

Talking about voluntary action and the welfare state: Looking back and looking ahead

30 April 2019



UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM



Programme

Chair: Susanne Rauprich

- Preliminaries and warm up (15 mins)
- Presentation and discussion (45 mins)
 - Introducing the study
 - Highlighting individual narratives
- Break (15 mins)
- Presentation and discussion (45 mins)
 - Cross cutting themes, emblematic moments and enduring issues
- Significance and implications (20 mins)
- Next steps and close (10 mins)



Image: Emily Samson, *Old Age in the New World* (London: Pilot Press, 1945)

Warm up

On your tables, please answer the following questions.....

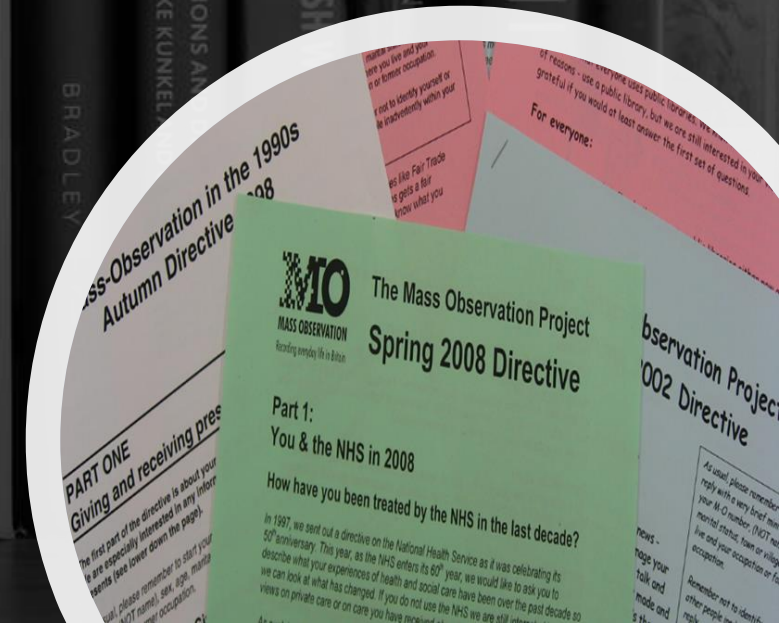
What **five words** come to mind when you think of **the welfare state**?

What **five words** come to mind when you think of **charity**?



ESRC-funded Discourses of Voluntary Action project

- Examining the debates that have taken place on the role, position and contribution of voluntary action in the provision of welfare in the 1940s and 2010s – two transformational moments
- Comparing and contrasting public, state/political and voluntary sector discourses over two time periods
- Using *three* narratives: public, state, voluntary sector





UK YOUTH



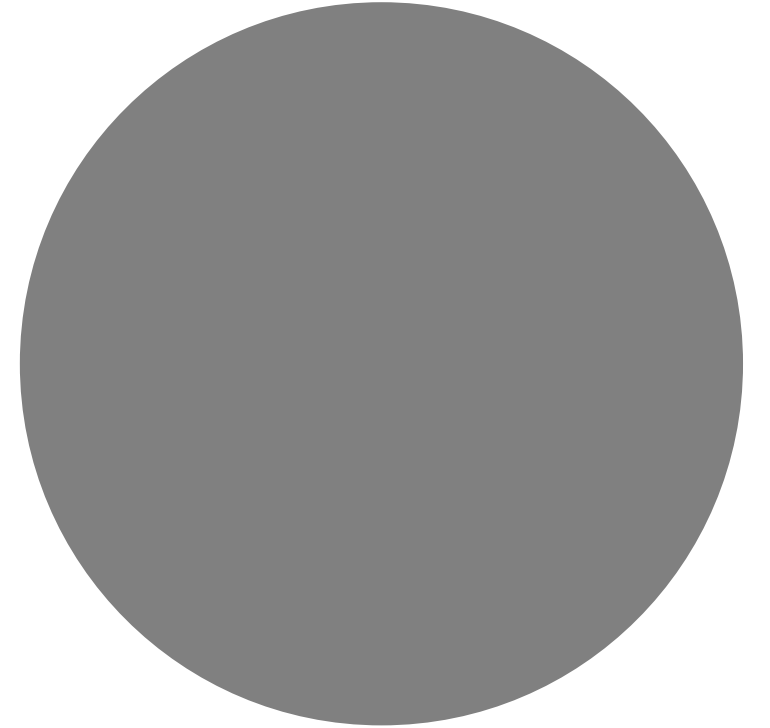
Project Partners

- Co-producing knowledge with: NCVO, Children England, UK Youth and Age UK
- Mass Observation Project – new directive commissioned 2018
- Archive and expertise of former chair of NCVYS (1937-2016)
- Project Steering Group chaired by Professor Marilyn Taylor



Part One - Emerging Findings:

Insights into different narratives



CHILD CARE

THE QUARTERLY REVIEW OF THE

National Council of Associated Children's Homes

MASS-OBSER BULLETIN

(New Series No. 10)

JULY & AUGUST 1940

As Cold as Charity

RECENTLY M-O has been investigating attitudes to all the various forms of charity. Street samples were questioned on their habits and feelings; and the National Panel has been used to fill in the details and give depth to this background picture. Here we mainly discuss the trends apparent amongst the more complex Panel opinions.

