

THE GOVERNANCE OF SOCIAL MARGINALITY IN THE UK: TOWARDS THE CENTAUR STATE?

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Abstract

Burgeoning prison populations and the growing use of compulsion in welfare policies across much of the western world has stimulated a great deal of academic discussion. Drawing on U.S experience Wacquant (2009) argues that a 'centaur state' has emerged which involves the 'double regulation of the poor' by the development of workfare and the expansion of the prison system. This article critically discusses the salience of these ideas to the U.K. It draws upon historical analysis to reveal the important continuities with the inter-war period which was also characterised by rising prison populations and the introduction of workfare in the brutalising form of labour camps. It then considers recent attempts to join up welfare and penal policies and finds that these have been frustrated by the behaviour of front-line staff operating in a context of acute resource constraints and growing workloads.

Key words: *social marginality; employment; offenders; welfare reform.*

Introduction

Burgeoning prison populations and the growing use of compulsion in welfare policies across much of the western world have stimulated a great deal of academic debate. In the UK the prison population stands at record levels and the benefits system has been characterised by growing compulsion. Wilson and Pickett (2010) show that Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries and US states that spend the least on social welfare have the highest rates of imprisonment. Cavadino and Dignan (2006) have linked penal policy with political economy. Neo-liberal states are both more unequal and punitive. They speculate that punishment may be a 'negative reward': societies that are prepared to reward success with higher incomes and greater social status are also more willing to punish failure with both poverty and formal sanctions. Downes and Hansen (2006) have also found that 'penal expansion and welfare contraction' have become more pronounced over the last twenty years. The 'transcarceration' thesis has been advanced in which 'penal and welfare institutions have come to form a single policy regime aimed at the governance of social marginality' (Beckett & Western, 2001, page 55). Furthermore, 'reduced welfare expenditures are not indicative of a shift towards reduced government intervention in social life but rather a shift toward a more exclusionary and punitive approach to the regulation of social marginality' (Beckett & Western, 2001, page 55).

Wacquant (2009) views these developments as paradigmatic of the way neo-liberal Governments deal with growing social insecurity. He argues that a new type of neo-liberal political regime has emerged, the 'centaur state'. According to Wacquant (2009, page 4), the 'centaur state' involves a triple transformation of the state including the 'amputation of its economic arm, the retraction of its social bosom, and the massive expansion of its penal fist'. It is 'guided by a liberal head mounted on an authoritarian body' (Wacquant, 2009, page 43). The result has been the 'double regulation of the poor' that involves, on the one hand, the decline of the Keynesian welfare state and its replacement with a workfare state, and on the other hand, the criminalisation of the poor and the expansion of the prison system. The centaur analogy was first used by Machiavelli (and subsequently by Gramsci) to refer to the diversity of strategies of rule deployed by the state towards various social classes combining a mixture of coercion and consent (Squires and Lea, 2012). For Wacquant it refers to a neo-liberal state that retains strategies of consent towards corporations and the upper classes but is authoritarian and coercive towards the poorest.

The 'centaur state' is predicated on the notion that there has been an historical rupture in the approach taken to social marginality. Wacquant (2009) argues that this shift began in the mid-1970s and has prevailed through a neo-liberal hegemony. This article seeks to make a distinctive contribution to the debate about the relevance of these ideas to the U.K. by undertaking an historical analysis of the treatment of the long-term unemployed in the benefits system during the inter-war period. This is particularly illuminating given the ahistorical nature of much of the debate. It goes on to draw upon the findings of contemporary research to discuss the contention that welfare and penal policies work in concert to push offenders into the secondary labour market. A key finding is that front-line practice intended to prepare offenders for the UK labour market has severely

restricted the operationalization of joint penal and welfare policies characteristic of the 'centaur state'.

