

SPICKER, P. 2017. Arguments for welfare: the welfare state and social policy. London: Rowman and Littlefield International Ltd [online]. Available from: [http://www.rowmaninternational.com/book/arguments\\_for\\_welfare/3-156-b8676521-173c-4557-9489-01d73d466f67](http://www.rowmaninternational.com/book/arguments_for_welfare/3-156-b8676521-173c-4557-9489-01d73d466f67)

# Arguments for welfare: the welfare state and social policy.

SPICKER, P.

2017

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## Why welfare?

This short book has presented 26 of the principal reasons for the provision of welfare.

- A. Welfare is the right thing to do if
- it has good consequences
  - it is consistent with general moral rules, such as human rights or the principles of major religions
  - it is done in recognition of specific obligations, or
  - it is the sort of thing done by good people.

However, it cannot be assumed that welfare is good or bad in itself. It all depends on what the provision is and what it is doing.

- B. It is good to do things for other people, whether this is done out of benevolence, altruism or humanitarianism, or a sense of social responsibility, duty or reciprocity.

- C. Sometimes we feel, morally, that something must be done, people are in need, or that state or social organisations have to take action.

- D. People have a range of rights to welfare:
- particular rights gained from interaction, exchange and contract,
  - rights of citizenship, and
  - human rights.

- E. Welfare serves people's interests.
- People who are self-interested tend to choose to have welfare.
  - People make collective arrangements with others for their mutual benefit, and to further their common and shared interests. If the choices which lead to them being set up are legitimate, so are the arrangements.

- F. Welfare furthers the common good:
- the interests which people have in common, and
  - the interests they share as members of a community or members of a society.

- G. There are limits to markets.
- Markets sometimes 'fail', in the sense that they cannot work adequately.
  - The advantages claimed for markets cannot consistently be realised, because many of the situations that welfare provision has to deal with are different from the conventional representation of production and economic exchange. The demand for services cannot be met consistently and effectively through commodification and exchange.
  - There would be gaps even if markets were to function perfectly. Markets cannot do everything. Some other arrangement has to be made.

H. Some universal standards are needed for people to function as individuals, to live with dignity, and to make it possible to thrive and make choices.

I. There is also a need to protect some people.

J. Welfare needs to be delivered through public services, which cannot operate as businesses do.

Public services have developed to deliver services in ways that are compatible with public policy. Beginning with policy requires services to be directed to meet aims effectively and accountable in those terms.

To achieve the aims of policy, and because they cannot be funded by payment at the point of consumption, public services have to operate as a trust.

K. Public services may be developed  
to deliver social goods  
to ensure minimum standards  
to develop services which users could not realistically pay for in their own right  
to provide comprehensive services.

L. Public services have also developed as a pragmatic response to requirements for service delivery.

M. Government is there to serve the interests of its citizens, and to do things that people want to have done.

N. Democratic governments have stronger commitments to welfare  
if they accept that citizens have rights, or  
if they are accountable to an electorate.

O. Government is a practical and legitimate option for the development of collective action. Equally, governments enhance their legitimacy by providing welfare.

P. Government depends on legal authority, and welfare may rely on the exercise of such authority.

Some things that have to be done require appropriate legal authority which can only come from government.

There is sometimes a case to use compulsion to ensure public benefit.

Q. Welfare broadens the range of mechanisms by which governments govern. Welfare provision offers mechanisms to persuade, promote, or offer incentives. Consequently, where there are developed welfare services, government is better able to act proportionately within its legitimate sphere.

R. Government is the provider of last resort, which justifies residual provision; its role extends to institutional provision as it comes to accept further responsibilities for citizens' welfare.

S. Welfare is an expression of moral values in itself, but it can also promote other core moral values.

T. Welfare can promote social justice through a fair, consistent distribution that is proportionate in its effects.

U. Welfare can promote equality both procedurally and materially:  
procedurally, through  
rights  
access to opportunity, and  
materially, in terms of  
citizenship,  
access to the conditions of civilization and  
the reduction of disadvantage in outcomes.

V. Welfare can promote freedom  
in an individual sense, through autonomy and personal choice  
in a social sense, through empowerment and collective capacity.  
It advances human development, allowing people to develop and realise their  
capabilities.

W. Welfare can be used for social investment, developing both human capital and social capital and helping society to continue into the future.

X. Welfare provision is used to achieve economic ends.  
It is a tool of economic management;  
It is used to promote economic development.

Y. Welfare provision is used to achieve social objectives, including  
social cohesion,  
integration and  
solidarity.  
Welfare is an investment for the future;  
it might also be used to shape individual behaviour.

Z. Most generic criticisms of the effects of welfare are ill-founded. Generalised claims that welfare leads to bad behaviour, economic failure or intergenerational dependency are not based in solid evidence.