LANGUAGE

When people write about charity and what it means to them, many use a specialised jargon. This 'jargon' where it is religious or historical in origin, is linked with the Biblical interpretation of charity as love; where it is topical, 'White Paper' officialise it is more often used in discussion of the social aspects of charities as they are organised at the present day. Some recurrent word and phrases are:—

- | | |
|----------------------------|---|
| 'penance' | 'supplementing state service' |
| 'chivalry' | 'essential services' |
| 'covenantants' | 'infirm or destitute persons' sole support' |
| 'take courage and look-up' | 'social obligation' |
| | 'relief of temporary distress' |

way in which people have used them it is clear that these terms are most of

eds; to that extent, the use of them indicates the unreality to the

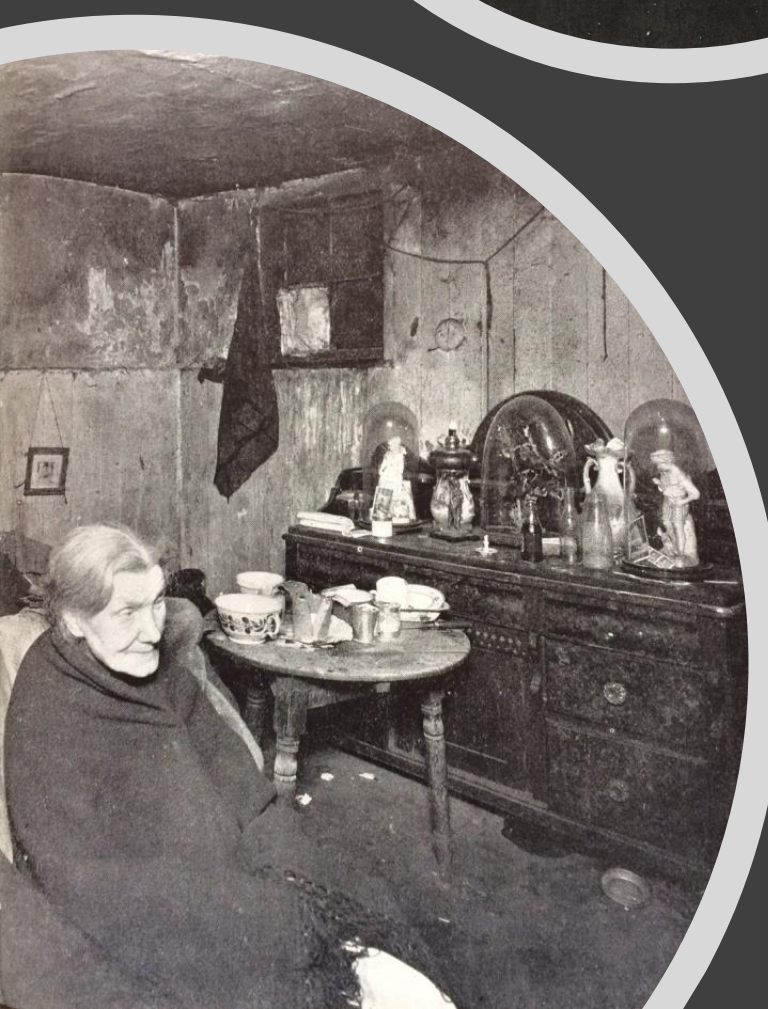
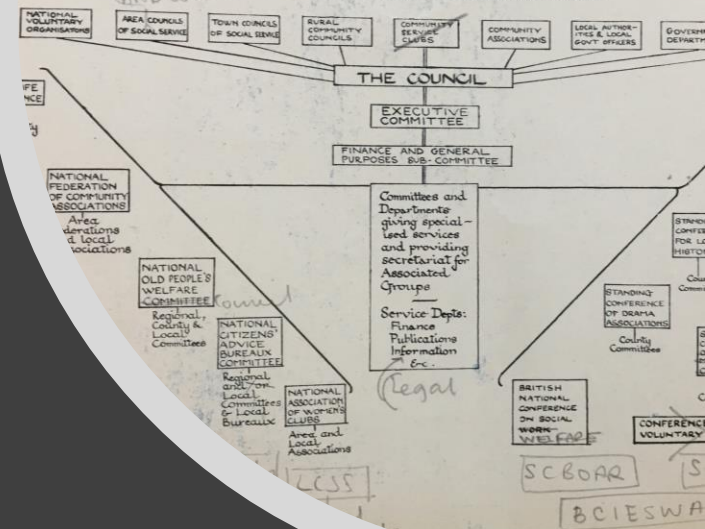
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THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICES

(AND COUNTY) STRUCTURE AND ORGANISATION



1940s

OLD AGE IN THE NEW WORLD

BY EMILY D. SAMSON



Context

- Second World War (1939-1945) revealed new social needs (children in residential care, older people) prompting research, media coverage and calls for reform
- Beveridge led wide-ranging inquiry published 1942 *'A revolutionary moment in the world's history is a time for revolutions, not for patching.'*
- Other inquiries and reports influenced the ambitious social welfare legislation programme of Churchill's wartime coalition and Attlee's Labour government

State narratives: Cradle to grave?