Towards the double regulation of the poor

There have been a series of UK policy reforms since the mid-1980s that emphasise greater compulsion and enforce a stricter benefit regime. Griggs and Bennett (2009) have identified the idea of a 'contract' in the benefits system, with increasing conditionality and sanctions for claimants. More recently, conditionality has been extended to previously 'inactive' groups such as lone parents. This approach has been further intensified by the Coalition Government. The 2010 White Paper *Universal Credit: Welfare that Works* (DWP, 2010) increases the level of conditionality that is applied to some recipients; strengthens the sanctioning regime (some claimants face the prospect of losing benefit for up to three years) and introduces mandatory work activity. During May 2011 the Mandatory Work Activity scheme, which requires Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants to undertake full time work activity to continue receiving benefits, was introduced. Failure to complete a placement without 'good cause' results in a benefit sanction of three months, rising to six months for a second breach.

The growing coercion of the poor is most evident in the development of mass incarceration (Wacquant, 2009). In the UK the prison population stands at record levels and those incarcerated are predominantly drawn from the most marginalised fractions of the working class. The Social Exclusion Unit (2002) has shown that most have a history of high levels of family, educational and health disadvantage and poor prospects in the labour market. A more recent survey of 1,435 prisoners within four weeks of starting their sentence has found that 44 per cent have had treatment or counselling for a drug problem; 29 per cent had a childhood experience of emotional, physical or sexual abuse; 24 per cent had attempted to take their own life; nearly a fifth (18 per cent) had a family member with an alcohol problem and 14 per cent had a family member with a drug problem (Ministry of Justice a, 2010).

Wacquant (2009) argues that these types of developments are emblematic of a shift towards a punitive treatment of poverty. This has resulted from a number of interconnecting factors including the decline of the Keynesian welfare state, the advent of post-Fordism and the rise of neo-liberalism.

Historical review

However, historical analysis reveals that the 'double regulation of the poor' was a feature of the British states' response to the economic crisis of the inter-war period. From 1920 until 1938 British unemployment never fell below 10% and the trade unions lost half of their members over the next 12 years. At the worst point in the economic slump in 1932/33 23% of the British labour force was out of work (Hobsbawm, 1994, page 93). 'There had been nothing like this economic catastrophe in the lives of working people for as long as anyone could remember' (Hobsbawm, 1994, page 93). The Labour and Coalition

Government's responded by cutting benefit levels, removing claimants from statutory benefit and coercing nearly 190,000 into labour camps.

The camps were brought into existence by Proposal Number 3225 to the Labour Emergency Expenditure Committee in 1928. Between 1929 and 1938 almost 190,000 men were admitted to the camps, the peak year being 1934 when nearly 33,000 attended (Croucher, 1987). They targeted: 'those, especially the younger men who, through prolonged unemployment, have become so 'soft' and temporarily demoralised that it would not be practical to introduce more than a very small number of them into our ordinary training centres without danger to the morale of the centre' (Ministry of Labour official quoted in Colledge, 1989, page 6). Those admitted were: 'thought by the authorities to be so degraded by idleness and sufficiently lacking in any practical skills, as to require a period of "reconditioning" into the habits of hard, routine manual labour in an isolated camp' (Colledge and Field, 1983, page 153).

Those registered as unemployed for at least six months and resident in the 'distressed areas' were originally targeted but this was later reduced to three months and extended to the rest of Britain. The official position was that attendance was 'voluntary', although the 1934 Unemployment Act made attendance compulsory it was never implemented. In practice, local unemployment officers coerced individuals to attend by threatening the loss of benefit. 'In 1934 I went to High Lodge [a Labour Camp]. Didn't have any choice, mind. It was a case of if I didn't go they would stop my dole' (Mr Gant quoted in Colledge, 1989, page 19). The training took the form of a 12 week course comprising tough, menial manual labour. This included tree felling, breaking rocks, road making and the levelling of playing fields. Men were also loaned from the camps to external employers. They worked at Whipsnade Zoo and helped with the Piccadilly tube line extension (Colledge and Field, 1983).

