

**Workfare - a blast from the past? Contemporary work
conditionality for the unemployed in historical perspective**

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Abstract

During 2011 the UK Government introduced the Mandatory Work Activity scheme which requires JSA claimants to work in order to continue receiving benefit. Workfare has been viewed as a radical departure in the evolution of British labour market policy. However, an historical review of workfare in inter-war Britain reveals that the most recent proposals merely resuscitate a heritage of compelling the long-term unemployed to work for their benefit. Both then and now workfare has flourished in times of economic crisis and particularly where Governments have pursued economic theories which exalt the market. Historical analysis reveals important continuities and changes in the nature of contemporary workfare.

Key words: Workfare; Unemployment; Labour Camps

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Introduction

During May 2011 the UK Coalition Government introduced the Mandatory Work Activity scheme which requires Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants to undertake a month's full time work activity in order to continue receiving benefit. Failure to complete a placement without 'good cause' results in a benefit sanction of three months, rising to six months for a second breach. A mandatory pilot scheme for young people in London (aged 18-24 years) to take 13 week work placements so that they can continue to claim benefits was also announced in August 2012. The previous Labour Government had also planned to introduce mandatory work activity. Workfare, where unemployed people are obliged to undertake designated labour if they want to continue receiving state benefits, has stimulated a great deal of academic discussion.

Many conceptualisations of workfare are predicated on the notion that there has been an historical rupture in the approach taken by the state to the long-term unemployed. Theodore (1998) argues that there has been a shift from the welfare state to a Schumpeterian workfare state. This is signalled by the punitive nature of programmes which attempt to recast 'supply-side' problems as the product of deficient work ethic. Piven (2010) and Dean (2012) argue that workfare seeks to reinforce the chronically insecure work that has flourished over the past four decades. Wacquant (2009) views it as emblematic of a shift towards the punitive treatment of poverty resulting from a number of interconnecting factors including the decline of the Keynesian welfare state, the advent of post-Fordism and the rise of neoliberalism. This has resulted in the 'double regulation of the poor' through the introduction of workfare and the expansion of the prison system.

However, policy makers and social theorists alike have paid little heed to the lessons of history. This paper undertakes an historical review of workfare in inter-war Britain. It is my contention that this may be particularly illuminating given the ahistorical nature of the contemporary discussion. Furthermore, this period is apposite for reflecting on current policy concerns. First, both periods were characterised by an analogous set of circumstances including the near collapse of the banking system and structural transformations of the economy (Stiglitz, 2012). Second, economic liberalism was hegemonic during both periods. Finally, it is possible to glean personal testimonies of those forced to attend the labour camps of the inter-war period.

Workfare in the New Millennium

There has been a series of UK policy reforms since the mid-1980s that emphasise greater compulsion and enforce a stricter benefit regime. Unemployment benefits have always been conditional on unemployment being involuntary, with an expectation of active job search. It is the increasingly sharp policy focus on individual behaviour that is new (Larsen, 2001). The introduction of JSA in October 1996 was an important landmark that represented a fundamental change in the rights and responsibilities of the unemployed (Finn, 1996). Eligibility for JSA depends upon a claimant entering a Jobseeker's Agreement which is a compulsory condition of eligibility for benefit. The introduction of JSA intensified the requirements placed on claimants to provide evidence of compliant behaviour and introduced a tougher set of sanctions.

There is now a strong mainstream political agreement in favour of conditionality, whereby welfare entitlements are increasingly dependent on citizens agreeing to meet compulsory duties or approved behaviour. The UK Labour Governments advanced welfare conditionality as a core element of their reform agenda, based on 'the principle that aspects of state support, usually financial or practical, are dependent on citizens meeting certain conditions which are invariably behavioural' (DWP, 2008: 1). The 2008 Green Paper *No one written off: reforming welfare to reward responsibility* signalled that the era of workfare had begun. 'We believe there is real value in long-term unemployed people working full-time to develop their work habits and employability' (DWP, 2008; 42).

More recently, conditionality has been extended to previously 'inactive' groups, such as lone parents. This approach has been further intensified by the Coalition Government. The 2010 White Paper *Universal Credit: Welfare that Works* (DWP, 2010) introduced further changes including:

- increasing the level of conditionality that is applied to some recipients;
- strengthening the sanctions regime so that it more effectively encourages individuals to meet their responsibilities; and
- introducing Mandatory Work Activity so that some recipients will be required to take part in full-time work activity for four weeks.