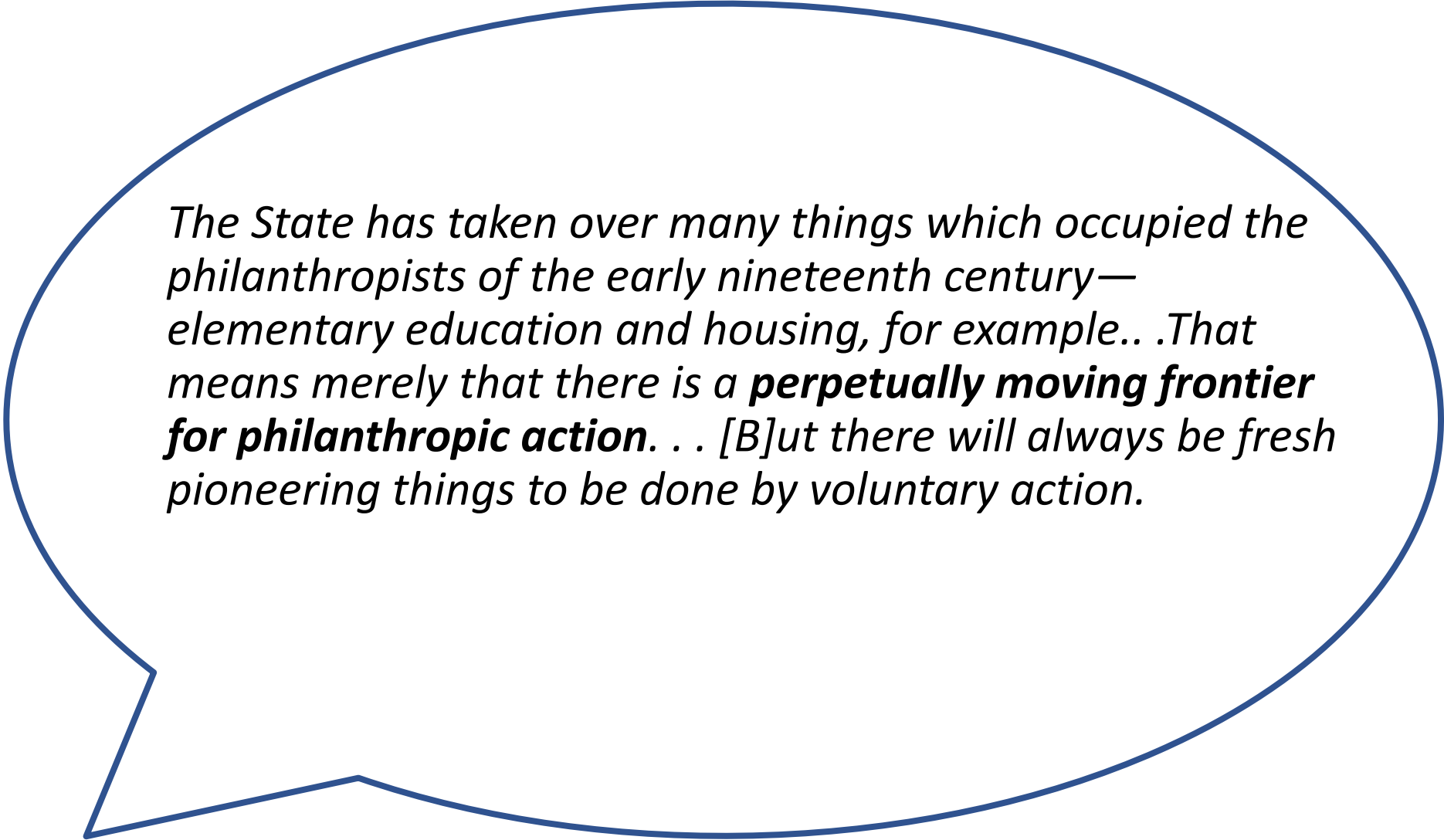


- 1945 Labour government under Attlee enacts ambitious legislative programme **expanding state's role in welfare** – but...
- ...Voluntary action **embedded in British culture** – the voluntary spirit will endure
 - Meeting additional needs
 - Innovating ('blazed trails')
 - Nursery of democracy ('schools in the practice of democracy'; 'debating ground')
- ...Neither the state nor voluntary organisations **can provide welfare services alone**
 - Need for partnership ('[state] can not cover the whole field of human welfare')
 - Particular role for voluntary organisations in leisure and provision for youth and child-care
- *Challenges the idea that Labour was hostile towards voluntary action*