Colledge and Field (1983) maintain that the purpose of the camps was disciplinary and they were run on strict military lines. The camp manager was invariably from the military. A team of 'gangers' worked directly with the men who were marched to work in military style. 'They had us digging trenches. We would dig it down one day then the next day another group would come and fill it in. That is all we done for three months' (Mr Grant quoted in Colledge, 1989, page 19). Responding to charges that the men were forced to undertake futile tasks the Ministry of Labour replied: 'the operations themselves, so far as we are concerned, are secondary as a mere means to an end' (quoted in Colledge and Field, 1983, page 156). A former Ebbw Vale steelworker recalled that: 'The first thing they did was supply you with a pair of heavy nailed boots, a pair of corduroy trousers, and some kind of shirt. So wherever you did go people knew who you were- you were a convict in a sense, because you were all dressed the same' (William Heard quoted in Colledge and Field, 1983, page 163).

The inter-war period was also characterised by burgeoning prison populations. The number of male prisoners in England and Wales rose from 7,595 in 1918 to 12,180 in 1933, a rise of over 60% (Home Office, 2002). This growth is even more remarkable given that the First World War would be expected to reduce the prison population because of the extraordinarily high number of men killed in the trenches and the creation of a credible

alternative to prison in the form of the Probation Service. Furthermore, it could be reasonably argued that some of those conscripted into the labour camps might have entered the prison system. It is salient to note that the Trade Union Congress ignored the plight of camp inmates because they presented little threat to the skilled jobs of their membership (Colledge, 1989). Similarly, the National Unemployed Workers Movement found it especially difficult to organise in the labour camps because inmates were unskilled and rarely had trade union experience (Hannington, 1977).

Since its inception in the nineteenth century the modern prison has been disproportionately concerned with the imprisonment of the 'lumpenproletariat', the 'dangerous classes', the poor and the feckless (Mathews, 2005). It has again been called upon to house the surplus population resulting from economic crisis and reduced spending on social welfare. In terms of the latter, prisons are also currently being used for the containment of those for whom the necessary welfare or medical services are unavailable (Carlen, 1988; Birmingham, 1999). Consequently, a significant factor behind the contemporary growth of the prison population is the: 'widespread use of prison as a dumping ground for those whom the state is unable or unwilling to provide suitable care and support' (Matthews, 2005, page 188). All of which suggests that the current use of the prison as a 'social dustbin' is not representative of an historical rupture but rather the continuation of its original function.

Do welfare and penal policies work in concert?

Wacquant (2009) views harsh penal policies ('prisonfare') and social policies ('workfare') as a material and symbolic apparatus to control the marginal populations created by economic neo-liberalism and the shrinking of the welfare state. He argues that welfare and penal policies increasingly work with the same population and are informed by the same behaviourist philosophy. 'They [welfare and penal policies] work jointly to invisibilize problem populations- by forcing them off the public aid roll, on the one side, and holding them under lock, on the other- and eventually push them into the peripheral sectors of the booming secondary labour market' (Wacquant, 2009, page 288).

The remainder of this article discusses the relevance of these ideas to the UK. It draws upon recent research conducted by the author that has explored the progress made with the implementation of the key recommendations of the joint Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) and Ministry of Justice (MoJ) offender employment review (see Table 1). This has involved conducting one hundred and thirty one in-depth semi-structured interviews with policy leads, practitioners and offenders across four case study areas in England and Wales in both custodial and community settings (see Fletcher *et al*, 2011). This research is particularly useful in this respect. First, because the joint review explicitly sought to join up the work of Jobcentre Plus, Prison Service and Probation. Second, the conduct of the research has provided a detailed insight into the benefit claiming and work histories of thirty six prisoners and sixteen offenders in the community.