'Having strong and clear sanctions are critical to incentivise benefit recipients to meet their responsibilities. Currently, we believe that sanctions are set at too low a level' (DWP, 2010: 28). Consequently, a new sanctions structure will be introduced. Some claimants face the prospects of losing benefits for up to three years. It is in this context that Slater (2012: 2) argues that this represents: 'the most punitive welfare sanctions ever proposed by a British government'. Peck (2001) has argued that a cross-party 'radical consensus' has emerged which favours replacing the welfare state with a workfare state.

Mandatory Work Activity (MWA) has been promoted both as a means of helping individuals acquire the habits of work and combatting fraudulent behaviour. 'The placement will be up to four weeks and aimed at helping the recipient develop the labour-market discipline associated with full-time employment such as attending on time and regularly, carrying out specific tasks and working under supervision' (DWP, 2010: 29). It would also give individuals 'the opportunity to demonstrate their compliance with the Jobseeker's regime' (DWP, 2010: 29). The scheme is delivered by a range of contracted providers who source placements in voluntary sector organisations or institutions that deliver a community benefit. From May 2011 to February 2013 53,720 individuals started a MWA placement (DWP, 2013). A further £5 million was committed in June 2012 to allow up to 70,000 annual referrals to the programme (DWP, 2012).

Historical review: workfare in the inter-war period

The road to the labour camps of the 1930s

Workfare has precedents going back to the English Poor Law of 1536 (Standing, 2011). However, the existence of British labour camps in the inter-war period is little known and has led some to argue that they are emblematic of our 'secret history' (see Humphries and Gordon, 1994). Their inmates have become something of a forgotten army, dumb occupants of a bleak historical no-man's land (Colledge and Field, 1983). This paper seeks to give a

voice to those forced to attend the camps in order to shed some light on contemporary debates.

The genesis of the camps lay in long-standing concerns about the contaminating effects of the unemployed 'residuum' and the need to physically separate them from the respectable working class. The residuum was dangerous, not only 'because of its degenerate nature, but also because its very existence served to contaminate the classes immediately above it' (Stedman Jones, 1984: 283). In 1889 Charles Booth put forward proposals for the removal of the very poor from the East End of London to labour colonies. Alfred Marshall and Samuel Barnett also called for 'colonising' the unemployed residuum. Sidney and Beatrice Webb advocated labour colonies to remove the 'unemployable' from the labour market, and avoid the danger of 'parasitic competition with those who are whole' (quoted in Welshman, 2006: 586).

Assisted emigration was another option (Morris, 1994). In 1928 a Ministry of Labour scheme led to 10,000 unemployed miners travelling to Canada on assisted packages to gather in the harvest. 'We were met, I think by the entire police force of Quebec. They stood shoulder to shoulder and we had to march between them into a huge hangar' (Will Philpen quoted in Humphries and Gordon, 1994: 127). Patrick Keogh recalled: 'Feeling ran high when the immigration authorities demanded we should take a job at no guaranteed wage or starve. There was an uproar, and when the men became hungry, cafes were looted' (quoted in Croucher, 1987). Many failed to find work and became destitute. Travelling back to Winnipeg hundreds of men were interned in an underground cage with an armed guard on the door. Some rioted and others forced the Canadian Pacific to ship them back to Britain free of charge (Croucher, 1987).

During the late 1920s the problem of long-term unemployment - a concept unacknowledged before the First World War - had begun to exercise policy makers (Whiteside, 1991). From 1920 until the outbreak of war British unemployment never fell below 10% and 23% of the British labour force was out of work in 1932/33 (Hobsbawm, 1994: 93). 'There had been nothing like this economic catastrophe in the lives of working people for as long as anyone could remember' (Hobsbawm, 1994: 93). The camps were a response to the perceived effects of long-term unemployment on the motivation and behaviour of the unemployed. The intention was to preserve the physical and mental fitness of unemployed workers (Whiteside, 1991).

The rising cost of unemployment also led to a 'search for the scrounger' whereby local officials purged claimants who could not prove they were making every effort to find work (Deacon, 1976). A court of referees decided cases in which the onus of proof rested upon the claimant. 'Tens of thousands every week were being deprived of their benefit by the arbitrary rulings of courts of referees under this clause. Not only were they suffering loss of benefit, but their character was being impugned, a decision against them under this clause being tantamount to declaring that they were wasters and ne'er-do-wells who did not want to work' (Hannington, 1977: 180).

