incentives. In his now classical work, 1960s industrial psychologist, Douglas McGregor claimed that managers held a series of assumptions, a view about workers and work, that he called Theory X. According to Theory X work is inherently distasteful to most people, they are not ambitious, have little desire for responsibility, and prefer to be directed. Therefore, these managers believe, employees must be closely controlled and often coerced to achieve organizational objectives. However, research seemed to clearly suggest that these assumptions were less valid than a different view about human behaviour, which he called Theory Y. He urged managers to manage based on these more valid Theory Y notions according to which work is engaged in willingly if the conditions are favourable. People, he argued, can be self-directed and creative at work if properly motivated.[24]

Theory X conforms with, the dominant liberal economic model in assuming that work is not a matter of self-expression, but rather that it competes with leisure. Given the choice, and other things being equal, people would prefer leisure to work. This assumption naturally leads to conceptualizing the 'problem' of unemployment, in terms of the character of the unemployed. They are too passive, lack initiative, fail to relieve themselves of their innate laziness.[25] Thus, it is said, unemployed people will remain unemployed as long as they can continue to receive welfare benefits without the need to work. Defining the problem this way logically leads to workfare as the solution: forcing the unemployed to start working will help them overcome their disposition to laziness and get adjusted to the idea that people should work in order to make a living.

However, on closer examination it is apparent that work is often acknowledged as a means of self expression, or at least as a source of emotional and intellectual satisfaction, and not merely as a means of financial provision. This can easily be noticed in people's behaviour. People often work for longer hours not for the extra pay but because they find what they do challenging and intrinsically rewarding. Writers, musicians, artists, and others engaged in creative work are all perceived as people whose work express their personality, as do sportspersons, academics, professionals such as doctors, lawyers and many others. It is implausible to assume that all these people are of a character radically different from that of the unemployed. Wouldn't they too recoil from work, had it been the case that their jobs were sweeping streets and the like? Although

Theory X might well apply to the unfortunate engaged in unattractive jobs, theory Y probably applies to the well off when they are lucky enough to enjoy meaningful, high-status, well paid jobs. The problem, then, does not lie in the types of personality but in the kinds of job.

From this we conclude that had the ‘problem’ been defined differently in the first place, the proposed solution would have been different and positive incentives could have been suggested. Moreover, the absence of unconditional guaranteed income eliminates all reasonable choice, thus the negative incentives, which Workfare inflicts, become punitive. As such they are coercive, demeaning, and morally questionable.

3.2. Meaningful work

Adam Smith opens his celebrated *The Wealth of Nations* in praise of the division of labour. It is to this principle, he believes, that we owe the greater part of modern wealth. The division of labour among trades and within the firm increases the dexterity of the worker, saves time, and is the cause of many labour saving improvements suggested by the worker. In the famous pin factory example he illustrates how deep that division can be applied.

One man draws out the wire, another straightens it, a third cuts it, a fourth points it, a fifth grinds it at the top for receiving the head; to make the head requires two or three distinct operations; to put it on is a peculiar business, to whiten the pins is another; it is even a trade by itself to put them into the paper; and the important business of making a pin is, in this manner, divided into about eighteen distinct operations, which in some manufactories, are all performed by distinct hands, though in other the same man will sometimes perform two or three of them.[26]

But Smith is well aware of the hazards of the division of labour. He is worried about the debilitating effect of a man’s job being confined to one or two very simple operations. “His dexterity at his own particular trade seems, in this manner, to be acquired at the expense of his intellectual, social, and martial virtues”. The worker becomes “as stupid and ignorant as it is possible for any human creature to become”. [27] We can just imagine the work of one such worker. Long before the millionth time, he has brought to perfection the act putting the head on the pin. There are no surprises, no problems to solve, no variation in his work, no call for involvement. And the workday for this employee is monotonous, unchallenging, fatiguing, under-compensated, and long. No wonder he would choose not to work if he could get sufficient funds from welfare benefits. The division of labour together with its improved efficiency is responsible for the impoverishment of the labour process. Industrialism has deepened the division of labour as far as it could go. The process has somewhat reversed since Henry Ford’s production line and Chaplin’s *Modern Times*. But such regress is only due to considerations of productivity. Where productivity has diminished, or merely remained unchanged, the process of recombination of labour has come to a halt.

