

The Irish Welfare State in Comparative Perspective

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Introduction

MOST INTERPRETATIONS of the transformation that Irish society has experienced since 1960 treat industrialisation as the central underlying dynamic. Typically, these interpretations also pay homage to the crucial role played by state industrial policies. This chapter explores an alternative interpretation of that transformation. Over the past three decades social citizenship rights have steadily expanded. In our view, this expansion of social rights constitutes a fundamental dynamic shaping contemporary Irish society, but neither the trend nor its significance has been sufficiently recognised. We argue that the expansion of social rights amounts to a silent revolution, one that vies for importance with industrialisation as a driving force in shaping Irish society.

Social citizenship refers to the bundle of social rights—to welfare, equality and security—to which citizens are entitled, unconditionally, by virtue of their membership of the national community. In Ireland, the range of exigencies from which people are protected has expanded dramatically over the past three decades. So has the proportion of the population enjoying such protection on an insurance rather than an assistance basis. The state increasingly takes responsibility not only for providing income replacement for the aged, the sick and the unemployed, but also for employment and for equality of opportunity. The progressive enhancement of social rights is a basic trend running through the changes that Ireland has experienced since 1960.

To argue that social citizenship has expanded in Ireland in recent

decades is not, however, to assert that its quality has vastly improved. Inequalities were neither eliminated nor even greatly abated. While all citizens may have come to have virtually equal entitlements to a comprehensive range of social rights, services, and benefits, the interaction of those rights with market-generated inequalities generally results in the reproduction of inequality. What has evolved is a pay-related welfare state in which minimal levels of universal entitlement to income and services are supplemented by market-based resources. Thus, we argue that the expansion of the welfare state, and of social citizenship, was accomplished in such a manner as to leave privilege essentially undisturbed.

The impact of industrialisation in Ireland is not, in our view, as comprehensive or well-defined as that of the expansion of social rights. Industrial production and employment certainly expanded after 1960, but the change can hardly be deemed an industrial revolution. Moreover, although state industrial policies were undoubtedly important in shaping that growth, those policies represented but one moment in a more general process in which there was a marked expansion of state intervention in all important spheres of social and economic life. We do not believe that the expansion of social citizenship was an inevitable consequence of the development of industrial society in Ireland. Expansion occurred despite the strong opposition of the main economic planners. Rather, the real import of industrialisation may be that enhanced industrial productivity generated the increased surplus that is a necessary, but by no means sufficient, prerequisite for welfare state expansion.

This paper sets out our interpretation of how and why the Irish welfare state expanded and with what societal consequences. We look first at the degree to which the major existing theories of welfare state expansion apply to the Irish case, concluding that a state-centred approach is the most appropriate. Second, we define the welfare state as a political mode of allocation and distribution of resources, and, therefore, of life chances, independent of market forces.¹ Third, we detail the main features of the Irish welfare state as it evolved, concentrating on the period since 1960. Finally, we return to the central problem of explaining how and why the Irish welfare state expanded in so distinctive a manner and with consequences that proved to be so favourable to privilege.

¹ We follow Giddens (1973: 130–131) in understanding life chances to refer to 'the chances an individual has for sharing in the socially created economic or cultural "goods" that typically exist in any given society'.

Applicability of General Theories of the Welfare State to Ireland

Three general approaches to the study of the welfare state can be identified that recognise important national differences in welfare policies: the 'logic of industrialism', the 'social democratic' and the 'state-centred' approaches. These identify important factors in the development of welfare states, but no single approach appears to provide a satisfactory account of the Irish case. The logic of industrialism theory argues that the welfare state is a functionally necessary accompaniment to industrialisation. Economic development, giving rise to demographic change and social structural upheaval, generates both new needs and new resources for the expansion of the welfare function (Kerr *et al.* 1960; Wilensky, 1975). A similar functionalism is also evident in certain Marxist formulations, in which social policies are held to aid capital accumulation and serve needs for legitimacy (O'Connor, 1973). Functionalist theories generally fail to specify the mechanisms translating systemic needs into policy outcomes and encounter difficulties in accounting for welfare state variation among countries at similar levels of development. This is particularly evident when the welfare state is operationalised in terms of levels of spending on state transfers and benefits (Castles, 1982). Ireland is a case in point. The level of spending on welfare state functions, conventionally measured, is underpredicted by level of development.

The social democratic approach, in contrast, emphasises the strength of working-class interests and the capacity of unions and political parties representing those interests to press for welfare policy reforms (Shalev, 1983b; Stephens, 1979). A substantial body of empirical evidence, finding that nations with strong and centralised union movements and stable and enduring social democratic governments have high levels of welfare spending, supports the social democratic theory (Cameron, 1978, 1984; Castles, 1982; Furniss and Tilton, 1977; Korpi, 1980, 1983, 1989). Support for this thesis is qualified, however, in the light of assertions that the effect of social democracy is contingent on macroeconomic conditions and political system characteristics, and that social democracy is not the only route to the expansion of the welfare state (Shalev, 1983a; Skocpol and Amenta, 1986). In the Irish case, although union membership is somewhat above the European average, the labour movement is deeply fragmented. Moreover, the Labour Party has never enjoyed much electoral support and has generally been excluded from power, except as a minor partner in coalitions dominated by the right-wing Fine Gael party. Despite working-class weakness, however the share of welfare expenditures in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has been higher in Ireland than in

Austria, Finland, Norway, and the United Kingdom—countries where the working-class is substantially more organised and mobilised.

Both the logic of industrialism and social democratic approaches view the state as determined by, or responsive to, societal forces and interests. The state-centred approach, in contrast, regards the state as an organisation with interests of its own to pursue. State-centred theories explain national differences in the timing and content of welfare policies in terms of historical variations in state structures. Crucial structural variables are the administrative capacities of states to introduce, finance and implement policies; prior state actions and policies that shape future policy innovations; and the degree to which states can act independently of powerful organised interests (Skocpol, 1981; 1985). The major criticism of this approach is that it overestimates the autonomy of the state and underestimates class biases within the state (Carnoy, 1984; Quadagno, 1987).

Advocates of a state-centred approach argue, however, that autonomy is a variable, 'not a fixed structural feature of any governmental system. It can come and go'. Autonomy is variable because 'the very *structural potentials* for autonomous actions change over time, as the organisations of coercion and administration undergo transformations, both internally and in their relations to societal groups and to representative parts of government' (Skocpol, 1985: 14). A state-centred view does not necessarily entail turning the society-centred view of the state on its head, as it were, by making the state into the dominant force in history.² Poggi (1990: 98) argues for a 'state centred view of the state itself', in which the state is a distinctive social force pursuing its own interests. But, he argues, that view needs to be juxtaposed with one recognising the importance of forms of social power other than the political that shape the structure and action of the state.

Our interpretation of the expansion of the welfare state in Ireland and of the consequences of that expansion relies on a state-centred approach. The Irish state has been an important agent of change since 1960, assuming a prominent role in the determination of the life chances of its citizens. But we do not argue that the welfare state has developed in isolation from its social context. On the contrary, our interpretation recognises the economic and political constraints on state interventions, as shaped by the particular pattern of democratisation, industrialisation, and class formation. Such an interpretation, moreover, can explain the quality of social citizenship in the welfare state, rather than simply the amount of money being spent.

² Although some interpretations will, of course, try to do just this: 'vulgar' statism as an antithesis to 'vulgar' Marxism.

What is the Welfare State?

The essence of the welfare state is that it confers social citizenship: a package or regime of programmes and policies that guarantee socially acceptable living standards independent of pure market forces (Marshall, 1950; Myles, 1988, Esping-Andersen, 1990). This conceptualisation of the welfare state returns to the inherent tension between politics and markets, between economy and society, that Polanyi identifies in *The Great Transformation* (1944). The market cannot be separated from society. Market logic requires that land, capital and labour be treated as commodities, governed exclusively by the laws of exchange. But the reduction of individuals to mere commodities, subject to the laws of supply and demand, and thus to a market logic that threatens to exploit workers to such an extent that they become unable to reproduce themselves, undermines the social basis of the market itself. Polanyi argues that it falls to the state to counteract the deleterious consequences of an otherwise unfettered market in capitalist societies. Welfare state institutions and policies are thus essential characteristics of advanced capitalist societies, although states may differ greatly in how they organise welfare.

The welfare state, understood in terms of political intervention to protect individuals from disadvantages suffered in the marketplace, encompasses a far wider range of policy intervention than what is conventionally designated as 'social policy': that is, income maintenance, transfer payments, and services in health, housing, and education (Castles, 1988; Esping-Andersen, 1990).

Castles (1988: ix) provides an informal listing that indicates the multiplicity of policy actions protecting the individual in the welfare state:

It can take the form of tariff protection, designed to cushion the impact of competitive market forces on wage levels or it can assume the character of industrial restructuring measures aimed at ensuring that individuals do not find themselves dependent on low-wage employment. It can focus on creating the conditions for full employment or it can provide compensation for those who cannot obtain jobs. It can seek to control wage levels or it can use state action to redistribute income through the tax-transfer system.