The adherence of all Governments to the financial orthodoxy of balanced budgets severely constrained policy options (Burnett, 1994). Moreover, Digby (1989: 49) argues that this 'tipped the balance towards more reactionary social programmes, since these were usually cheaper'. There were few attempts to create jobs but labour transference was encouraged.

Between 1929 and 1938 government-assisted migration averaged 32,000 individuals per annum (Burnett, 1994: 260). Training centres were established to help prepare trainees for a new life in Canada, Australia or the south of England. However, the Ministry of Labour identified: 'a residual group that was unable to learn a trade and loathe to break old associations' (quoted in Colledge and Field, 1983: 155). The labour camps were targeted at these individuals.

Personal experiences of the labour camps

The camps were brought into existence by Proposal Number 3225 to the Labour Emergency Expenditure Committee in 1928. They targeted: 'those, especially the younger men who, through prolonged unemployment, have become so 'soft' and temporarily demoralised that it would not be practical to introduce more than a very small number of them into our ordinary training centres without danger to the morale of the centre' (Ministry of Labour official quoted in Colledge, 1989: 6). The Blackpool centre was the first to open in April 1929. 'Its aim is to bring each man into the physical condition necessary for obtaining and keeping a job and to revive the habits of good time-keeping and steady work' (Ministry of Labour quoted in Colledge and Field, 1983: 156). Between 1929 and 1938 almost 190,000 men were admitted to the camps, the peak year was 1934 when nearly 33,000 attended (Croucher, 1987).

Those registered as unemployed for at least six months and resident in the 'distressed areas' were originally targeted but this was later reduced to three months and extended to the rest of Britain. The official position was that attendance was 'voluntary'; although the 1934 Unemployment Act made attendance compulsory it was never fully implemented. In practice, local unemployment officers coerced individuals to attend by threatening the loss of benefit. 'Men are continually being pressed by labour exchange managers to volunteer for these camps'. (Hannington (1977: 94). This is corroborated by personal testimonies. 'In 1934 I went to High Lodge [a Labour Camp]. Didn't have any choice, mind. It was a case of if I didn't go they would stop my dole' (Mr Grant quoted in Colledge, 1989: 19).

The 'training' took the form of a 12 week course comprising tough, menial manual labour. This included tree felling, breaking rocks, road making and the levelling of playing fields. 'They had us digging trenches. We would dig it down one day then the next day another group would come and fill it in. That is all we done for three months' (Mr Grant quoted in Colledge, 1989: 19). Responding to charges that the men were forced to undertake futile tasks the Ministry of Labour replied: 'the operations themselves, so far as we are concerned, are secondary as a mere means to an end' (quoted in Colledge and Field, 1983: 156). 'They said you were supposed to learn something, but I still don't know what we learned. It was nothing!' (Mr Heard quoted in Colledge and Field, 1983: 164).

The purpose of the camps was disciplinary and they were run on strict military lines. The camp manager was invariably from the armed forces. 'When we got to the camp, this fella came out, they called him the major, he had these britches on and a hat and stick. In his hands he had a brown pair of leather gloves and he was banging these against his thigh like. He said, "You're here to work, not bloody shirk and work you will" (Ben Russ quoted in Humphries and Gordon, 1994: 138). A team of 'gangers' worked directly with the men who were marched to work in military style. 'This ganger you know he had a white-handled pick shaft and wherever he went he kept tapping it on the ground as much to say, "You start any nonsense and I'll belt you with it" (Ben Russ quoted in Humphries and Gordon, 1994: 138).

A former Ebbw Vale steelworker recalled that: 'The first thing they did was supply you with a pair of heavy nailed boots, a pair of corduroy trousers, and some kind of shirt. So wherever you did go people knew who you were- you were a convict in a sense, because you were all dressed the same' (William Heard quoted in Colledge and Field, 1983: 163). Another complained that: 'Instead of giving the impression that there was the chance of a new life with a trade in your hands, you felt that this was a place of punishment for a collection of idle layabouts on the criminal fringe' (Donald Kear quoted in Burnett, 1994: 263). 'There is the atmosphere of the prison or the barrack square; they must rise at a certain time in the morning and come for a roll-call; they must be in bed for a fixed time at night. They are isolated from the rest of the workers by the camps being situated many miles from the towns' (Hannington, 1977: 112).