In so far as meaningful work may be understood as the opposite of a division of labour, it involves a recombination of labour. We can describe the process as a horizontal integration of work. Now, it might be difficult to make a strong case that individuals have a right to meaningful work. Adina Schwartz, for example, argues that a respect for individual autonomy cannot permit the employment of people in non-meaningful jobs. Thus she aims to establish an autonomy-based right to meaningful work.[28] But, as Richard Arneson points out, meaningful work can be viewed as just one legitimate purpose individuals may choose to advance by means of their work.

Moreover, it seems unfeasible for governments to supply meaningful work to everyone. Therefore, strictly speaking, there is no right to meaningful work as such, but at most a right to have the option of having meaningful work, which individuals may choose to realize. Nevertheless, since meaningful work is one significant means by which individuals pursue their conception of the good, fairness requires that meaningful work be an object of distributive justice. So that whatever meaningful work is available in a society it ought to be distributed fairly. Thus even if there is no right to meaningful work, it is plausible to assume that meaningful work is a legitimate *distribuendum*.^[29]

3.3 Status and Empowerment

It has often been observed that the business organisation is an island of authoritarianism within an ocean of free trade. It is characterised by a hierarchical structure of command rather than the interplay of free market forces.^[30] Each person within that structure is at once an issuer of orders and a receptor, to different degrees. There is one person in the organisation - the Chief Executive – or perhaps a small team of executives, who are wholly on the side of giving orders. Most other strata are on both sides – at times issuing orders at other times subject to orders given by others. But there is one stratum, the largest bottom stratum, which only “receives orders” in Russell’s terms, and together with the next above which is mostly so constitutes the great bulk of employees in any hierarchical organisation. The time they come to work, and the time they leave; the time they take a break and its length; the rate in which they work (determined by the speed of machine, or by standards set by management and controlled by diverse means of surveillance); the order in which they perform their various tasks; whom they work with; how they dress to work; and so on and so forth. In all these respects and others they are subject to the authority of others in the organisation. It should come therefore as no surprise how little satisfaction they derive from their work.

In so far as empowerment may be understood as the opposite of a status hierarchy, of the authority structure, it involves the self regulation of employees. We can describe the process as a *vertical integration* of work. Is there a right to empowerment? Kanungo, for example argues that powerlessness is one variant of alienation. The alienated employee, in this sense, lacks control over the design, creation and quality of the product or service, in the production of which he is engaged. He lacks control over the means – materials, instruments, machines – used in the process of production. He is subordinated to the mechanized process as well as to management personified in the concrete supervisor. This experience of powerlessness, and the significance of work as a constitutive element of self-development, grounds “a moral imperative for the manager to empower his/her subordinates...”.³¹ Again, a right to empowerment might be difficult to demonstrate, but even if there is no such right, status does seem a plausible object of distributive justice.^[32]

3.4. Leisure

In choosing to work for a certain number of hours at a particular pay, we choose what is usually called an income-leisure bundle. In a simplistic (understanding) income and leisure are perceived to be traded off against each other: more income comes with more work and, therefore, with less leisure. The person who chooses not to work at all maximises the amount of leisure anyone can achieve. Thus the recipient of unconditional welfare benefits unjustifiably enjoys more leisure than working people. But this view is mistaken on two counts: first it takes a purely quantitative view of leisure – how many hours one has at one’s disposal to do with as one pleases. And ignores the qualitative issue of what one can do with these “free” hours. Leisure is not mere idle

relaxation, laying on one's back doing nothing for hours on end. There is nothing paternalistic in this idea; it is merely a banal empirical observation that the pleasure derived from leisure costs money. There is a huge leisure industry: watching TV, reading a book, going to the opera, eating a gourmet meal, and so on, all involve consumption. Even laying on one's back as a form of leisure is carried out by a swimming pool under the Mediterranean sun, or at home in bed when one's meals are taken care of. Of course leisure needn't be purely passive – one might undertake to write a book, produce a film or prepare a gourmet meal – but all these too involve costs. On the simplistic quantitative measure, the carefree millionaire and the unemployed pauper are equal in terms of leisure. On a quality-sensitive measure leisure is not merely the number of free hours but also a measure of the range of options available, a range that is wider, with more material means at one's disposal.