SOCIAL INSURANCE AND ALLIED SERVICES

By Lord Beveridge
INDIA CALLED THEM
FULL EMPLOYMENT IN A FREE SOCIETY
THE PILLARS OF SECURITY
CHANGES IN FAMILY LIFE
THE EVIDENCE FOR VOLUNTARY ACTION

LORD BEVERIDGE
VOLUNTARY ACTION
A REPORT ON
METHODS OF SOCIAL ADVANCE



*The State has taken over many things which occupied the philanthropists of the early nineteenth century— elementary education and housing, for example.. .That means merely that there is a **perpetually moving frontier for philanthropic action**. . . [B]ut there will always be fresh pioneering things to be done by voluntary action.*

Lord Beveridge, House of Lords Debate on Voluntary Action, 1949 (*HL Deb 22 June 1949 vol 163 cc75-136*)

Public narratives: Cold as charity?

Social welfare: expectations

- All writers reflect an **expectation of change** to welfare, but political affiliation shapes views
- Sense of expectation and **rights** to social welfare services, health care & social insurance
- Questioning what **beneficiaries** should expect –the minimum? Or more generous?
- **Outstanding needs identified**– nurseries; youth clubs/youth work; help for older people

Charity: future role?

- Many writers are **supporting charities** whilst waiting for legislative change
- Considerable discussion about the **projected future of charity**: No longer needed? Topping up the state? Meeting new need?
- Questions of **trust**: Charity-racketeering; administration and efficiency; charity functions
- Concerns about **charitable giving** (e.g. flag days, door-to-door collections, appeals); **street begging**; and **deserving / underserving poor** (e.g. discourses of scroungers)
- Class differences in views on need, giving, mutual help & aid

Sense of **transition** and some **confusion** (and ambivalence) as to how the welfare state & its relationship with voluntary organisations will develop

Voluntary narratives: Coordinating the voluntary movement

- Increasing importance of coordination between voluntary orgs – united voice to government
- ‘Standing Committee of Voluntary Organisations in Time of War’ and new infrastructure bodies, e.g. National Council of Associated Children’s Homes
- Focus on post-war planning from 1940 – voluntary movement to play ‘valuable part’ in reconstruction
- NCSS led movement through Beveridge’s Voluntary Action Inquiry & subsequent Nathan Committee and eventual reform of charity law
- Laying groundwork for formation of voluntary sector?

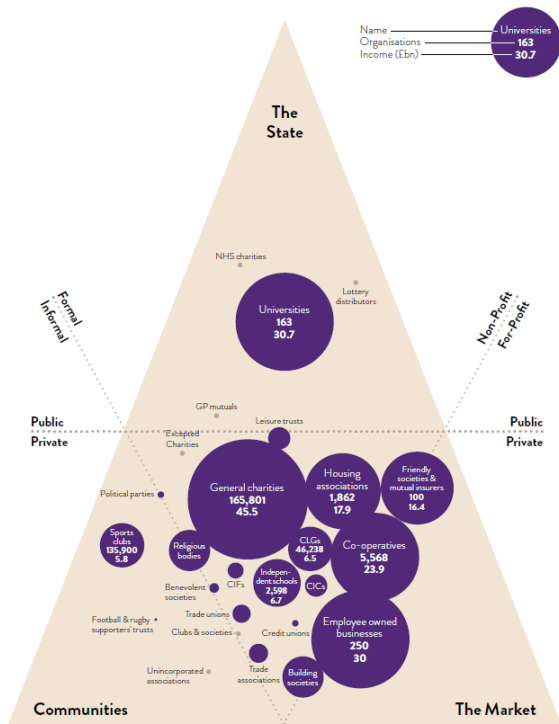


NCSS headquarters in Bedford Square was the centre of the voluntary movement



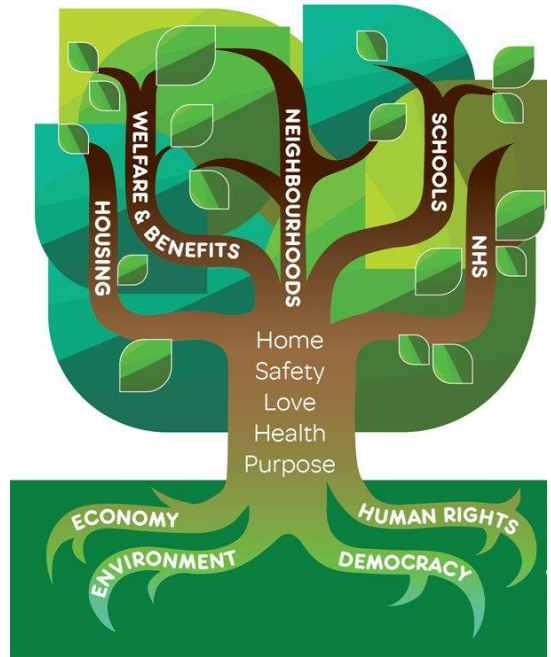
Voluntary narratives: Defending the role and contribution