Those leaving prematurely had their benefit stopped for six weeks. 'This is well understood by the men, and therefore, once inside the camp, they have to stick it out or be faced with loss of benefit and consequent starvation' (Hannington, 1977: 95). Nevertheless, a substantial proportion left early to return home (Ministry of Labour Annual Report quoted in Colledge, 1989: 13). By the late 1930s almost one in three young men sent to the camps quit or were discharged before completing their training (Humphries and Gordon, 1994).

A special commissioner for the Depressed Areas estimated that only one in five trainees obtained work at the end of their training. 'Under the schemes now in operation insufficient employment is found for those who have been trained. The majority drift back home after training and feel the effort made has been wasted' (Stewart quoted in Hannington 1976: 95). Moreover, the stigmatising effects of attending the camps further undermined employment prospects. 'The tendency of bosses to look down on youngsters who had gone to the labour camps as hopeless cases further undermined the scheme' (Humphries and Gordon, 1994: 116).

The ineffectiveness of the camps is corroborated by personal testimonies. Mr Wild of Sheffield was unable to find a stable job throughout the 1930s despite attending four different camps. In 1936 he returned home prior to completing the course at Wallsend. 'I came back home and I had a right job then 'cause they'd terminated me benefit, because I'd broke my contract' (quoted in Colledge, 1989: 41). Ben Russ turned down the offer of selling ice cream from a wheelbarrow in London. 'Hell, I've just come back from Brechfa [a labour camp] man, I wants a decent job in Swansea near. He told me dole was stopped and he pointed his finger at me and he said, "Join the bloody army"....There wasn't much I could do, and I thought that the army couldn't be much worse than Brechfa so I went to join up' (quoted in Humphries and Gordon, 1994:140).

Workfare: continuity and change

Workfare has flourished in times of economic crisis especially where Governments have sought to balance budgets and pursued economic theories which exalt the market. In April 1929 Churchill summarised the conventional wisdom: 'no permanent additional employment can, in fact, and as a general rule, be created by state borrowing and state expenditure' (quoted in Hayburn, 1983: 280). More recently, economic liberalism has flourished in response to the crisis of the long post-war economic boom (Glyn, 2006). It has made sound money the cornerstone of domestic economic policy (Gamble, 2001). This has been reflected in the UK Coalition Agreement (2010:7) which asserts: 'We are also agreed that the

most urgent task facing this coalition is to tackle our record debts, because without sound finance, none of our ambitions will be deliverable.'

The MWA represents both continuity and change with respect to inter-war workfare. The target population of workfare has changed. The labour camps were exclusively for young unemployed men which supports the view that they were primarily disciplinary institutions. However, women were not viewed as central to the labour market given the 'prevailing ideology of maternity and domesticity' (Digby, 1989: 62). Consequently, the limited interventions for women were mainly in domestic work (King, 1999). Nevertheless, males have again bore the brunt of workfare, approximately 70% of individuals starting MWA placements are men (DWP, 2013).

The MWA is a mandatory scheme whereas attendance at the camps was, albeit notionally, on a voluntary basis. The power to direct men to the camps was approved in legislation but was abrogated after nine months. This resulted in 1,800 claimants being compelled to attend (Whiteside, 1991). The Ministry of Labour recognised the dangers of compulsion undermining the suitability of trainees for job placements. King (1999) also suggests that political support for compulsion ebbed further away when the Nazi labour system became known. Nevertheless, this discontinuity should not be exaggerated since labour exchange officials often gave the impression that attendance was compulsory.

During both eras the escalating costs of welfare resulting from burgeoning unemployment has been a key concern and the perceived need to balance budgets has constrained policy options. However, the MWA is explicitly viewed as an instrument for deterring benefit claims and reducing welfare expenditure. A major part of the debate about its introduction in policy circles has been about the scale of potential 'deterrent' effects. This reflects the view that many claimants have become 'dependent' on benefits. The impact assessment of the MWA has found evidence of a deterrent effect (DWP, 2012). In contrast, the sanctioning of camp inmates was primarily viewed as a means of enforcing attendance albeit in a context of an officially endorsed 'search for the scrounger' (Deacon, 1976).