The second way in which this view is mistaken is that it takes leisure as the amount of time in which one is not engaged in paid work. This is false since unpaid time is neither a sufficient nor a necessary condition of leisure. It is not sufficient because one may and typically does take part in various activities for which one is not paid. Time spent on shopping, cleaning and other chores, at least to the extent that they are not enjoyed, cannot be considered leisure. It is not necessary because one might be paid for doing exactly what one would choose to do even without pecuniary reward. There are the lucky few, who proclaim that their work is their hobby, but many more enjoy various aspects of their work, and the pay is only a part of the reason for them to engage in it. A more plausible view of leisure is time spent on activities done for the sake of intrinsic benefits.[33] Accordingly, “disleisure” would be defined as time spent on activities for instrumental purposes.

To the extent that the well-off enjoy their work, derive intrinsic satisfaction from it, they also enjoy a greater amount of leisure, or a smaller amount of “disleisure”. A normal adult spends a little more than 16 hours per day awake. For the disadvantaged, an hour at work is one less hour of leisure. For the well off an hour on the job is mostly an hour of leisure. With higher pay the well off can also afford to buy the services that would relieve them from house chores and other disleisure activities. They also have the means that expand the range of options in which to take advantage of their leisure time.

In so far as leisure may be understood as activities engaged in for the sake of intrinsic benefits the well off enjoy a greater amount of it. They derive more intrinsic satisfaction from hours spent at work, they can purchase the services that would relieve them from disleisure activities at home, and they have more qualitative options in which to make use of their leisure time.

While it is difficult to argue for a right to a certain amount of leisure, leisure is distributed between the well-off and the disadvantaged. We therefore suggest that under any reasonable theory of justice, leisure is a distribuendum.[34]

4. The hidden function of Workfare

The distributive justification of workfare is the argument for reciprocity. We shall now review it, and, based on the discussion of the nature of work, will claim that this argument disregards the various elements of work that are being distributed, and thus sustains the uneven distribution of these elements between the well off and the disadvantaged.

The basic idea of the reciprocity argument in favour of workfare proceeds along something like the following lines: the welfare system is, or should be, a cooperative arrangement by which all

roughly gain. Under the ideal circumstances of full compliance everyone should contribute what they can, in terms of work and taxes, and all benefit by receiving a guarantee that their basic needs (education, health care, social services and material security) will be met. Some people cannot contribute anything – but this needn't disqualify them from receiving support for their basic needs. The problem lies with those who *can* but *choose* not to contribute. The choice of receiving benefits without bearing the costs of working, appears to the voluntarily unemployed (or underemployed) to be better than working for a pay not much higher than the welfare benefits they would otherwise receive. By acting so they violate the principle of fairness, as articulated by Hart and restated by Rawls: “We are not to gain from the cooperative labours of others without doing our fair share”.^[35] Workfare, it is argued, obliges as a matter of justice all capable persons to share the burden of work in return for a fair share of the product of cooperation, that is, of the income generated by the work of everyone.

The reciprocity argument views work as a cost or burden, which must be shared fairly by everyone working. But, as we argued above, this ignores other, more positive aspects of work. When work is viewed not merely as a cost, but as a valuable good in itself, it is apparent that in actual practice work is distributed unfairly – not towards those who contribute more, those endowed with the more marketable skills and talents – but towards the less so skilled welfare beneficiaries and workfare candidates. For when work is viewed as a potential milieu of meaningful activity, status, and a possible augments of the value of leisure, it is immediately apparent that on all three counts the well-off get the better deal.