Table 1: Key strategic review recommendations

<p>Implement a framework for joint working and data sharing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • better integrate (and co-locate) Jobcentre Plus Employment and Benefit Advisers (EBAs) with prison teams leading on skill, employment and resettlement • introduce a single point of contact within Jobcentre Plus and Probation to work together on offender issues • provide guidance to support partnership working between Jobcentre Plus and NOMS front-line staff- • provide a legally approved data sharing form for use between front-line Probation and Jobcentre Plus staff.
<p>Reintroduce a leaflet for EBA staff explaining the current Jobcentre Plus offer to offenders</p>
<p>Enable EBAs to focus more on job search</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • introduce a revised EBA job description • maintain EBA knowledge of Jobcentre Plus provision by spending more time in Jobcentre offices and rotating the role • prisons are to provide EBAs with appropriate space to deliver face-to-face advice to prisoners • prisons are to provide EBAs with broadband access to allow on-line access to the Jobcentre Plus network (including the Labour Market system) and a dedicated telephone line • Jobcentre Plus will provide the EBAs with a single point of contact within the Benefit Delivery Centre to action benefit closure activity • use offenders to provide peer support to assist EBAs
<p>Jobcentre Plus and NOMS to join-up employer engagement activity</p>

A key objective of the joint review was to develop a delivery framework that would articulate the roles and responsibilities of Jobcentre Plus and the National Offender Management Service (NOMS). This was to be facilitated by a number of initiatives including the introduction of single points of contact within Jobcentre Plus and Probation to work together on offender issues and a legally approved data sharing form for use between front-line staff. This represents a concerted attempt to begin to join up the work of two key delivery organisations. However, implementation underlined the profound difficulties encountered changing the behaviour of front-line staff, a task that was made herculean by the context of severe budget cuts and associated organisational restructuring.

The interviews with Probation and Jobcentre Plus operational staff revealed a highly variable picture with regard to both awareness and support for the review. In some areas awareness was very high and the principles, direction and recommendations of the review were strongly supported. However, in other areas senior staff confided that they had little knowledge of the details. More generally, it was recognised that effective implementation required addressing long-standing, entrenched practices which necessitated cultural shifts and a 'change of mindset'. It would take time to embed changes and there would need to be a transitional period in which new mechanisms became integrated into everyday practice. As one Jobcentre Plus manager stated: *'It's a long walk, it doesn't happen overnight'*.

Consequently, the implementation of recommendations and the impact of these changes were uneven, both geographically and between different delivery bodies. Some local areas were already implementing changes prior to the review. Jobcentre Plus and Probation in the North East of England had, for example, been proactive with sharing information and developing multi-agency working. Elsewhere senior Probation staff admitted that the implementation of key recommendations had been highly problematical. This was variously described as: *'a bit of a nightmare'*; and *'a waste of time'*.

The introduction of single points of contact had often improved joint working at the strategic level. This was particularly apparent in the North East of England where much of the groundwork had already been undertaken. *'We're heading in the right direction. There are much better working relationships than before'* (Jobcentre Plus officer). This had improved the flow of information on the restrictions that affect individual availability for work; facilitated better timetabling of probation activities that have reduced clashes with signing-on times; and secured more effective use of scarce financial resources. Nevertheless, the impact on front-line practice has been modest. Jobcentre Plus staff frequently reported that: *'It hasn't affected my work one iota'*. Interviewees in one area confirmed that there was little routine communication between Probation and Jobcentre Plus. *'There are a handful of occasions each month where we contact Jobcentre Plus about say clashes with appointments or drug using offenders'* (Probation interviewee). Front-line staff were often unaware of the existence or identity of the single point of contact. This problem had been compounded by staff discontinuities and the contacts being given additional responsibilities.

The data sharing form provided information on individuals' education, training, employment; basic skills needs and other support required e.g. help with finding accommodation or drug/alcohol issues. The intention was to share information about ex-prisoners and *'to get the right people together and start conversations'* (Policy lead). Another likened it to a *'vehicle for cultural change'*. The form was used more frequently in areas where it had been actively promoted by senior management such as Cumbria, Merseyside and Lancashire. It was also found to be more widely used in areas characterised by strong pre-existing relationships between the two delivery organisations. In Durham and the Tees Valley, for example, it was claimed that data sharing had increased from 1-2 per cent of offenders to up to 30 per cent. However, in areas where there has traditionally been little partnership working the picture was less rosy.