Esping-Andersen (1990: 2) also argues for a broad conceptualisation of the welfare state in terms of the quality of social rights: '... issues of employment, wages and macro-economic steering are considered integral components in the welfare-state complex', as is the impact of state policies on general social structure. Korpi (1980), moreover, identifies a series of stages of public intervention in the distribution of resources. Initial public interventions take the form of legislation affecting minimum wages and the

bargaining power of unions. Policies affecting employment and labour force participation then shape the distribution of market incomes. Subsequent interventions, including taxes, transfers and public services shape the distribution of disposable incomes or 'buying' power. The welfare state is thus the political mediation of life-chances: the policies by which the state intervenes in, and interacts with, markets to protect the individual. How social rights are defined, how they are pursued, and with what resulting quality of social citizenship varies considerably among countries; but a broad definition, based on the notion of social citizenship, offers the most meaningful and analytically useful way of approaching the welfare state.

The welfare state as social citizenship rights can be captured empirically by focusing on three sets of state policies, programmes and activities designed to alter market outcomes:

- 1 state actions that affect the range of positions within the class structure available for market participation;
- 2 policies that have an impact on the processes by which persons are recruited into positions within the class structure;
- 3 state interventions that mitigate market-based income inequalities by levying taxes and distributing benefits.

The first set of welfare state policies is directed at the number and structure of positions in the labour market. The state is a significant employer in most of the advanced capitalist societies and underwrites a significant proportion of positions in the private sector, including those of proprietors and the self-employed. Employment in the public sector itself is the most obvious manifestation of this set of policies. 'In most major Western nations, the period since 1951 has seen a doubling in public employment as a proportion of the workforce' (Rose, 1985: 10). Public employment accounted for between a quarter and a third of the workforce in the early 1980s in Britain, France, Germany and Italy; the percentage in the United States, though considerably lower, was still substantial at 18.3 per cent (Rose, 1985: 11). Welfare state employment covers a broader set of positions located in both the private and public sectors. Denmark and the United States indicate the range of variation for the advanced societies. It is estimated that the welfare state (*c.* 1985) accounts for 28 per cent of employment in Denmark and 17 per cent in the United States. However, virtually all of that employment in Denmark (90 per cent) is in the public sector, in contrast to less than half (45 per cent) in the USA (Esping-Andersen, 1990: 158). Countries also differ in subsidies to proprietors and the self-employed that make such positions economically viable. Industrial policy more generally may have profound implications

for the set of positions available to labour market participants, if, for example, it subsidises capital intensive, rather than labour-intensive, investment.

The second set of policies concern state interventions to structure the flow of individuals into the positions available for market participation. These policies are therefore concerned with the state role in fostering, or otherwise, equality of opportunity. Education policy plays a particularly large role in determining the degree of openness in the processes of recruitment of individuals to fill class positions. These policies also include efforts to counter discrimination by gender or race. The converse of these are policies that inhibit female labour force participation or, more specifically, labour force participation by married women.

The third, and most conventional, set of welfare-state policies refers to the redistribution of income that occurs through taxation and benefits. Benefits in principle include all social expenditures on income maintenance, health, education, housing and transportation. These may take the direct form of transfer payments or publicly provided services, or the more indirect forms of subsidies to users and 'tax expenditures', such as tax relief for mortgage interest payments or for personal pension contributions (both of the latter amounting to public subsidies to private saving). Participants in social insurance programmes transfer income from points at which income is being received to other points when income is absent owing to contingencies such as retirement, illness, or temporary unemployment. Participants and non-participants benefit from transfers from other age-cohorts funded from general tax revenue. Social security and similar programmes, however, capture only a part of what is being exchanged. Tax expenditures to persons accumulating private pensions can approach or exceed the value of what the state provides directly as cash income to the retired (Munnell, 1982; Hughes, 1991) and mortgage interest relief subsidises the purchase of a family home that will be owned outright by the point of retirement from the labour market.

A comprehensive understanding of the welfare state alerts us to the problems inherent in adopting more restrictive definitions. The share of national resources being devoted to social spending is an inadequate index of welfare effort because it is restricted to one way in which welfare objectives may be met (Heald, 1983). Similarly, income redistribution through state benefits and taxes does not represent the essence of a welfare state. Redistribution depends on two features of government taxation and expenditure: the average tax/benefit and the progressivity with which it is levied/distributed. If we look at the degree to which cash transfers are redistributive, for example, the United States may appear as a more efficacious welfare state than, say, Sweden, because the proportion of

transfers going to the poor is higher (Myles, 1988: 268). This is due primarily to the residual nature of the American welfare state: spending is targeted as income replacement in the poor-law tradition and is consequently highly 'progressive', with the average rate of benefit declining as income increases. This progressivity is sufficient to offset the low levels of benefits in the United States relative to average labour market earnings.³

Of course, the more broadly we define the welfare state, the more likely it is to exert a significant impact on the market determination of life chances. Comparative or historical analysis, however, requires such breadth because most welfare state objectives can be pursued by, separately or jointly, intervening in the operation of the labour market, restructuring processes of recruitment to positions, or modifying the distribution of market incomes.

The Welfare State in Ireland, 1960–91

It is our contention that the Irish welfare state over the last three decades substantially (i) altered the range of positions within the class structure, (ii) shaped the rules by which individuals are recruited into those positions, and (iii) extended the range of collective entitlements or social rights in such a manner as to restrict the degree of inequality generated in the labour market, without, however, undermining the position of privileged groups. This section identifies what we regard as the main tendencies and trends within each sphere of the welfare state.

Class transformation and welfare state expansion

Over the last three decades in Ireland agricultural employment continued in its long-term decline, there was some increase in industrial employment, and massive growth in employment in services. Two overarching trends affecting the labour force accompanied these sectoral changes: an upgrading of the quality of positions in the labour market and a marked expansion in public sector employment. Moreover, from the mid-1970s onwards, the ranks of the unemployed rose steadily. The main underlying logic to the transformation these changes represent, however, is not the

³ Generally, the redistributive impact of cash transfers depends, first, on the distribution of market earnings and on the proportion of the population without market incomes; second, on the degree to which transfers are targeted selectively to low- and zero-market income groups, rather than as universalistic entitlements to transfer income; and, third, on the level of benefits offered under various transfer programmes.

replacement of positions lost in agriculture, nor even the upgrading of skills within manufacturing. Instead, the predominant shift is away from positions governed by pure market forces and toward those dependent on state intervention. State industrial policies may have been instrumental in setting the class transformation in motion; state policies in other arenas proved equally, if not more, influential in reshaping the class structure.

The change in the class structure is most clearly shown in the changing composition of the male work force, as described in Table 1 for the years 1951–89.⁴

Late industrialisation in a peripheral economy does not transform the class structure in the manner previously experienced by the core group of advanced capitalist societies (Breen *et al.* 1990; O'Malley, this volume). In the Irish case, growth in manufacturing employment was modest and peaked during the second decade of export-led industrialisation. Manufacturing output in the Republic of Ireland rose almost fivefold between 1959 and 1988; manufacturing employment in 1988, however, was but one quarter higher than in 1959 (Kennedy, 1989: 36).

While industrialisation generated only modest gains in the numbers employed in manufacturing, the timing and location of Irish industrialisation did put its stamp on the class and occupational structures. What types of positions were created and reproduced over the three decades of industrial development? Skilled manual workers grew from 93,000 in 1961, representing 12 per cent of the work force, to 163,000 in 1981, just over one-fifth of the work force. Over the 1980s, however, both the numbers and the share of the male work force in skilled manual employment declined. Positions in semi-skilled and unskilled manual work also declined sharply over those years, and by 1989 accounted for only 8.9 per cent of the work force. Therefore, employment in industry did not compensate for the persistent decline in agriculture. For industrial workers with minimal or low skills, moreover, the trends represent job losses, not upgrading to new positions in modern manufacturing.

The rise after 1961 in the proportion of the work force occupying skilled manual positions is overshadowed by the more sustained growth in positions available for upper middle class employees and for non-agricultural proprietors (including here both employers and the self-

⁴ Excluding the unemployed focuses attention on positions available for market participation. However, the size of the total number at work varies significantly due to emigration (outward migration in the 1950s and 1980s; return migration in the 1970s) and the high rates of unemployment since the late 1970s. This means that the numbers in a class can remain constant over time while its share of the work force rises or falls. Table 1 therefore includes both the numbers in each category, by year, and the percentage of the work force each class represents.

Table 1. Males at Work by Class Categories, 1951-1989.