Workfare is now devoid of the overt penal overtones emblematic of the labour camps. Personal testimonies are full of references to their authoritarian nature, poor food, and bullying. Suicides, riots and strikes also occurred. MWA participants are not physically separated from their home communities and the experiences of those who have completed their placement have been largely positive (DWP, 2012). Nevertheless, workfare continues to be viewed as a form of punishment and there remains an explicit link with criminality in terms of combatting fraudulent behaviour. 'We've found that a month's full time activity can be a real deterrent for some people who are either not trying or who are gaming the system' (Grayling quoted in DWP, June 12th 2012).

Contemporary conceptualisations of workfare have often focused on its compulsive and punitive function. Theodore (1998) highlights the increasingly punitive nature of welfare programmes that attempt to recast 'supply-side' problems as the product of deficient work ethic. Wacquant (2009) argues that the advent of neo-liberalism has resulted in the 'double regulation of the poor' that involves both workfare and the expansion of the prison system. From this perspective workfare is designed to push its beneficiaries into the low paid jobs. Similarly, Piven (2010) and Dean (2012) argue that workfare seeks to reinforce the low wage and insecure work that has characterised the post-industrial labour market.

However, a lack of historical focus has meant that many social theorists have exaggerated the degree of change taking place. The policy discourse of both periods is strikingly similar. There is the same pre-occupation with the motivation and behaviour of the workless. There is the familiar imperative to cut benefit expenditure and root out those that are 'not genuinely seeking work'. The lexicon is one of contracts, compliance and compulsion. Moreover, the 'double regulation' of the poor was also evident in the inter-war period in the form of labour camps and burgeoning prison populations. The number of male prisoners in England and Wales rose by over 60% from 1918 to 1933 (Home Office 2002).

Continuity is most obviously reflected in the use of front-line public employment service staff to discipline 'recalcitrant' groups. King (1999) argues that the use of labour exchange officials to select men to attend the camps distinguished it from US experience. Those viewed to be resistant to government schemes, especially labour transference, were targeted. This complemented other monitoring aspects of exchange officials' work (McKibbin, 1990). Similarly, referral to the MWA is at Jobcentre Plus adviser discretion and the focus is those felt to be lacking the necessary commitment to finding work (DWP, 2012). In 'trailblazer districts' advisers were also asked to refer those with a history of two or more sanctions (DWP, 2012).

A defining feature of both interventions is that the 'training' provided is not intended to lead to the acquisition of new skills. Training is designed less to impart vocational skills than to maintain morale, reinforce work discipline and prevent long-term benefit receipt (Whiteside, 1991). Then as now the main target is young people who might otherwise become long-term unemployed. Workfare also continues to have a strong political appeal because it allays 'the irritation commonly provoked by the thought that some people are able to live at the public's expense without having to stir a finger to earn their keep' (Whiteside, 1991: 90).

The promotion of workfare continues to draw upon social psychological theories of unemployment. These suggest that the unemployed progress in stages to a state of personal and social disintegration (cf. Jahoda et al, 1972). The Ministry of Labour argued that prolonged unemployment 'has robbed many men both of the physical fitness and of the attitude of mind which would enable them to undertake heavy work' (quoted in King, 1999: 173). A substantial body of research over the last eighty years has demonstrated that unemployment causes mental health problems including anxiety, depression and negative self-esteem (Fryer, 2013). However, inter-war surveys found little evidence of 'demoralisation' amongst the unemployed i.e. the disintegration of daily routines, collapse of intellectual interests and abandonment of political activity (Welshman, 2013). McKibbin (1998) also noted that most returned to work when economic conditions improved.

The re-appearance of workfare underlines the resilience of behavioural explanations of labour market marginality. During the inter-war years the concept of the 'unemployable' stressed the role of 'defects of character' (see Welshman, 2013). The camps were targeted at those deemed to be making insufficient effort to find work and resistant to labour transference. The re-emergence of mass unemployment has led the UK Government to question the work ethic of some groups. 'Work must be seen as desirable and something to be aspired to' (HM Government, 2012: 46). It has been suggested that family breakdown or being brought up in a deprived community may mean that individuals fail to assimilate a conventional work ethic in their formative years (see Gallie, 1994).

However, evidence of a lower commitment to work among such groups remains elusive. Dean and Taylor-Gooby (1992) found that the long-term unemployed are not separated from the rest of society but follow a value-orientation in which material dependency on the wage relation is seen as natural and necessary to personal identity. The Social Change and Economic Life Initiative found that the unemployed suffered serious disadvantage but they did not have a markedly lower commitment to work than those in employment (Gallie, 1994). A study of the lives of people on low incomes concluded that they had aspirations just like others in society (Kempson, 1996). Digby (1989: 131) cites American research that concluded: 'workfare programmes did not create the work ethic, they found it'.