Unconditional welfare benefits would produce under favourable conditions an incentives for employers to do one or more of the following: (1) raise pay; (2) redefine the job so as to achieve horizontal and/or vertical integration; (3) eliminate the job by implementing technological improvements. The second of the above utilises meaningful work and status as affirmative incentives. This will lead to a more just distribution of these aspects of work, and to an extent that leisure is experienced on the job, it will also improve the distribution of leisure. The first will at least compensate for the deprivation in terms of these aspects, but it might also improve leisure in terms of the possibility to purchase services that will reduce the amount of necessary off-the-job disleisure activities, and to consume goods and services that would enhance one's choice of leisure activities.

The third, might be a cause of worry in the short run, for this appears to reduce the number of available jobs. However, if such jobs, which anyway have low intrinsic value, cannot generate an income above the subsistence level afforded by welfare benefits, then arguably such jobs shouldn't exist. Whatever jobs remain ought to be fairly distributed among all capable and willing job seekers, until such time as more jobs might become available. Of course, training might be necessary in order to meet this requirement.

Workfare acts as an inhibitor of such moves by employers. It removes employers' incentives to further vertical integration (empowerment), horizontal integration (meaningful work), and for the redistribution of leisure. As such it acts as a mechanism for making affirmative incentives to workers unnecessary, and augmenting the coercive power of punitive incentives. This it does in two ways. First, the options employers have to employ welfare recipients weakens the workers' bargaining position. The added competition for jobs will drive wages for unqualified workers down, erode workers solidarity, and reduce union power. In Alberta, Canada, for instance, a hospital laid off full time nursing assistants who were paid \$12 an hour and replaced them with welfare recipients paid \$6 an hour on the Alberta Community Employment Program.^[36] Second, the only option to work for a wage, is to participate in a workfare program, perhaps doing the same job for lower pay. In NYC, for example, 20,000 full time city jobs were eliminated and then

replaced with 37,000 part time workfare participants.³⁷ In one case a group of sanitation workers was laid off and became eligible for welfare, and within two months they were performing the same tasks as when they were employed, only now they were on workfare[38].

Workfare sustains the division between those doing decent, prestigious, and enjoyable jobs and those having to make do with unwanted jobs. It thus preserves the privilege of the well-off class, and continues the subjection of cheap labour to the production of cheap goods and services for the benefit of the well off who can afford them. It is a fetish of production at the expense of the process of production. Unconditional welfare is based on the recognition that producing more is not the only thing that matters – the conditions under which we produce are at least as important.

End Notes

1 The authors would like to thank

2 While there are various Workfare programmes in different countries and cities, we hereby refer to workfare as the general idea that people who receive financial aid and other services either for themselves or for their offspring through welfare are required to perform or participate in mandatory labour or services in order to qualify for the benefits they receive.

3 These two arguments can be often found in many of the leaflets and Internet sites supporting workfare; see for instance: http://www.waynetownship.org/program_workfare.htm . See also Evans, P. (1995) 'Linking welfare to jobs: workfare, Canadian style', *Policy Options*, 16, Cited in S. Trojman (1996) *Workfare: A Poor Law*; Caledon Institute of Social Policy, www.caledoninst.org/workfare.pdf

4 Solow R. (1998) *Work and Welfare* (Princeton, Princeton University Press).

5 Solow op.cit, p. 4

6 Solow, op.cit p. 4

7 Solow, op.cit p. 5

8 Trojman op. cit

9 Quicley W. (2003) *Ending Poverty as We Know It* (Philadelphia, Temple University Press) p. 3, p. 23.

10 NY Mayor's management report (1997), cited in Abramovitz M. (1997) 'Workfare and the non-profits?' <http://www.sullivan-county.com/id2>