	Number					%				
	1951	1961	1971	1981	1989	1951	1961	1971	1981	1989
EMPLOYERS AND SELF-EMPLOYED										
Agriculture										
(i) employers	27,844	14,001	212,982 ^a	13,540	10,500	3.1	1.8	27.5 ^a	1.7	1.7
(ii) self-employed and relatives assisting	314,768	265,524		140,841	120,400	35.1	34.2		17.5	16.4
Non-agricultural										
(i) employers	19,689	12,582	64,624 ^a	35,679	37,200	2.2	1.6	8.3 ^a	4.4	5.1
(ii) self-employed and relatives assisting	52,522	47,897		42,408	62,400	5.9	6.2		5.3	8.5
EMPLOYEES^b										
(i) upper middle class	47,780	58,959	84,512	128,499	133,400	5.3	7.6	10.9	16.0	18.1
(ii) lower middle class	123,011	121,134	139,991	163,012	153,400	13.8	15.6	18.0	20.3	20.8
(iii) skilled manual	90,400	92,632	128,056	163,021	131,400	10.1	12.0	16.5	20.3	17.9
(iv) semi/unskilled manual										
(a) agricultural	94,957	64,753	40,245	25,780	22,000	10.6	8.4	5.2	3.2	3.0
(b) non-agricultural	124,789	96,731	105,384	89,962	65,000	13.9	12.5	13.6	11.2	8.9
TOTAL AT WORK^b	896,624	774,540	776,507	808,670	737,700	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
TOTAL UNEMPLOYED^c	36,115	46,989	55,157	91,279	157,300	3.7	5.7	6.6	10.1	17.6

^a Employers and self-employed were not distinguished in the 1971 Census.

^b Total numbers at work includes a small number of individuals who could not be allocated to a class, and excludes theological students, 'professional students', and 'articled clerks'; in 1981 it also excludes persons in hospital.

^c Percentage figures = unemployed as % of gainfully occupied.

Sources: 1951, 1961, 1971 and 1981 *Census of Population of Ireland*; unpublished 1989 Labour Force Survey tabulations provided by the Central Statistics Office.

Table 2. Percentage changes in class membership, 1961–89.

	1961–71	1971–81	1981–89
Upper middle class employees	+43.3	+52.0	+3.8
Non-agricultural proprietors and self-employed	+6.9	+20.8	+27.6
Skilled manual workers	+38.2	+27.3	-19.5

employed). Table 2 expresses the percentage change in the numbers in these classes over each decade. By that index, opportunities for labour market participation were expanding most rapidly for upper middle class employees during the 1960s and 1970s, and for proprietors during the 1980s. The most resilient growth trend is in the class most likely to benefit in terms of enhanced employment prospects from state expansion: upper middle class professionals, administrators and managers.

The direct effect of state intervention in labour markets was the increase in employment in the state itself. Employment in the state sector grew from 118,000 in 1961 to 235,000 in 1981 (Kennedy and McHugh, 1984). If state-sponsored bodies are included, by 1981 the public sector employed one-third of the non-agricultural labour force (Humphreys, 1983: 88). Until the mid-1980s, the rate of expansion in the public sector continued to outstrip growth in the total labour force. The trend of public sector growth over the 1960s and 1970s, and decline in the latter half of the 1980s, is summarised in Table 3. In the 1960s, growth in the central civil service (male and female employees) approached that experienced for skilled manual work; by the 1970s, opportunities in the public sector (and especially in the central civil service) were expanding at a far higher rate than in industry. This is consistent with the experience of most European democracies. Generally, public sector growth was greater in the more prosperous, social democratic countries. Ireland and Italy, however, are exceptions, with substantial growth in public employment in the absence of either prosperity or social democratic dominance (Rose, 1985: 7).

The expansion of opportunities for middle class employment was not, of course, confined to the public sector. Some of the growth in the upper middle class reflects the employment of senior managers, engineers and accountants in the industrial sector. Employment in the private services sector also benefited from purchases of services by manufacturing firms and their employees. But the expansion of the state was so rapid as to have generated the bulk of the growth. Industrial production and its trickle down effects certainly contributed to financing the rise in public spending and, thus, employment (although the effects were muted by the virtual immunity from taxation enjoyed by foreign capital). Yet public

Table 3. Percentage growth in the public sector, 1961–90.

	1961–71	1971–81	1981–90
Central civil service	34.6	57.8	-18.1
Total public sector	23.7	42.1	-8.2

Sources: Ross (1986: 289, 303) for 1961 to 1981; IPA (1990: 395) for 1981–90.

employment, and particularly the expanding welfare state, proved the more substantial and durable factor in class transformation. Even in the 1980s, public employment in health and education was essentially stable, despite an overall decline of 8.2 per cent in the total public sector and of virtually the same magnitude, 8.8 per cent, in the total number at work (IPA, 1990: 395).

The transformation of Ireland's class structure appears distinctive in the degree to which it fostered an expansion in the number of non-agricultural proprietors and an enlargement of their share of the work force. Industrialisation is typically associated with a general shift from self-employment into wage-employment. In Ireland, non-agricultural self-employment did decline consistently from 1926 to 1961, but thereafter began to expand with increasing vigour in successive decades (see Tables 1 and 2 above). This coincided since the mid-1970s with a general trend in EC countries—especially Belgium, Italy, and the United Kingdom—toward growth in self-employment (Steinmetz and Wright, 1989). Ireland may therefore be seen as a precursor of a structural reversal in the fortunes of the petty bourgeoisie, although such an interpretation is open to debate (cf. Linder and Houghton, 1990; Steinmetz and Wright, 1990). However, the state can undoubtedly play a key role in reducing the risks of starting a business. Taxation policies may favour the self-employed, labour market and industrial programmes may underwrite the start up costs of a small business for those unemployed, and the self-employed can in various ways be incorporated into state subsidised social insurance schemes. More recently, and of likely import in Ireland, attempts to reduce the size of the state sector, and thereby state expenditure, have resulted in the transfer of tasks (and professional workers who perform them) to the private sector. Early retirement and redundancy packages facilitate the duplication in the private sector of positions once formally within the state sector but no less dependent on state support for their viability.

State employment policies also offer incentives to entrepreneurship, a quality some believe to be inadequately emphasised in Irish culture (Kenny, 1984; Lee, 1989). That concern seems misplaced, in view of the fact that one in twenty members of the male non-agricultural work force is an employer and a further one in twelve is self-employed—a strikingly

high percentage by European standards. It is particularly so, given the degree to which industrial policy has sought, successfully, to create employment by offering incentives to foreign capital and, since the mid-1960s, without excessive regard for native industry's share of the home market. Native entrepreneurs seem nonetheless to have been encouraged by the substantial package of tax incentives, adaptation grants, advisory bodies, subsidised labour, and sectoral specific schemes established by the state.

It appears, therefore, that industrial workers were not the sole beneficiaries of state policies in recent decades. Foreign capital is tempted to invest in Ireland by the offer of subsidies that are extraordinarily generous by the standards of other industrial democracies (OECD, 1978). Native entrepreneurs, employees with secure and well remunerated positions in the state bureaucracy and professionals in medicine and other fields who provide social services subsidised by the state are also filling positions in the class structure that depend on the state, and, more specifically, on the welfare state.

Finally, one should note a further twist to the new class structure that is attributable to state policy. Regional policy led to a decentralisation of industry. As a result, the working class beneficiaries of jobs in industry are not labouring, for the most part, in industrial cities. Late industrialisation in Ireland intruded more upon the rural than the urban landscape, as the bulk of manufacturing plants—and industrial employment—were located outside of the major urban areas. Office blocks and sprawling commuter suburbs, not factories or warehouses, give Dublin its current 'character' and account for its ever growing population. In fact, Irish industrialisation was perhaps of primary benefit to small farmers, who were able to use the new positions to forge successful adaptive strategies that allowed them to survive on the land with a respectable standard of living (Hannan and Commins, this volume).

In sum, the increasing salience of the state mediation of life chances is evident in

- 1 state policies that fostered public employment;
- 2 welfare state expansion that created jobs not only for public employees, but also for self-employed professionals and private sector employees;
- 3 state economic, social and taxation policies which underwrite property-based market capacities that would not be otherwise viable;
- 4 rationalisation strategies implemented in pursuit of fiscal rectitude which, in recent years, shifted positions from the state sector into self-employment; and
- 5 regional policies which redistributed industrial jobs from urban to rural areas.

Together, these state interventions were as influential as industrial policy in determining one of the most fundamental of life chances: the possibility

for secure market participation. We turn next to how the state affected the distribution of access to those positions in the period 1960-90.

Recruitment and state policies

Within the span of twenty years, roughly 1950 to 1970, the Irish class structure shifted from one based primarily on property ownership to one based on educational credentials and wage-employment. Access to the most valued credentials governed, by and large, who would be recruited into the positions created for skilled manual work and for white collar professional, administrative and managerial employment.

The transitional process is one of formal equality of opportunity interacting with considerable inequality of conditions. In the mid-1960s a series of reforms left the basic structure of the educational system largely unaffected but nonetheless vastly expanded its scope (see Tussing, 1978; Hannan *et al.*, 1983). The chief reform was free education at the post-primary level, introduced in 1967. Institutional change through the introduction of non-denominational comprehensive schools and the establishment of a Higher Education Authority can also be traced back to that period. But the main impact was in educational participation. Among 16 year olds, the participation rate was 36.8 per cent in 1963-64; by 1984-85 it had reached 80.3 per cent. The change over those years among 19 year olds was from 8.8 per cent to 23.6 per cent (Breen *et al.*, 1990: 127).