The stigmatisation of the long-term unemployed during both periods has been facilitated by their exclusion from the public discourse. The airing of the personal testimonies of the unemployed by the BBC radio programme, 'Time to Spare' (1934), was instructive. Government officials publicly sought to discredit the first-hand accounts of unemployed contributors. 'The simple and radical act of letting the unemployed speak for themselves while the Commons debated the Unemployment Bill was enough to give the left a field day against the government which responded with an astonishing display of threat' (Scannell 1980: 25). Stigmatising depictions continue to dominate the public discourse. 'The poor are largely hidden from public view, relegated to prejudiced depictions of benefit scroungers in tabloid stories and popular television programmes that dwell on the titillating sins of the underclass' (Toynbee, 2003: 12).

Workfare underlines the ideological nature of welfare policy development. The idea for the camps rested upon little more than a perception amongst senior civil servants that the long-term unemployed required physical reconditioning to find work (King, 1999). In the event most drifted back home feeling that the privations that they had endured had been futile. Research in the US, UK, Australia and New Zealand has found few positive employment effects of workfare (Crisp and Fletcher, 2008). Similarly, referral to the MWA programme has had no impact on the likelihood of individuals being employed compared to non-referrals (DWP, 2012). More recently, concerns have been expressed that workfare may move some into a 'low-pay, no-pay' cycle rather than sustainably resolving unemployment (Wright 2012; Shildrick et al, 2012).

The potential effect of workfare on wages has been an enduring concern. 'The use of workfare has escalated over the past year and this has had a significant effect on the amount of paid work available...it all adds up to workfare replacing paid jobs and driving down wages' (Clark, 2013: 2). Writing eighty years earlier Hannington (1976:113) argued: 'If men are made to feel that they should be satisfied with a condition where they work for a labour exchange or U.A.B pittance, then the tendency will be to regard themselves as fortunate if they can get an ordinary job at wages fare below trade union standards.'

Nevertheless, the response of the trade union movement continues to be muted. The Trade Union Congress (TUC) turned a blind eye to the camps and was even consulted on plans to disallow the benefits of men who refused to attend. The TUC now has an ambiguous position of opposing workfare, while supporting the Opposition's proposed 'Job Guarantee' scheme which also advocates compulsory work (Clark, 2013). The vacuum has been partly filled by grassroots campaigns. In the 1930s the National Unemployed Workers Movement (NUWM) sought to persuade people not to go to the camps and publicly burned 'letters of

invitation' (Croucher, 1987). Boycott Welfare has provided advice and information to help individuals resist being subject to the MWA.

Mandatory work programmes have several appeals to economically liberal policy makers. First, such programmes are inexpensive. Second, they resuscitate and are built upon the age-old distinction made between the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor. Third, they demonstrate that the 'undeserving' do not share mainstream values and must be compelled to work. It is in this context that we can understand the Ministry of Labour view that futile work tasks were a means to an end. Fourth, behavioural rather than structural explanations of unemployment are prioritised. Fifth, in the modern era workfare fulfils an important ideological function by 'stressing not the rights but the obligations of citizenship, the principal obligation being to work in return for support' (Morris, 1994: 3). Finally, they mask 'the real dynamic of abandonment' that has taken place through the 'dismantling of the protections and defences constructed in post-war welfare capitalism against the rigours, vagaries, demands and inequities of the market' (Clarke, 2005: 542).

Concluding remarks

Slater (2012) argues that policy makers have actively manufactured ignorance with regard to the structural causes of unemployment to dominate the debate on welfare reform. Historical evidence has not been immune from this process. A Government Adviser has, for example, quoted the 1942 Beveridge Report to justify punitive welfare reform. He drew attention to the proposition that the unemployed 'should be required, as a condition of continued benefit to attend a work or training centre, such attendance being designed as a means of preventing habituation to idleness and as a means of improving capacity for earnings' (Beveridge quoted by Freud, 2009: 2). This attempt to invest current policy with some historical legitimacy underlines the continuing relevance of Orwell's maxim that: 'He who controls the past controls the future. He who controls the present controls the past' (Orwell, 1949).

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