- Of **'service to nation'** during war and reconstruction - essential for a **democratic** society
- **Pioneering** to meet new needs, e.g. Citizen's Advice and National Old People's Welfare Committee
- Continued **service delivery** needed during war and post-war austerity
- **Partnership** between voluntary agencies and the state was 'perhaps the most fundamental question of all'
- Making important contributions to the design and implementation of post-war **social welfare policy**



ChildFair State

A society that has children at heart is a better society for everyone



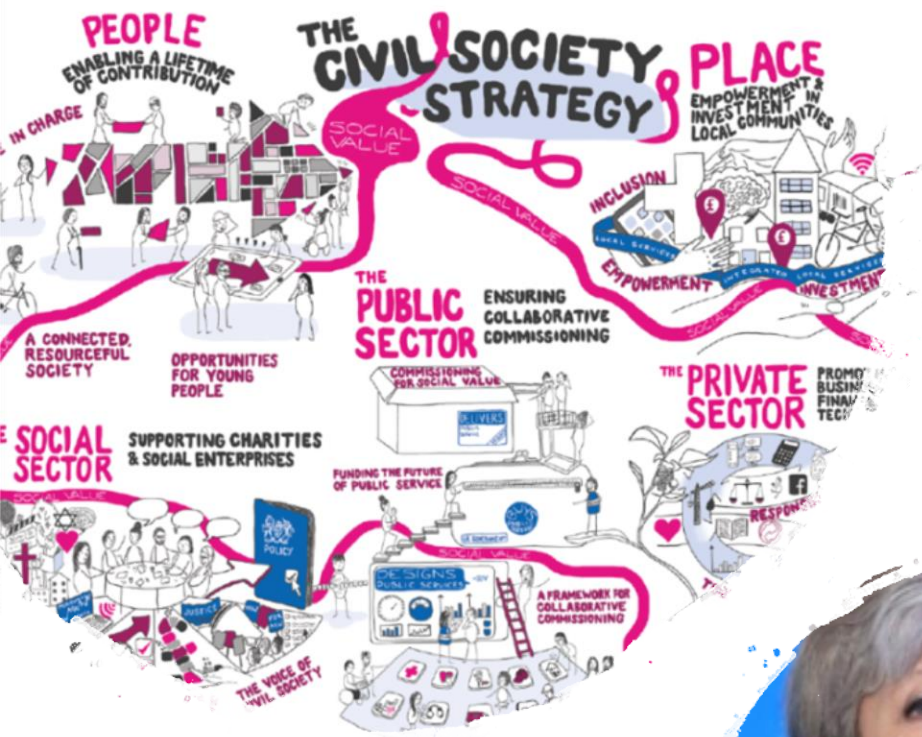
2010s

Context

- 2008 financial crisis
- Formation of 2010 Coalition Government - ideology of austerity and spending cuts unprecedented in modern times
- UK a more multicultural, pluralistic society with a changed relationship between citizen and the state
- Rise of national populism, while Labour party shifting left under Jeremy Corbyn
- May's minority government, with Brexit dominating recent political discourse



State narratives: from Big Society to Civil Society Strategy



Early 2010s

- Promoting the ‘Big Society’ – state failure, social action and new responsibilities for citizens and communities
- Open public services and social investment – ‘broken’ system, choice, blending financial return and social impact, building a market open to all

Mid-2010s

- Sticking to the knitting – increasing antagonism e.g. Lobbying Act, contract clauses
- Need to strengthen governance and leadership – e.g. House of Lords Select Committee

Late 2010s – coming full circle?

- Collaboration and co-creation – e.g. Civil Society Strategy - social value, responsibility, accountability, removing bureaucratic interference



Public narratives: Resonance with the 1940s

Welfare state:

- Sense of **transition** & desire for change – **welfare state in crisis** – no agreement as to what to do, polarised views on future of welfare state
- Conservative voters favouring less/little govt intervention, and others favouring more
- **Recognising the impact of ‘austerity’**: homelessness; poverty; food banks; universal credit; loss of youth services; Sure Start
- **Questioning rights** to welfare; also concerns over **erosion of rights** to welfare; deserving/undeserving poor; benefit scroungers
- All recognise need for social care for **older people**, but some intergenerational differences

Charity and voluntary action:

- **Support for** and involvement in voluntary orgs widespread amongst writers
- Some discuss **erosion of rights** to welfare, and **charitable provision** becoming **‘the norm’**. Concerns about **capacity of voluntary action** to make up for state failure
- Raising questions **of trust**: Scandal; administration costs; efficiency
- **Concerns about charitable giving**: chugging; guilt; celebrities; and **street begging**

Tension in discourses - **distrust of beneficiaries**, even amongst left-wing writers. **Class background important** - few writers describe experience of unemployment and/or poverty

Relevance and role of charities?