The effect of this expansion of social citizenship was shaped by the interaction between the method of state financing for education and social class differentials in the take-up of the new educational opportunities. State support for education per pupil at second level is essentially a constant amount across private and public, fee paying and 'free' schools, with the bulk of teachers' salaries being paid by the state. Costs have been assumed by the state for parents with children in the 'free' sector. Where parents enrol their children in fee-paying schools, the state subsidy forms the foundation on which the fees they pay will support enhancements. Also, the schools in the 'free' second level (approximately 440 out of 500 secondary schools in 1986) differ in their resources according to what additional resources parents and schools make available (Breen, 1984a; Breen *et al.*, 1990: 114). Tuition and fees paid by the pupils' parents and endowments, if any have been established, supplement what the exchequer provides. Until 1986, fee paying schools also received a slightly reduced capitation grant. State financing of education was, therefore, a key instrument for expanding social citizenship. The state underwrote the full cost of second level schooling, allowing for a dualism in which the market could supplement the bedrock minimum that the state undertook to

provide. Scholarships and grants to individual students also facilitated and encouraged continued educational participation beyond the mandatory age of 15 (raised from 14 in 1972).

The vastly expanded opportunities to obtain educational qualifications offered by the state subsidy were overwhelmingly taken up by children from middle class families. True, rates of participation increased for all class categories, resulting in differentials between classes that were roughly the same in the 1980s as they had been in the 1960s (Breen *et al.*, 1990). Participation by working class children in second and third level education, however, remains so low as to effectively inhibit their mobility outside of their parents' class. The emphasis on formal qualifications extended to competition for apprenticeships, one of the traditional ladders of working class mobility from low skilled backgrounds into skilled employment. Thus, in the keenly competitive Irish labour market of the 1980s, middle class children were able to 'trade down' their non-vocational credentials for access to secure and well paid jobs (Breen, 1984a).

In fact, the disadvantages associated with early school leaving appear to expand rather than to abate over time. Making the shift from unemployment into a job depends on two related factors. 'The first of these is educational qualifications, the second is the individual's labour force record, where the duration of current unemployment is important in reducing the chances of getting a job' (Breen, 1991b: 81). This leads to a vicious cycle, in which the initial gap in labour market success associated with credentials expands: 'because they have no qualifications and a poor employment record early leavers are unable to get a stable job—which further worsens their employment record . . .' (Breen, 1991b: 80).

Class barriers proved resistant, by and large, to state initiatives that sought to equalise access to education and, as part of economic development policy, upgrade the skills of the Irish work force (the two facets of state policy and the links to contemporary OECD thinking are discussed in Breen *et al.*, 1990: 124–126). Family resources rooted in the old, proprietorial class structure facilitated acquisition of the credentials and qualifications that governed access to the new class positions in services, industry, and the welfare state. A formal expansion of a major right of social citizenship, that to education, did not generate a real change in the degree of openness in Irish society.

Gender barriers proved to be equally resistant. Ireland's economic development policy might be expected to have facilitated the entry of more women into the labour force, creating more openness as expressed in higher female labour force participation and a shift away of women workers from traditional female occupations (Pyle, 1990: 3). But the female share of the Irish work force rose only from 25.9 per cent to 28.4

per cent in the first two decades of active state development policy, and Ireland's female labour force participation rate in 1981 was the lowest in the OECD, well below the weighted average of 37.0 per cent (Pyle, 1990: 26).⁵ This modest overall increase masks two trends: a slight decline in the participation rate by single women and a substantial increase—a doubling over the 1970s—in participation by married women (Blackwell, 1989; Mahon, 1991). Gender inequalities interact with those located in the educational system and, more generally, in the class structure: there is a strong correlation between labour force participation and the level of education attained (Review Group, 1991: 8). State policies, often reinforced or compelled by EC regulations and rulings, removed most formal barriers to female labour force participation. Regional policy, industrial policy, taxation policy and social welfare policy combined, however, to shape and limit the extent of women's involvement in the labour market.⁶

For our purposes, the recruitment and promotion of women within the state sector itself is of particular relevance. After all, formal barriers to recruitment, retention, and promotion were abolished in the 1960s and 1970s. The presence of women in the various grades constituting the central civil service is shown in Table 4. In describing women's place within the civil service, this is one of the rare situations where the data do speak for themselves. Untangling the factors that create this outcome is more complex, requiring reference to, first, the selection process through which candidates are recruited into the main promotional grades and, second, the rates of promotion upward from those grades. Recruitment into the main promotion grades works to the disadvantage of female candidates. In part, this can be traced to the winnowing effects of face-to-face interviews, since female applicants score as well or better than males on written tests and other universalistic criteria. The impact is cumulative: 'A low recruitment of women to these posts now will in time mean the continuity of vertical segregation: their absence from the top level posts' (Mahon, 1991: 24). The restricted access by women to the main promotional grades is then exacerbated by a selection process that discourages women from applying and imposes standards of 'suitability' that are not gender neutral (Mahon, 1991: ch. 5).

From the 1960s onwards, there was a substantial increase in the intervention of the state into the processes by which positions in the class

⁵ Toward the end of the decade the rate had risen to 31.9 per cent, but was still the lowest in the EC (Mahon, 1991: 2).

⁶ Pyle (1990) appears to underestimate the powerful disincentives in the tax code to married women's labour force participation.

Table 4. Representation of women in civil service grades, 1987.

Grade	% Female
Secretary	0
Assistant Secretary	1
Principal Officer	5
Assistant Principal Officer	23
Administrative Officer	26
Higher Executive Officer	34
Executive Officer	44
Staff Officer	67
Clerical Officer	68
Clerical Assistant	83
Overall	38

Source: Mahon (1991: 21)

structure are filled. Social citizenship was extended in ways that nominally opened access to the more advantaged positions in the class structure regardless of class or gender. But formal equality of opportunity interacted with inequality of conditions with the result that the actual change effected was slight in contrast to the massive changes in legislation and state funding. In education, and we shall argue in other areas of policy in the pay-related welfare state, intervention spread thin, in the form of minimal social rights, rather than deep, in the form of programmes targeted to those most in need, was not sufficient to overturn privilege.

Redistribution through benefits and taxation

Three general trends are evident in traditional welfare state policies to alleviate market-based inequalities: the erection of an assistance-based safety net of support at higher levels of benefit; the growth of the proportion of the workforce incorporated into social insurance; and the development of a pay-related form of service delivery, particularly in health care and education, in which a basic universal subsidy serves as the foundation on which those with advantaged positions in the class structure can purchase a better quality of service.

The strongest expression of social citizenship took the form of a patchwork of income maintenance programmes created as the state granted official recognition and redress for an increasingly wide range of specific contingencies. Today, virtually all of the standard welfare contingencies are covered by state programmes (although some only on a means tested basis) and most of the labour force is protected by full social insurance. This is a marked change from the 1950s, when provision was

Table 5. Social Insurance Coverage, 1953–90.

	Number insured	% of labour force with full coverage
1953	724,000	51.7
1961	713,000	56.8
1971	808,000	65.5
1981	1,129,000	74.2
1990	1,471,019	75.3

Sources: Maguire (1987: 468, Table 7) for 1953–81; Department of Social Welfare (1991: 9, Table A8) for 1991.

made for only a narrow range of contingencies and only a small proportion of the workforce was insured against those contingencies on a non-means tested basis.

Universalism, however, is largely limited to the health and educational systems. In income maintenance programmes there are significant disparities between differing categories of beneficiaries. Several groups are excluded from social insurance: married women not at work in the labour market being the most numerous category. Finally, the tax system operates in ways that often cut across the effects from the social welfare system. The heavy reliance on indirect taxation ensures that even those living off social welfare payments return a significant proportion of their incomes to the exchequer (Rottman and Hannan, 1981; Breen *et al.*, 1990).

(i) *The framework of entitlements*

Social insurance extended only to manual and other low paid employees until the late 1970s. The trend toward universalism is evident in Table 5, which traces the change in the number of insured persons and the percentage of the labour force covered for all contingencies. The circumference of the social insurance umbrella expanded dramatically in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1974 social insurance was extended to all white collar employees under the new Pay Related Social Insurance (PSRI) scheme. The number of persons with social insurance entitlements grew by 40 per cent over the decade. By 1990, virtually all employees apart from 'permanent and pensionable' public servants were covered for the full range of benefits. Persons on training schemes were included, as were those who were unable to work but entitled to be credited with contributions (25 per cent of all insured persons). In terms of breadth of coverage, the universalistic component of the welfare state had truly 'grown to its limits' with the inclusion of the self-employed.

The changing balance between means-tested assistance and universalistic

Table 6. Trends in the incidence of insurance and assistance.

