

American Social Welfare Policy: A Pluralist Approach

Chapter 2

Religion and Social Welfare History

Religious Antecedents of Welfare Statism

- The roots of social welfare go deep into the soil of Judeo-Christian tradition
- Church, State, and Social Welfare in Colonial America
 - Most settlers in colonial America were poor
 - European Protestants valued work

Religious Antecedents of Welfare Statism

- The Second Great Awakening
 - General spirit of reform
 - Clashes between church and state by the New England Sabbatarian campaign
- The Civil War Era
 - The evangelistic fervor of the Second Great Awakening was rekindled

Religious Antecedents of Welfare Statism

- Ushered in a new period for relief activities
- The Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries
 - Protestant discrimination contributed to Catholic and Jewish sectarianism
 - Immigration and industrialization made significant impacts on Protestant optimism

The Rise of Social Work as a Profession

- Urban Needs during Industrialization
 - Life in late nineteenth-century America was hard
- Charity Organization Societies
 - Had offices in most American cities by 1900
 - The work was carried out by a committee of volunteers and agency representatives

The Rise of Social Work as a Profession

- Settlement Houses
 - Primarily set up in immigrant neighborhoods
 - By wealthy people, college students, unattached women, teachers, doctors, and lawyers
 - Who themselves moved into the slums as residents
 - Jane Addams established Hull House in 1889

The Rise of Social Work as a Profession

- The Social Casework Agency
 - Emerged during the “Progressive Era”
 - The need for scientifically based techniques and the socialization of charity
- The Progressive Movement
 - A reaction to heartlessness that characterized a large segment of American society

The Rise of Social Work as a Profession

- Prohibition and the Twenties
 - The Protestantism of the 1920s held little resemblance to its 19th century predecessor
- The Great Depression and New Deal
 - The Great Depression called for emergency measures
 - The New Deal programs were the response

The Rise of Social Work as a Profession

- The Reawakening of a Religious Social Conscience and the Great Society
 - Rosa Parks
 - Martin Luther King Jr.
 - Lyndon B. Johnson

The Rise of Social Work as a Profession

- The Continuing Decline of Mainline Influence
 - White religious leadership
 - The influence of liberation theology on mainline thought
- The New Christian Right
 - Jerry Falwell

The Rise of Social Work as a Profession

- Commentators on religion & politics often heralded the decline of the Christian Right
- Religion and Social Policy
 - The United States is one of the most highly religious countries in the industrialized world
 - Olasky was among the first to advocate for faith-based provision of social services

Conclusion

- Tension between religion and social and public policy
 - Continues to dominate American political life in areas of:
 - Women's health, the environment, education and science

Conclusion

- One of the most potent areas for religious intervention involves women's health
- The Virginia legislature