*“In broad terms the aims of the welfare state are to ensure that the population has its **basic needs covered** for shelter, food and warmth.”*

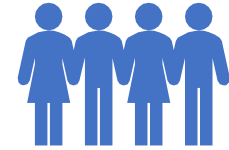
(L1991, female, 81, retired nurse, Conservative)

*“In my opinion then, the relevance of charity in Britain today is that it is **compensating for the Government’s negligence** in looking after its citizens properly.”*

(B3327, male, 51, administrator, Liberal/Labour)

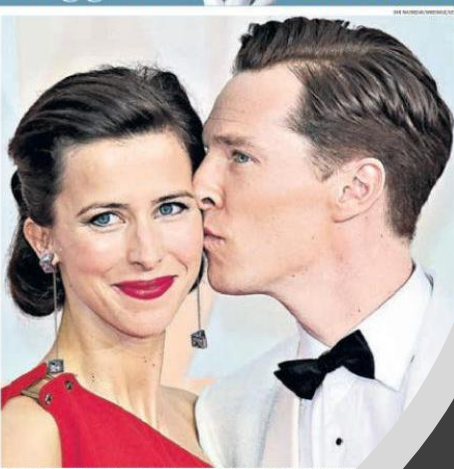
*“... the **welfare state does too much** for people. It’s looked to by too many people as a first resort rather than a last resort. They don’t just expect to be provided for, but they demand it as they consider it their right”*

(W3163, 60, GP receptionist, Conservative)



Cameron accused as troubled charity fails

PM 'mesmerised' by founder of Kids Company
An Iranian exile, has long enjoyed the political and financial support of Mr Cameron. Downing Street intervened in 2012 to overrule ministerial objections to providing a multimillion-pound annual grant to the charity.
In late June two Cabinet Office ministers approved £3 million in funding despite the opposition of the department's most senior civil servant.
"She was a good news story for the Conservative party. It was a case of glamour over substance," the former minister said. "It was all about charisma. She just swept them both up. It was a good thing for the Tory party to be identified with her publicly and if there was any chance of it going under they would have been humiliated."
"She knows a lot of people in the media. She would have gone to them and accused the government of letting down disadvantaged kids."
The charity carried out youth work in London, Liverpool and Bristol. Last night there were emotional scenes outside its largest drop-in centre in south London as tearful parents staged a protest against its closure and children found out that summer holidays organised by Kids Company were cancelled.
Charity's offices in Bristol, staffed by a mix of volunteers and paid staff, had no idea that it was being closed.
"The closure is now inevitable," said a spokesman.



Dementia victims are getting worse
Katy Lay Health Correspondent
Dementia is being diagnosed in people a decade earlier than it was 20 years ago, pioneering experts warn that the world is facing a "silent epidemic."
The disease is now responsible for 1 in 10 people aged 65 and over.

Voluntary narratives: back on the defensive?

- 'Unsettlement' following period of growth; expansion of infrastructure support; 'mainstreaming'; partnership; and 'strategic unity' during New Labour era
- Sense of **vulnerability and fragility**: changing funding sources and mechanisms; scandals; concerns about public trust; struggling to engage with government
- **Differentiation and fragmentation?** Big versus small; national versus local; differences across policy fields
- **Dismantling of infrastructure**: closures; mergers; restructures; refocusing; repositioning
- **Organisations on the defensive?** Securing future; strengthening governance and leadership



Unifying strategic narratives?



- **It's a challenging time for voluntary action** – austerity (less funding, more demand), sector agnosticism, 'bad media', threats to public trust and confidence
- **Voluntary action is essential to democracy**, but its important campaigning and advocacy role is being stifled / weakened
- **Voluntary action has a role to play in transforming public services**: prevention, reach, innovation, voice – BUT different positions across the sector on what this should look like
- **Voluntary action complements, but differs from, the state and the market**, yet distinctions are being blurred – need to chart a new relationship - BUT not clear what this should look like
- **Universal welfare system under threat**, at time when needs are rising –BUT muted debate?

Round table discussions (1)

- What do you think about the material presented here? Does it **resonate** with your understanding of the issues?
- What are the **commonalities & differences** you see when comparing the 1940s with the 2010s?
- What **other insights** or questions arise?