	Insurance		Assistance		Total number
	Number	%	Number	%	
1947	56,926	19.3	237,748	80.7	294,674
1966	170,090	50.0	170,044	50.0	340,134
1971	211,273	52.6	190,415	47.4	401,688
1982	350,230	56.8	266,054	43.2	616,284
1990	382,843	52.2	350,454	47.8	733,297

Sources: Commission on Social Welfare (1986: 60) for 1947–82; Department of Social Welfare (1991: 5) for 1990.

social insurance cash benefits is further revealed in Table 6 which shows trends in recipients. First, an expanded state role is evident: the number of recipients of weekly social welfare payments rose two-and-a-half times from 1947 to 1990. Most of that growth occurred in the 1970s. Second, by the 1960s, a rough balance had been reached in which about half of all recipients received insurance-based payments and one-half means-tested assistance. The two systems are linked for several key contingencies, notably unemployment, where insurance entitlements have a fixed duration after which payments are made as means-tested assistance. The growth in the proportion of the long-term unemployed in total unemployment may account for the shift back between 1982 and 1990 toward assistance payments. The provision made for recipients of both insurance and assistance became more generous over recent decades. To varying degrees, the level of payment offered in the various programmes rose more rapidly than inflation from the 1960s to the 1980s (McCashin, 1982; Department of Social Welfare, 1991), closing the gap between those dependent on social welfare for their income and those with market incomes.

When we assert that social citizenship has expanded since 1960, the reference is most immediately to the increase in the contingencies against which state provision is made. Income maintenance programmes are created to cater for long-term illness, unemployment, marital desertion, retirement, and other eventualities. Typically, as the range of contingencies expands, so does the proportion of the population that can seek shelter under the umbrella of the welfare state. This expansion is not, however, an inexorable march towards convergence in actual life circumstances among the population or towards reduction in the extent to which privilege is transmitted from one generation to the next.

The Irish experience of welfare state expansion in fact stands in stark contrast to the Scandinavian pattern. In Scandinavian welfare state expansion, changes occurred along two main dimensions: first,

universalistic entitlements created solidarity among classes and between other social categories; second, a commitment to the levelling of inequalities was given expression in all spheres of social policy (Myles, 1989: 62). In the Irish case, commitment to reducing inequality has been slight, showing strength only in the mid-1960s (Maguire, 1986). There was greater stress, concentrated in the 1970s and 1980s, on achieving social solidarity through an expanded social insurance system. This coincided with experimentation with neo-corporatist arrangements (Hardiman, 1988). However, unless tied to a commitment to reduce inequality, the extension of social insurance to the middle classes or the universal provision of services can exacerbate rather than reduce inequalities.

That is what we believe occurred in Ireland. The expansion of old age pensions provides a good illustration of how the pay-related welfare state reproduces market inequalities. Provision for old age originated with a general means-tested pension established by the British Administration.⁷ Subsequently, in 1960, an insurance based pension system was established offering a flat rate pension at age 70 for manual workers and low paid service workers. Insurance coverage was extended in 1974 to all employees and the normal pension age gradually reduced to age 66 (by 1977). The self-employed were incorporated into the insurance system in 1988. A parallel retirement pension is available from age 65 but requires the recipient to leave the labour force, an action that is not a prerequisite for receiving the old age pension (Maguire, 1986; Hughes, 1991). The pension system that has emerged reflects both the expansion of social citizenship and the way in which social and market rights interact in Ireland. There are three tiers. Entitlement to non-contributory old-age pensions, which provide for those with intermittent or marginal labour market participation, is subject to a means test. Contributory state pensions form a second tier and can be universally attained in the private sector and by the self-employed, and are open to most state sector employees. Where state contributory pensions are combined with occupational and private pensions, a third tier is formed.

All three tiers benefited from the rise in the real value of state pensions —by just over 50 per cent in both the 1960s and 1970s (Maguire, 1986: 285), and by a more modest 11.6 per cent in the 1980s (Department of Social Welfare, 1991: 15–16). That rise in benefit levels is the main gain achieved by the semi-skilled and unskilled working class. For most working-class employees, passing a means test would not pose an insurmountable obstacle to receiving a state pension. The higher level of benefit

⁷ The Old-Age Pension Act, 1908, went into effect in 1909, and responsibility for the system was assumed by the Irish government after independence.

that they receive is only possible, however, because of the broad inclusiveness sought and achieved by social insurance policy. That is to the benefit of the middle class and the basis for the third tier of the system. Middle-class employees can combine a social insurance pension with occupation pension entitlements, private pensions and savings, all subsidised through tax expenditures, in order to attain financial comfort in old age. Those covered by private occupational pensions are likely to be in white collar rather than manual employment, males rather than females, in large rather than small firms—in other words, to occupy secure, well-paid employment. All public sector employees in Ireland enjoy the security of an occupational pensions scheme, as compared to an estimated 32.3 per cent (in 1985) of private sector employees (Hughes, 1991). Occupational pensions are earnings related; state pensions are set at a flat rate. The result is that privately financed, but state subsidised, occupational pensions yield incomes that, as indexed by the replacement ratio, tend to be above international targets, while the income afforded by state pensions falls below that target (Hughes, 1991: 79–80). Retired middle-class employees consequently enjoy a considerably enhanced income compared to retirees in other classes (Whelan and Whelan, 1988).

The significance of the interaction between private provision and welfare state programmes is considerable. Occupational and private pensions represent an accumulation of money that increasingly matters. Pension assets amounted to 6 per cent of GNP in 1975, 10 per cent in 1980 and 38 per cent in 1989 (Hughes, 1991: 14). The tax expenditure underlying those assets is nearly as large as direct state expenditure in the form of pension payments. In 1989, tax relief on the income of approved pension schemes amounted to 172 million pounds (Hughes, 1991: 68). A universal entitlement to a state-guaranteed minimal pension is, therefore, supplemented by private savings and insurance based schemes that are subsidised by state tax expenditure for higher income groups, thus reinforcing market based inequalities. This echoes the pattern found in education, whereby a universal entitlement forms a foundation on which parents can build by adding their own money to the state subsidy to obtain a higher quality of education. Similarly, free hospital care, until changes in 1991, underwrote part of the costs of a stay in a private hospital ward, with the patient and/or insurer paying the difference between the subsidy and the actual cost (Rottman and Reidy, 1988; Nolan, 1991). This amounts to a 'pay-related' welfare state, premised on a mixing of private and public components to attain a final level of benefit.

Although the degree to which the Irish middle class in fact benefited from the expansion of social citizenship is demonstrable, its inclusion was a result of state policies, not demands expressed and realised through party

politics. Middle and high income white collar workers had the opportunity to contribute to social insurance on a voluntary basis before 1974; the self-employed similarly could contribute prior to their mandatory incorporation in 1988. But few in either group volunteered to participate. There were some 6,000 voluntary contributors in 1974 prior to the abolition of the earnings limit for non-manual workers and fewer than 900 voluntary contributors in 1984 when the self-employed represented the only major non-insured segment of the labour force (Commission on Social Welfare, 1986: 498).

(ii) *Financing the welfare state*

Citizenship entails both obligations and rights.⁸ The obligations of citizens in a welfare state are most immediately expressed in the manner through which public social expenditure is financed. Two aspects of the financial obligations of welfare state citizenship receive attention here: the structure of taxation as it affects the impact of social expenditure and the question of who funds social insurance.

The progressivity or regressivity of tax collection alternatively enhances or blunts the impact of state income replacement programmes and social service provision. The stratification outcomes of any given social policy will depend on the taxes used to finance public spending and debt. Currently, about one half of the income dispensed by the Irish welfare state is drawn from general tax revenue or borrowing (Department of Social Welfare, 1991). If spending on health, education and housing is taken into consideration, the overwhelming proportion of the welfare state is funded through taxes.

There are some important consistencies in Irish taxation policy that bear on the amount of redistribution from social expenditure, and some notable changes in direction as well. Tax policy in Ireland has been shaped by subservience to the goal of economic development, a narrow base for taxation of income, historical and political associations that make government reluctant to levy tax on land, and the effects of inflation. These features of the tax burden are important, but neglected, factors for understanding the quality of social citizenship achieved in Ireland.⁹

The changing profile of Irish taxes can be traced in Table 7. One consistency is a general preference for taxing goods and services rather

⁸ Citizenship in the modern state is 'a set of mutual claims and reciprocal involvements binding together the state and the individuals' (Poggi, 1990: 33).

⁹ Murphy (1984) summarises the results from conventional redistribution analyses using Irish data. Callan and Nolan (this volume) place Irish redistribution patterns in comparative perspective.

Table 7. The structure of taxation, 1955–1985.