11 Abramovitz op. cit

12 Finder, A. NY Times, 25 August 1996, p. A1. cited in Abramovitz op. cit.

13 Quigley op. cit p 21.

14 <http://www.iacenter.org/wisc.htm>

15 Abramovitz op. cit

16 See 'Workfare: The Real Deal. NY 1997' in <http://www.workfarewatch.toronto.on.ca>.

17 Abramovitz op. cit

18 See reports by Steven Greenhouse in the *NY Times* 24 July 1997 p A1, *NY Times*, 4 August 1997, p. B3.

19 Russell, B. (1994 (1932)) *In Praise of Idleness* (London, Routledge)

20 See Walzer, M. (1983) *Spheres of Justice* (Oxford, Blackwell). Especially Chapter 6, 'Hard work'.

21 McKnight, A. (2003) 'Low-Paid Work: Drip Feeding the Poor', in J. Hills, J. Le Grand, D. Piachaud (eds.), *Understanding Social Exclusion* (Oxford, Oxford University Press). p. 100

22 We ignore here "status" as a kind of social prestige attached to certain jobs though, no doubt, it too roughly divides along the same lines.

23 Cohen, G.A. (1988) 'Are Disadvantaged Workers Who Take Hazardous Jobs Forced to Take Hazardous Jobs?' in his *History Labour and Freedom* (Oxford, Clarendon Press) p 245.

24 McGregor, D. (1960), *The Human Side of Enterprise* (New York, McGraw-Hill Book Company)

25 Needless to say, the higher unemployment is, the less this thesis seems feasible. Moreover, as research conducted in the UK reveals, often unemployment, low pay and poverty have a regional dimension. This may suggest that the character of those who become unemployed has very little to do with the reasons for their unemployment. See McKnight, A. (2002) 'Low Paid Work: Drip Feeding the Poor', in Hills, John, Julian Le Grand, and David Piachaud (eds.) *Understanding Social Exclusion* (Oxford University Press) pp. 95-117. p. 99

26 Smith, A. (1994 (1776)) *The Wealth of Nations* (New York, Modern Library), pp. 4-5.

27 Ibid. p. 840. See also Marx, K., *Capital I*, Ch. 14 'The Division of Labour and Manufacture', sections 4-5, for a social critique of the division of labour and of Smith's negligible remedies.

28 Schwartz, A. (1982) 'Meaningful Work' *Ethics* 92.

29 Arneson, R. J. (1987), 'Meaningful Work and Market Socialism', *Ethics* 97 p. 537. For an argument that there is no right to meaningful work see: Maitland, I. (1989) 'Rights in the Workplace: A Nozickian Argument' *Journal of Business Ethics* 8.

30 Coase, R.H. (1937), *The Nature of the Firm*

31 Kanungo, R. N. (1992), 'Alienation and Empowerment: Some Ethical Imperatives in Business', *Journal of Business Ethics* 11. See especially pp. 415 and 419f. For a discussion of the various forms of empowerment in business organizations and several ethical dangers of such

policies see: Gandz, J. and F. G. Bird (1996), 'The Ethics of Empowerment', *Journal of Business Ethics* 15.

32 For further discussion see Walzer, M. (1983), *Spheres of Justice* (Oxford, Blackwell). Chapter 11, 'Recognition'.

33 Cohen, G.A. (2000 (1978)). *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence* (Oxford University Press) p. 304.

34 Walzer *Spheres of Justice*, Chapter 7, 'Free Time'. Van Puijs, P. (1995) *Real Freedom for All* (Oxford, Oxford University Press); Rawls, J. (2001) *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*, (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press) §53 (Brief Comments on leisure Time).

35 Rawls, J. (1972) *Theory of Justice* (Oxford, Oxford University Press) p 112; Hart, H.L.A. (1955) 'Are there Any Natural Rights?' *Philosophical Review* 64 pp 185f.

36 Trojman (1996) *Workfare: A Poor Law* p 5.

37 Abramovitz (1997) 'Workfare and the non-profits?'

38 Torjman (1996) *Workfare: A Poor Law*, p 5