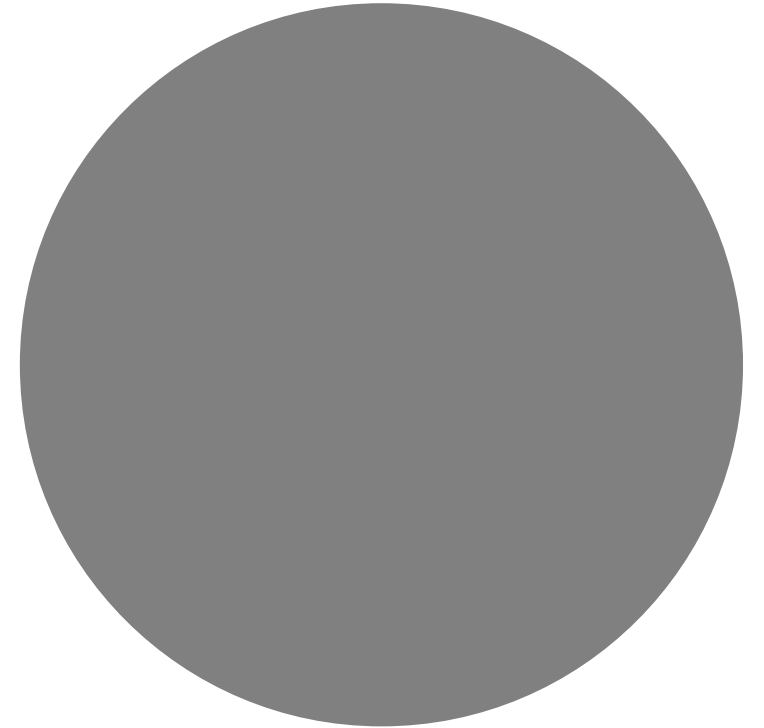
Coffee Break

Part Two - Developing lines of analysis

Overarching themes, illustrated through

'Enduring issues' – broad themes running across both time periods but which may show different features in each

'Emblematic moments' - dilemmas, events or interventions which somehow capture the debates and issues of a particular time



Context matters in developing discourses

| 1940s | 2010s |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• shift to the left• social democratic, state expanding, welfare project• collectivist spirit of reconstruction• austerity...• role of the media• trust in charities• a pragmatic partnership between the state and voluntary action | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• ongoing rightward shift• neo-liberal, state retrenching, welfare project• individualist/populist spirit• austerity...• role of the media• trust in charities• an increasingly antagonistic environment for voluntary action |