	% of total tax revenue			
	1955	1965	1975	1985 ^a
Personal income	16.4	16.7	25.2	31.3
Corporate income	7.4	9.1	4.8	3.2
Employer social security	2.4	3.3	8.2	9.4
Employee social security	2.2	3.2	5.6	5.2
Property	19.2	15.1	9.7	4.0
Goods and services	52.4	52.6	46.5	44.4
Total	100	100	100	100 ^a
total tax as % of GDP	22.5	26.0	31.5	38.9

^a Since 1980 an 'employment and training levy' and a 'health contribution' of 1 per cent have applied to all earnings (up to an upper income limit for the 'health' levy) and, between 1983 and 1986, a special levy of 1 per cent was imposed to raise revenue for unspecified uses. All three were collected in conjunction with PRSI. Employees pay the current levies unless they hold 'Medical Cards', in which case the employer pays the tax. The resulting revenue is classified in the OECD accounts as being derived from 'payroll taxes' and represented 2.3 per cent of total tax receipts in 1985.

Source: OECD (1989b: Tables 3, 47, 112 and 115).

than income, for, as a Fianna Fáil Minister for Finance put it in the late 1960s, 'it discourages excessive spending but not earning or saving' (quoted in Sandford and Morrissey, 1985: 50). Corporate income is not a substantial source of tax revenue. Economic development policies offered 'negligible' corporate tax rates (Telesis, 1982) and high depreciation allowances as part of what became the most generous tax-expenditure package for investors in the OECD.¹⁰ Therefore, although foreign capital generated a level of corporate income hitherto unavailable for taxation, tax from that source declined in importance after an initial boost in the early 1960s.

Sheer growth in taxation is the most dramatic change. Total tax revenue in 1955 amounted to 22.5 per cent of Ireland's GDP, commensurate with the state's limited ambitions during the early decades of independence. By 1985, tax revenue had grown to the equivalent of 38.4 per cent of GDP, with much of the increase having occurred in the 1970s. Even so, this only partly funded the more active state of recent decades — total public expenditure in 1985 representing just under two-thirds (65.8 per cent) of GDP. The rising tax burden was accompanied by a shift away from property tax and towards taxes on income. Tax on property declined significantly as a revenue source in recent years, particularly after a

¹⁰ The generosity of the subsidies presented difficulties for those undertaking comparative evaluation: 'Ireland's extremely large subsidies require a different scale' (McKee, Visser and Saunders, 1986).

commitment made in the course of the 1977 general election was honoured. An attempt by the Coalition government ousted by that election to introduce a wealth tax was also terminated, but even in its heyday generated little revenue but much controversy (Sandford and Morrisey, 1985).

The compensating increases came from taxes on personal income and from social insurance contributions. In the inflationary 1970s, the failure to act sufficed to significantly raise revenue from income tax because inflation steadily—and rapidly—eroded the real value of tax bands and tax exemptions. The result was more revenue but less progressivity (Rottman and Hannan, 1981). Social insurance contributions also soared, particularly with the expansion of PRSI in 1974. Overall, social insurance represented 4.6 per cent of tax revenue in 1955 and 14.6 per cent in 1985 and the share borne by employers increased four-fold and that by employees doubled.

Taxation in Ireland constrained what was achieved through welfare state policies. Targeting consumer spending as the primary source of tax revenue and exempting property and corporate incomes meant that the costs of welfare state expansion were borne by working class and middle class households alike. Progressivity in personal income tax and the substantial (relative to the average wage) levels of benefits make the overall effect of state interventions redistributive. This needs to be assessed, however, in the light of the sizable proportion of the Irish population without a market income and the income tax rate accruing to employees with modest incomes. Further, the favourable tax position afforded to farmers and to proprietors generally served to underwrite the viability of their positions within the class structure.

Beyond the general impact of the tax structure, the shares paid by employers, by employees and by the state define the nature and impact of social insurance. The share funded by each of the three contributors varies among countries and, in Ireland, varied over the decades. Tripartite funding was characteristic of continental European welfare states from their inception. However, in Britain greater deference was made to the interests of private insurers (Ashford, 1986: 163), an influence that was yet more pronounced in Ireland, where a powerful producer group, the medical profession, allied with the Catholic hierarchy, successfully lobbied for exclusion from key British reforms in the 1911–13 period (Barrington, 1987: 39–66). The welfare state framework that Ireland inherited in 1922, therefore, relied more on actuarial principles than on social solidarity in justifying social insurance and defining to whom it applied. Professionals and institutional providers of services in areas such as medicine and education were able to shape public policy—a further aspect of the more

general pattern in which middle class actors enjoy greater capacity to determine outcomes in the welfare arena in their own favour.

In Europe a shift toward a broader conception of social insurance is evident from the late 1940s. There has been a movement away from a social insurance system heavily reliant on state subsidy to one that is heavily funded by employers' contributions. In Ireland, however, employer social insurance contributions have essentially kept the corporate sector's share of total tax revenue at its 1955 level, and the actual rates of tax involved are low relative to those found in countries such as France or Germany.

The increased yield from social security taxes did not fund the expanded rights to income replacement. Before the incorporation of white collar employees into PRSI, the Social Insurance Fund was truly tripartite in funding: 30 per cent from employers, 28 per cent from employees, and 40 per cent from the state (see Table 8). With most employees included, the burden shifted in the direction of employer PRSI contributions with the state's share initially falling, then rising again in the early 1980s and in 1990 falling to 5.9 per cent of the Fund, as a result of strenuous efforts to reduce the budget deficit. The share financed from employee contributions was 26.2 per cent in 1990, little changed from twenty-five years before.¹¹ The insurance based segment of the welfare state, expanding substantially in importance since the 1960s, was therefore funded primarily by employers' contributions and by a considerable state subsidy. That subsidy could not be sustained when the late 1980s brought massive demands for expenditure on assistance based programmes, including from those whose entitlement to short-term income support had expired. Fiscal rectitude reappeared as a prime political virtue toward the end of the decade, making the reduction of the public debt a priority. The state's contribution to the Social Insurance Fund was a place where cuts could be effected. Yet, the commitment to maintaining the real value of social welfare payments and the level of social services remains. So does the principle of tripartite social insurance funding although its integrity seems somewhat tattered. In *Social Security* a 'white paper' issued in 1949, tripartite funding was justified on the basis that employees, employers, and the state all benefit: employees are insured against contingencies, employers gain in worker productivity, and the state enjoys an enhanced 'standard of efficiency, contentedness and security of the workers' that makes it 'equitable that the Exchequer, that is to say, the community as a whole, should also continue to bear its

¹¹ There was less change over the period in the state's share of the total social welfare budget: 69.6 per cent in 1965; 57.8 per cent in 1975; 60.2 per cent in 1985; and 52.9 per cent in 1990 (the latter year is atypical, the 1989 share was 57.2 per cent).

Table 8. Percentage shares of Social Insurance Fund finance.

Year	Employers	Employees	State	Self-employed	Other	Total
1965	29.5	28.0	39.9	–	2.6	100
1975	47.3	29.3	22.8	–	0.5	100
1985	47.9	23.2	28.8	–	0.2	100
1990	63.8	26.2	5.9	3.7	0.4	100

Sources: Department of Social Welfare (1967: Table 43D; 1976: Table 48E; 1987: Table 78; 1991: Table G6).

share of the burden of social insurance and so keep the contribution of the individual worker down to a reasonable level' (quoted in the Commission on Social Welfare, 1986: 272).¹² However, it is questionable whether the current levels of social citizenship can be sustained through 'reasonable levels' of employee and employer contributions in the absence of a more substantial state subsidy.

Having described the transition from a minimalist to a more comprehensive but pay-related welfare state, we turn next to the questions of how and why that transition occurred in the Irish case.

Explaining the Development and Consequences of the Irish Welfare State

In general, the rise and expansion of welfare states in Western Europe can be understood as responses to the two fundamental transformations of the modern era: the development of industrial capitalism and the growth of national states and mass democracies (Flora, 1985). The particular pattern of these two transformations appears to be of substantial importance for the interaction of state and economy and for the development of the welfare state. Ireland combines a dependent, peripheral and relatively less-developed economic structure with the liberal democratic political institutions of an advanced capitalist society. The distinctiveness of Irish welfare state development derives from this unusual combination of economic and political characteristics.

That distinctiveness requires that we give priority to the structure and policies of the state itself. That necessity derives from Ireland's peripheral location in the international economy. Malloy (1985: 28) notes a general tendency in peripheral countries: 'the need to consciously adapt to

¹² The document paved the way for the Social Welfare (Insurance) Act, 1952, which extended coverage to agricultural and domestic service workers and integrated the assorted contingency specific schemes.

processes generated in the centre in a sense forced the peripheral countries to develop an activistic mode of statecraft prior to some centre countries'. But our state-centred interpretation is contingent on three other variables that constrain the autonomy of the state: political system characteristics; class structure and mobilisation; and the capacities of other interest groups.

Most western European societies emerged from the Great Depression and the Second World War with commitments to both extend social rights and abolish unemployment. Ireland was an exception. Sustained expansion of social citizenship had to await the 1960s. We need therefore to explain both the absence of welfare state expansion before the 1960s and its rapid advance thereafter.

