Social welfare

Has there been a shift of patterns of social welfare policy over time? Is the American welfare state truly fair when it comes to receiving financial help? Does it favor certain social groups over others? The Declaration of Independence documents the strong American belief in equality of opportunity; but large portions of our population lack meaningful opportunities. According to an article written by Isabel V. Sawhill, welfare policy was first formulated at the state level.

AFDC itself owes its origins to state-run “ mothers pensions” programs first set up in 1911 in Illinois and Missouri, long before the federal government incorporated family assistance into the Social security Act of 1935. Before 1935, people in vulnerable populations needing support could not find help from private groups. Aid for the poor was considered a public obligation, but was provided on a voluntary basis. Private charity was distinguished between the “ deserving” and “ undeserving” poor.

Widows and orphans and others rendered dependent by tragedy were considered deserving. Able-bodied people unwilling to work or newly arrived transients were considered undeserving. Therefore, charity seekers had to submit to economic and moral qualifications on a very subjective basis that incorporated a lot of prejudice. The provision of aid ignored larger conditions that caused unemployment, and instead considered social case work at the promotion of mental hygiene.

Sawhill explains in her article how gradually, state governments developed programs to aid citizens in difficult conditions. The Great Depression resulted in many middle-class people loosing their job and business, which proved to

Americans that poverty, could result from different failures in the economic system as well as from personal responsibilities. This forced the drastic revisions of standards regarding who was worthy and who was not. This provided the public demand for federal programs. It was at this time when President Franklin D.

Roosevelt introduced a public welfare system that made the federal government the main source of aid to the poor. Roosevelt greatly expanded the scope of the federal government through a series of public works programs and he signed the Social Security Act that provided the elderly with retirement income. In the 1960’s President Lyndon B. Johnson expanded the welfare system to include health, care, food, and housing assistance. This aid to the poor, elderly and disabled led to higher taxes and some abuses of the system, and by the 1990’s there were calls for reform.

From my understanding, social policies have three major objectives: (1) they are supposed to protect most people from the risks and insecurities throughout the life cycle, (2) promote equality of opportunity, and finally, (3) alleviate poverty. Backing up to the first objective; “ They are supposed to protect most people from the risks and insecurities throughout the life cycle. ” Sounds acceptable, just keep in mind the keyword of the phrase; most. Reviewing the second objective; “ Promote Equality of opportunity. ” This is where the debate of social welfare takes effect.

Today, social welfare policies seem to be unjust. Is the government really helping those that are in greater need in our democracy? If this would be true, why is it that every year more of our tax paying money goes to the

more fortunate than the less fortunate? Is the government truly alleviating poverty as they say they are? The role of the government to assist the less fortunate in society is a central debate that defines the government and its relationship with the economy. This system called welfare is a little unfair.

In some cases it is very helpful to people who are in need of it, but in most cases, it neglects the very people who need it the most. According to an article written by Jacob S. Hacker, the current poverty plans spend $6, 100 per poor person yearly or $24, 000 on a family of just four. But not all poverty money is spent on the poor. Only 43% of all poor families receive food stamps, and 23% of food-stamp families have income above the poverty level. Only 19% of all poor families live in public housing or receive housing subsides, and 40% of families receiving housing subsides are not poor.

Only 41% of all poor families are covered by Medicaid, and 35% of all Medicaid beneficiaries are not poor. Amazingly, 46% of all poor families receive no means-tended benefit of any kind from government. Furthermore, an article written on social policy says there is considerable evidence that private charities do a better job of helping the poor. The private sector does a better job of getting aid to the needy promptly, encouraging self-sufficiency and self-reliance and preserving the family unit. Private charities help those that the government doesn’t: 94% of all night shelters in the U.

S. are privately operated, and 80% of low-income people’s inequality turns to private agencies in times of crisis. More than two-thirds of federal welfare spending ends up in pockets of those who are not poor. Since public welfare

faces no marketplace competition, it can spend money in wasteful and inefficient ways. So is the government truly alleviating poverty? I’m sure that those who are in this particular situation would disagree with this notion. In my opinion, the social welfare system does not give to those who are in need of it.

While researching for this paper my main objective was to find how the government favors certain needy social groups over others, but in reality while in the process of searching for the answer to this issue, I kept coming across how really the social group who receives the largest portion of this government money are those who are not in need. They are indeed the social group that seems to be favored by the government. Statistics prove it. Articles defend it. The question is not really who is favored among those who really need it, instead it should ask if it is even being given to the right people overall?