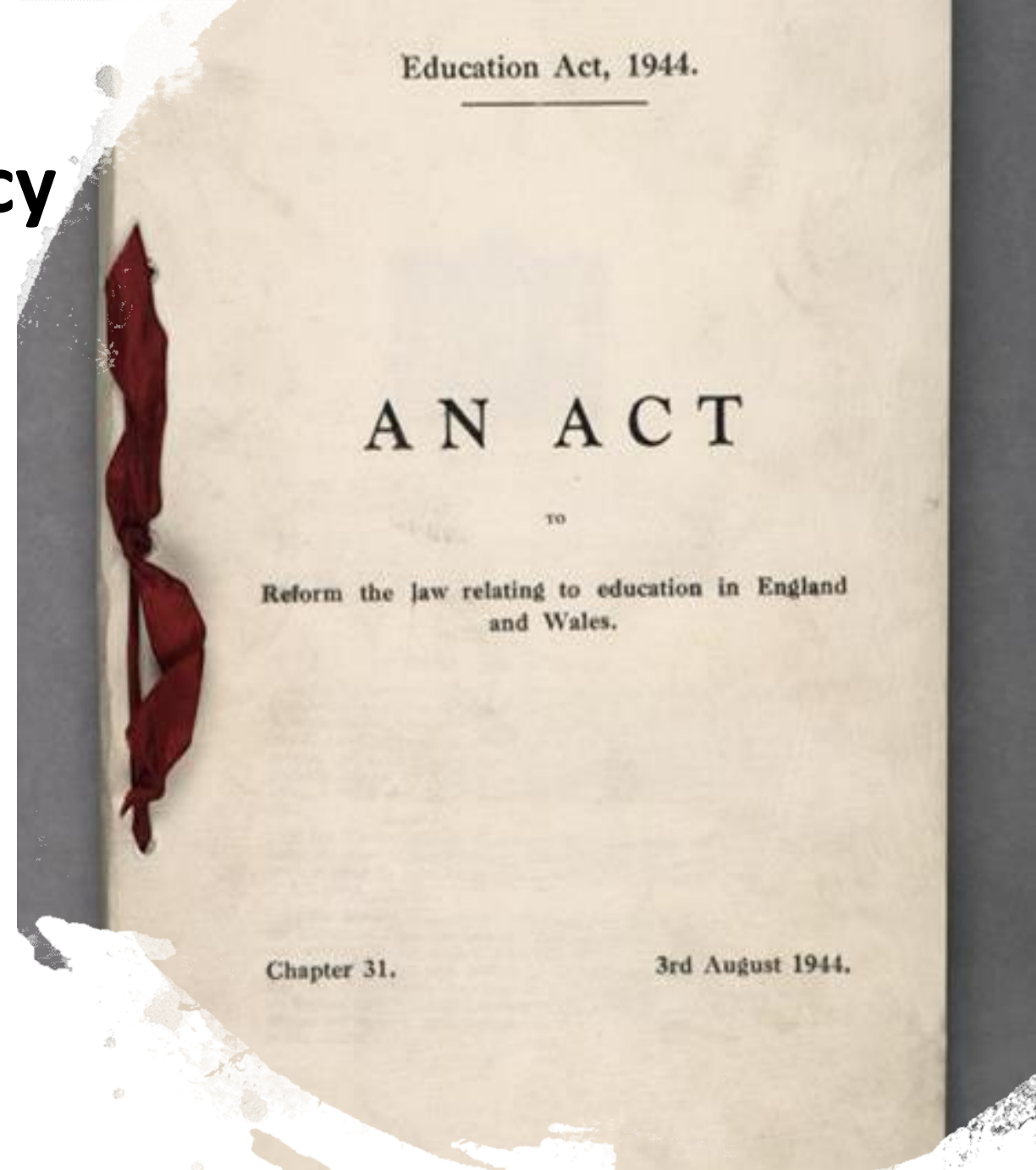
Enduring issue: public trust

- Public scepticism and annoyances around charities in both periods – fraud, abuse, fundraising/chugging and costs
- But in 2010s this appears to have more of an orchestrated/political edge, e.g. criticism from the right on campaigning and advocacy: ‘Sock puppetry’, ‘stick to your knitting’, Lobbying Act
- Charity ‘scandals’ and media amplification, e.g. CEO pay, fundraising, the demise of Kids Company, Oxfam and safeguarding
- Concern about apparent decline in public trust
- Policy focus on governance and leadership in the sector, and new regulatory mechanisms
- A myth-busting communication drive to improve understanding of charities amongst the public

A significant role in shaping narratives & influencing policy

Different dimensions of shaping and influencing:

- Depends on organisations' resources, networks, access and connections
- 'Insider' and 'outsider' strategies – committees, consultations, lobbying, campaigning, thought leadership
- Policy influence work may seek to align with a prevailing 'current', or seek more fundamentally to resist or change it
- How conducive the policy and political environment is for lobbying, campaigning and advocacy



Emblematic moment: Older people and National Assistance

- **National Assistance Act, 1948**
 - end of the Poor Law
 - required LAs to provide residential care (but could be sub-contracted to voluntary orgs)
 - provision for vol orgs to deliver welfare services e.g. meals on wheels, home help, old people's clubs
- A '**better Act**' because of amendments made by National Old People's Welfare Committee
 - Generally informing the Act through expertise
 - Specifically enabling the form and funding of local non-residential welfare services
- Act '**warmly welcomed**' by NOPWC, it provided 'fresh opportunities for **cooperation**'
- Not a straightforward transfer of responsibility, but **new recognition** of need 'to make up for inadequate effort to meet the needs of older people'
- Shared understanding that needs exceeded what state could meet alone, within context of austerity



The 'moving frontier' is fluid, complex and contested

- The simple version – a single line with the state on one side and voluntary action on the other
- A complex version –
 1. Always in motion and always in a state of tension – challenges over meaning and movement
 2. Disaggregating the state and voluntary action across different fields
 3. Blurred and hybrid arrangements and partnerships, rather than a zero-sum relationship (where more of one implies less of another)
 4. Complicated relationships involving activities and services, but also financial flows, regulatory requirements, degrees of control and the wider tone of discussion.
 5. Other actors and sectors are also implicated in any frontier-work, such as private firms, professional bodies and trade unions – not just a state-sector binary

Emblematic moment: Reforming children's social care as a line in the sand

- 2014 DfE's proposals to enable local authorities to **outsource children's services**
- Children England (and others) launched vigorous campaign. Key concern potential **for profit** and **third party involvement**
- Proposals amended: profit-making not allowed
- 2016 proposed **Children and Social Work Bill**: 'developing **innovative new organisational models**...potential to radically improve services'
- Opposition again mobilised – CE joined a coalition of 40 orgs: 'unprecedented constitutional change'
- Lords voted against the power to exempt LAs, **but** clauses re-inserted in the Commons
- Opposition re-mobilised - eventually government withdraws proposal entirely
- **Complicating factors... different third sector positions**

Roundtable discussions (2)

- What do you think about the material presented here? Does it **resonate** with your understanding of the issues?
- What for you might be the '**emblematic moments**' which somehow stand for, or say something about, the debates in the 1940s and 2010s?
- What other '**enduring issues**' would you highlight as running across the two periods of time?
- What **other insights** or questions arise?



Roundtable discussions (3): Implications

- *What might our findings mean for your own work? And for others?*
- *What is the relevance of the historical work within this project for your current practice?*



Thank you!

Come to our end of project conference, 2nd July,
Friends House, London

For more information on our research see:

<https://discoursesofvoluntaryaction.wordpress.com>