Why did Ireland lag so far behind its European neighbours in developing its welfare state? The legacy at independence was mixed in respect of social citizenship. Ireland in 1922 had an underdeveloped economy, full adult male suffrage, which was immediately extended to the adult female population, and a minimalist state. The inheritance included a somewhat attenuated version of British welfare institutions, including the poor relief system, an embryonic social insurance system providing unemployment and sickness compensation for certain categories of workers, some health and housing services, and subsidised education. Spending on social services accounted for about 36 per cent of total central government spending during the 1920s (Maguire, 1986: 245). 'Welfare effort', as measured by the percentage of GNP devoted to social expenditure, was thus comparatively high in the 1930s, although this must be interpreted in the light of a low level of national income (Goodin and Dryzek, 1987: 57). The Free State thus inherited a substantial set of obligations—a precocious set of social rights that had expanded during the final decades of British rule—relative to the development of the economy and to the tax-base. The value of the entitlements this afforded to Irish citizens could be cut—as in the 10 per cent reduction in Old Age Pensions in 1924—but the obligations were sacrosanct, to the chagrin of civil servants and politicians (Fanning, 1978; Lee, 1989). Rights, once extended, appear to be difficult to rescind in a liberal democracy.

Arguably, the most important part of the post-colonial legacy can be seen in the policy stance of the state itself. The Department of Finance, which, following the Treasury model inherited from the British administrative system played a dominant role in state policy formation for much of Ireland's post independence history, was opposed in principle to increases in state expenditure and taxes, and in particular to increased commitments to social welfare. The Department, especially during the protracted secretaryship of J. J. MacElligott, consistently argued from a classically liberal position against the expansion of social programmes on the grounds

that the state should not interfere with markets and that its responsibilities should be limited to the relief of destitution. Thus, for instance, in opposing a government proposal for universal payments of family allowances in 1942, MacElligott criticised the proposal because it would increase the degree of bureaucratic control over the domestic affairs of families, and argued, more generally, that

social schemes in this country up to the present have tended to develop on lines of too great reliance upon the state as a source of help and assistance towards a situation where below a given wage level the incentive to work will be totally destroyed (quoted in Lee, 1989: 281).

Given its dominant position in the civil service, the Department of Finance represented a powerful champion of the liberal cause. It was joined in this by the Central Bank (see Bew *et al.*, 1989). There is little evidence to suggest that MacElligott had changed his mind by the time he resigned in 1953, and the Department suspicion of 'social schemes' was evidently still alive when T. K. Whitaker, its secretary in 1958, argued in *Economic Development* for cuts in social spending.

The political system generated few welfare innovations in the first decades of independence. The conservative Cumann na nGaedheal government, fixated on promoting agricultural exports, preferred to keep both welfare spending and taxes down, and relied on emigration to alleviate high levels of unemployment in the late 1920s (Breen *et al.* 1990; Maguire, 1986). The Fianna Fáil party, which replaced Cumann na nGaedheal after winning the general election in 1932, appealed to the less well-off sections of society—small farmers and business people, and urban and rural manual workers—who had fared poorly under the previous government. Fianna Fáil promised to increase the state commitment to social welfare, and to fight unemployment and promote industrial development through protectionism. Unemployment benefits and old age pensions were increased and new income-maintenance schemes were introduced; unemployment assistance came in 1933 and widows' and orphans' pensions in 1935. The major initiative of the first Fianna Fáil government was, however, an ambitious housing programme. An average of 12,000 new houses were built with state aid between 1932 and 1942, compared to 2,000 per year between 1923 and 1931 (Lee, 1989: 193). Need was urgent, given the overcrowded and inadequate condition of much of the nation's housing stock, and it was a particularly effective social policy since it was targeted directly at the most deprived sections of the community. There were additional advantages. The housing programme functioned as a Depression era public works scheme; housing, along with other welfare reforms and a commitment to increase employment, encouraged working-class

support; and new house construction enhanced Fianna Fáil's relationship with another important group—property speculators and builders. Thereafter, renewed activity in housing occurred between 1949–53 (Kennedy, 1971), and in the 1950s eligibility for public hospital services was extended to about 85 per cent of the nation, and unemployment insurance coverage was extended to male agricultural workers (Maguire, 1986). Nonetheless, these reforms still lagged far behind the rate of innovation in other European countries. Development of social rights in Ireland had to await the 1960s, and the elimination of unemployment proved quite beyond the capacity of the state.

Ireland's reluctance to emulate other European countries is also partly explicable by its economic predicament and by the petit-bourgeois cast of its class structure (Rottman and O'Connell, 1982). Total social expenditure actually fell from 16 per cent of GNP in 1951 to 14 per cent in 1959. How could this be during a decade of economic stagnation and declining employment? Part of the answer must lie in the decision by 400,000 citizens to emigrate; the departure of approximately 13.5 per cent of the population relieved both the fiscal and potential political pressure on the state. There was, moreover, a coincidence of policy preferences between the state and powerful interests. The early post-war attempts at reform were discouraged by opposition from the Roman Catholic Church to an expansion of state involvement in welfare. In the 'Mother and Child Scheme' incident in 1951 the church blocked a major extension of public health care to provide free ante- and post-natal care to mothers and free medical care to all children without a means test. It is perhaps ironic that the church and the 'premier' department in the state should be joined in their opposition to increased state commitment to social welfare. The ideological roots of the church's opposition, were, in fact, quite antipathetic to the liberalism of the Department of Finance. Catholic social thought of the period was heavily influenced by the corporatist rejection of both unfettered markets and state bureaucratic regulation. The specific objection by the church to the Mother and Child scheme, entered on behalf of the medical profession, was that it allocated to the state responsibilities rightfully the preserve of intermediate institutions to which the family could have direct access.¹³

¹³ As in the 1911–13 period, the material interests of the medical profession and the principles of the Catholic hierarchy happily coincided: 'The true clash had, in any case, always been between the wishes of a reforming minister (and his department) and the self-interested conservatism of the Irish Medical Association. When the latter proved able to persuade the bishops that the survival of private practitioners in the field of public health was crucial to the safeguarding of Catholic morality a specious cloak of principle was very effectively thrown over what had, from the start, been essentially a fight over cash and the privileges cash can buy' (Hoppen, 1989: 244).

The quality of social citizenship expanded markedly from the early 1960s to the mid-1970s as services were improved and the coverage of income maintenance payments were extended and upgraded. Why did the welfare state expand so decisively and rapidly during the 1960s and 1970s after such inauspicious beginnings in the earlier post-war period? Our explanation is a state-centred conjunctural one that examines both the state itself and the major organised interests in Irish society during the crucial decade of the 1960s.

First, state intervention in the economy expanded dramatically in the wake of the early planning documents of the 1960s. The strategy adopted by the state to resolve the economic and social crisis of the 1950s—export-led industrialisation relying on foreign capital—necessitated the development of a welfare state for business, replete with capital grants and other incentives and generous tax breaks. This has been well documented elsewhere (Breen *et al.*, 1990; Lee, 1989). But the expansion of the state role did not necessarily entail an expansion of social citizenship: in fact, quite the contrary. From the onset of increased state economic intervention, Whitaker envisaged a reduction in social expenditures and the diversion of funds to investment in economic development. Such a 'free-market' approach would have been quite consistent with state strategies in other late-industrialising nations, in which restricted citizenship rights allowed non-democratic governments to keep down consumption in order to free funds for investment in expansion (cf. Chirot, 1986: 128). That social rights expanded and welfare budgets grew despite Finance reluctance and in the midst of a state-sponsored industrialisation drive, suggests the importance of political and economic constraints on state policy formation, and should serve as a caution against overestimating the autonomy or monolithic nature of the state.

However, part of the impetus for the expansion of social citizenship may also be found within the state itself, where bureaucratic politics appear to have been undergoing some changes. After the initial spurt of state intervention in the late 1950s, the dominance of the Department of Finance waned. There is substantial evidence to suggest that the Departments of Finance and Industry and Commerce were in conflict during the late 1950s and 1960s over fundamental policy issues, with Finance defending restrictive deflationary policies and Industry and Commerce advocating expansionary policies, and that Finance was defeated on crucial issues (Bew and Patterson, 1982; Girvin, 1989). It was also during the 1960s that the main social spending departments, headed by new energetic and ambitious ministers in the departments of Education, Local Government, Health and Social Welfare, were successful in overcoming Finance's traditional resistance to increases in spending (Kennedy,

1971: 244–245).¹⁴ Moreover, part of the expansion and construction of social citizenship represented the specific interests of the state as an organisation. Perhaps the most obvious example of such a state-centred logic is the crucial decision to extend PRSI coverage first to all employees (1974) and ultimately to the self-employed (1988), which promoted the social solidarity needed to accomplish the extension of social citizenship, and helped to legitimate the extraction of taxes to finance the welfare state. It was a decision that followed from the logic of state policies, not in response to political pressures or in pursuit of political advantage.

