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Trends. Political Psychologies of Welfare

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Government welfare programs often have encouraged failure. They reinforce needs for dependency, low self-esteem, beliefs of being nobody not somebody, a sense of not belonging to the world. They punish many forms of initiative and creativity. The programs take care of those who can't take care of themselves or who believe they can't or are able to look like they can't. Looking like one can't is a good thing. Things going wrong is a good thing. Money follows from failure in a failing attempt to somehow decrease the economic disparity between winners and losers in society.

Government welfare programs can encourage success. They can reinforce needs to be independent, high self-esteem, beliefs of being somebody not nobody, a sense of belonging to the world. They can reinforce the many forms of initiative and creativity. The programs take care of those who dare to succeed. When those who dare fail, welfare provides the net to catch them. The next attempt at success soon follows. Welfare programs can significantly decrease the psychological disparity among citizens as to happiness, hope, and meaningfulness.

Two very different notions of welfare. The first has a long history of empirical validation. The second, so far, but a pipe dream, perhaps too close to other pipe dreams that sound great in theory but play out so differently, that seem to posit a New Man and New Woman that never exist regardless of all the paeans to them. A pipe dream that seemingly is the foundation of the Labor Government's approach to welfare in the United Kingdom. With all the success this government has so far had in implementing its mandate, will it founder on a welfare perspective that is closer to its "red" past than might meet the eye, that only can go up in smoke? (See Bornstein, R. F. (1997). Dependent personality disorder in the DSM-IV and beyond. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 4, 175-187; Giddens, A. (1994). *Beyond left and right: The future of radical politics*. London: Blackwell; Mesa-Lago, C. (1997). Social welfare reform in the context of economic-political liberalization: Latin American cases. *World Development*, 25, 497-517; Rosenberg, A., & Limber, S. P. (Ed.) *Contributions of social science research to Issues of family policy*. *Journal of Social Issues*, 52, 1-203; Wenger, G. C. (1987). Dependence, interdependence, and reciprocity after eighty. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 1, 355-377.)