Second, though welfare issues assumed greater importance on the political stage, there is no simple correspondence between political parties and welfare issues. Fianna Fáil, for instance, controlled government both during contractions in welfare spending (1951–54, 1957–61, and from 1987) and during the period of its most rapid expansion (1963–73). Likewise, Fine Gael, the other major contender, has also had a chequered history on welfare policy, and while the Labour Party has been more consistent in its support for social welfare, its electoral support has been weak. Nevertheless, electoral politics has been important in the expansion of the welfare state.

Fianna Fáil is a populist and corporatist party that attempts to mobilise support across class lines. It articulates an ideology that emphasises social harmony and economic growth (Mair, 1987). During the early 1960s its leader, Sean Lemass, argued that social progress would follow from, but was contingent upon, economic development (Bew *et al.*, 1989). Fine Gael, was also a catch-all party, but it had traditionally found its greatest support among large farmers and other substantial propertied interests, and had accordingly favoured conservative social and economic policies. Fine Gael policy underwent a major change in the mid-1960s with the party's discovery of a social democratic concern with social justice and, after the publication of its *Just Society* programme in 1965, it began to advocate increased state commitment to social welfare. This coincided with electoral gains by the Labour Party, which also advocated welfare policy reform. Both Fine Gael and Labour made social policy a major issue of the 1965 election. From 1965 onwards, Fianna Fáil responded to increased electoral competition over social issues by emphasising its own commitment to social spending and the reform of social welfare programmes. The 1965 budget was pronounced a 'social services budget' by the Minister of

¹⁴ The power struggle between the Departments of Finance and Industry and Commerce is well researched in Girvin (1989), Fanning (1978), and Bew and Patterson (1982). Little evidence is available, unfortunately, through which to characterise the relationships among other departments.

Finance (Maguire 1986: 334), indicating, incidentally, the extent to which the imperatives of political strategy had overcome the market oriented fiscal orthodoxy of the officials of his own department.

Party politics thus underwent major changes and welfare issues became more salient to party competition. It became likely that electoral success would go to the party or coalition of parties promising the most to the greatest number of beneficiaries—thus reinforcing the tendency toward universal provision of services. This intensification of concern over welfare issues coincided with relatively strong economic growth, which thus provided the necessary revenue buoyancy to finance the competition. Later, when growth slowed, revenue would be replaced by borrowing.

Third, several aspects of the social structural changes wrought by state-sponsored economic development were of particular importance for the subsequent shape of the Irish welfare state. The increase in waged and salaried employment entailed growing needs for social-insurance-type provision for security. The particular timing and nature of economic development also led to an upgrading in the quality of labour-market positions in both the public and private sectors. The class structure was thus transformed into one dominated by middle class professionals and proprietors. Deference to their interests was a prerequisite for any expansion of the welfare state. By contrast, working class families fared poorly.

The expansion of the wage-dependent work force increased the strength of trade unions. Wage pressure intensified over the 1960s as Irish workers attempted to raise their living standards closer to those in other European countries, and in the 1970s returned migrants brought enhanced expectations of the state. The strategy of export-led industrialisation with foreign capital necessitated, however, harmonious industrial relations and wage competitiveness. One of the responses of the state to the intensification of distributive conflict in the 1960s was the establishment of a number of tripartite neo-corporatist institutions to encourage cooperation between trade unions, employer organisations and government in matters relating to economic development. By the 1970s the state had become centrally involved, underwriting incomes restraint with welfare spending and tax reforms (Hardiman, 1988; O'Brien, 1981; O'Connell, 1982). This politicisation of incomes policies and the displacement of distributional conflict from the private sector to the state intensified over the decade. In the late 1970s, centralised bargaining had been extended, through the 'National Understanding', to include a wide range of state activities, including employment creation, industrial relations, social welfare, health, education and housing services, as well as wages and taxation. The expansion of the welfare state must therefore be understood in relation to

these attempts to maintain international competitiveness and foster labour-market conditions favourable to economic growth.

Moreover, class mobilisation in the period encouraged welfare state expansion through party politics and sectoral bargaining alike. The standard interpretation, represented, for example, in Bew and Patterson (1982) and Bew *et al.*, (1989: ch. 3) focuses on just one aspect of class mobilisation: that of the working class. But political mobilisation in Ireland took the form of parties attempting to mobilise individual voters by appealing to their class interests rather than classes mobilising through parties. The transformation of the class structure is crucial here. During the 1960s, the middle class was consolidating its position and putting its imprint on party politics. Irish industrialisation meant the numeric decline, fragmentation, and geographical dispersion of the working class and, simultaneously, the growth and consolidation (particularly in Dublin) of the middle class. In our interpretation, middle class political mobilisation and the expression of middle class preferences and interests proved the dominant force.

Fourth, the Roman Catholic Church, which had successfully opposed increased state involvement in welfare in the 1940s and 1950s, also underwent change during the 1960s. The corporatism of Catholic social thought actually embraced two different components. One was represented by the vocationalist tradition which gained popularity in Ireland in the 1940s. The other, more familiar in Latin America, Spain and Portugal, favoured a strong interventionist state which pursued the common good of all its subjects (Stepan, 1978). The latter tradition is clearly far more amenable to welfare state expansion, and appears to be reflected in the substantially greater concern with social justice adopted by the Catholic Church in Ireland in recent years.

Conclusion

Our interpretation of the expansion of social citizenship counters the excessive importance that has sometimes been placed on state industrial policy and economic planning in understanding the transformation of Irish society. Stressing the growth of social citizenship also identifies some aspects of the welfare state in Ireland that have gone largely unremarked and certainly under-researched. The creation of a pay-related welfare state, in our view, reflects the undoubtedly wide range of social rights to which Irish citizens are now entitled, but also the degree to which those rights reinforce, rather than mitigate, market inequalities. Minimal levels of security and service are guaranteed to all resident citizens. However,

the welfare state is 'pay-related' in that it permits those with advantages generated in the market to supplement their citizenship rights with their own resources. Purchasers of private health and education continue to enjoy virtually the same level of state subsidy as the users of public services, but they enjoy a more expensive and, presumably, better product. Thus, for example, the consequences of such a system for providing education is evident in the remarkably low rate of social mobility in Ireland (Breen and Whelan, this volume). In income maintenance programmes, the dual system means that those with higher incomes are entitled to higher rates of compensation, and minimal state pensions can be supplemented with private pensions, thus replicating market inequalities in old-age. This dual nature of social citizenship reflects middle class interests in security and in quality of services. But the inclusion of the middle class was essential both to legitimate the large welfare role of the state and to justify the high rates of taxation faced by higher income employees.

Focusing on the principles underlying social rights and welfare institutions, and on the social forces articulating those principles, allows us to explore a conjunctural explanation for why social citizenship expanded during the 1960s and 1970s. This conjunctural explanation suggests that in those decades shifts occurring both within the state and within Irish society relaxed some of the opposition to welfare state expansion, and simultaneously strengthened social forces favouring the growth of social citizenship.

What, then, can be learned from the Irish case about the process of welfare state development in general? First, the theory of industrialism does not fare well in Ireland. While the coincidence of industrial development with the expansion of social citizenship appears at first sight to provide compelling evidence in favour of the logic of industrialism, closer inspection reveals that the expansion of social rights—as they are experienced by people and as they affect life chances—is nominal rather than real. The restricted nature of this expansion is revealed both by the pay-related structure of the welfare state which replicates, rather than mitigates, market advantages, and by the persistence of inequality of opportunity—the failure, therefore, of advancing industrialism and expanding social citizenship to create a more open, achievement-oriented society. Moreover, from the standpoint of the logic of industrialism, the role of state is determined by socioeconomic forces (Kerr *et al.*, 1960) and political development is a function of economic development (Lipset, 1960; Huntington, 1968). The state in Ireland, however, must be seen as an independent rather than a dependent variable; this inverts the causality that the theory of industrialism asserts.

Secondly though, the social democratic approach does not contribute

much more than that of the logic of industrialism. The welfare state expanded in Ireland in spite of the weakness of left-wing political parties, and neither the timing of that expansion nor the nature of the new citizenship rights can be explained by reference to working class strength. Welfare state expansion occurred in Ireland during a process of late industrialisation that consolidated the position of the middle class, not the working class.

We have argued, instead, for a state-centred approach. States in less developed peripheral societies tend to be activist in pursuit of what they define as national priorities. Liberal democratic states are expected to be responsive to the demands of their citizens. Ireland is one of the few nations combining both of these state-expansionary tendencies, and the role of the state is therefore particularly important. State-centred approaches cannot, however, be applied mechanically. In the Irish case, such an application leads to the expectation that social citizenship would have been restrained during the period of economic development. This was, after all, the explicit policy position of the Department of Finance, the core of the Irish state in the first decades of independence. That social citizenship nonetheless expanded indicates that the state is far from monolithic and that it must formulate policies in concert with other powerful social actors. In our interpretation, then, political factors are subsumed within the state centred approach. The emergent welfare state was shaped to attract the support of the middle classes; it was not targeted at the working class, as it had been in other European countries from the late nineteenth century onwards. The influence of politics on an emergent welfare state therefore depends on the nature of the class structure and the material interests associated with those market processes to which the state is responsive.

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