Senior probation staff in one area expressed a high degree of scepticism about the utility of the form which was described as: *'a box ticking exercise'*, and *'a waste of time'*. A decision had reluctantly been taken to trial its use by a small part of Probation. However, offender managers were unconvinced. *'What is the purpose of them?'* They complained that they filled it in, got the offender to sign it, photocopied it and sent it to Jobcentre Plus but had not received any feedback. It was widely viewed as an unwelcome distraction from core duties. Similarly, Jobcentre Plus management acknowledged that: *'Some people are using it, some people are reluctant'*. Poor communication meant that some staff did not know that the forms existed. Growing workloads often meant that advisers lacked the time to complete the necessary paperwork.

Deep-seated cultural differences between staff in the two organisations were apparent. Jobcentre Plus was established in April 2002 following the merger of the Employment Service and the Benefits Agency. From the outset, it has played a pivotal role in enforcing a stricter benefit regime. In contrast, the Probation Service has its origins in late nineteenth century philanthropy. The Probation of Offenders Act 1907 provided the statutory foundation of the probation service. Probation officers were required to *'advise, assist and befriend'* those under supervision. The indications are that the rehabilitative mission of Probation has adapted and survived. Many Probation Staff expressed reservations about the role, purpose and effectiveness of Jobcentre Plus. The view was frequently expressed that the move towards a stricter benefit regime backed up by financial sanctions had created a *'credibility gap'* for many offenders. *'Jobcentre Plus is a hassle for offenders'* (Senior Probation Officer).

The Agency was unable to help many offenders into employment. *'Offenders don't see Jobcentre Plus as a provider of employment opportunities. They see it as a benefits agency'* (Assistant Chief Executive). A further issue was the perceived inflexibilities of Jobcentre Plus which made it difficult to meet their complex needs. *'It [Jobcentre Plus] is a huge tanker of an organisation with tiers of accountability and fixed processes'* (Assistant Chief Officer of Probation). A Senior Probation Officer acknowledged that: *'Jobcentre Plus finds offenders hard to help'*. The employment support offered by Jobcentre Plus staff is based on a white-collar model which has little relevance to most offenders. This is evidenced by the emphasis on CV preparation. *'Offenders get jobs they don't get careers. I think the risk is that we are imposing a middle class approach to finding work'* (Assistant Chief Executive).

Do welfare and penal policies force offenders off benefit?

The joint review has had the effect of increasing the visibility of offenders in the welfare system. Interviews with policy leads confirmed that the focus was on helping individuals into work and thereby reducing re-offending. *'My gut feeling is that it has made a difference, particularly in focusing minds on the offender agenda and providing a structure to a relationship [with partners] that was previously ad-hoc'*. However, a more covert objective was revealed during some of the interviews. *'There will be less confusion about the role of Jobcentre Plus and Probation and data sharing means that offenders will be less able to play off Probation against Jobcentre Plus'* (policy lead).

Analysis of a one-off data share project between the Department for Work & Pensions, Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs and the Ministry of Justice has suggested that significant financial savings might accrue from reducing the number of offenders on benefits. Approximately 26 per cent of the 4.9 million open claims for out-of-work benefits as at 1st December 2010 in England and Wales were made by offenders who had received at least one caution or conviction between 2000 to 2010 (MoJ/DWP, 2011). This rose to 33 per cent of the 1.2 million Jobseeker's Allowance claims open on 1 December 2010. Furthermore, those leaving prison in 2008 spent on average 48 per cent of the next two years on out-of-work benefits.

The present study has produced some important insights into offender experiences of work and the benefits system. Most of those interviewed had previously been employed in low-skilled, male dominated manual jobs in manufacturing and construction. A few had worked in services e.g. retail, catering and hospitality. Many had extensive experience of undertaking cash-in-hand work, especially in construction-related trades. Virtually all were seeking similar work on release from prison. A significant number would: 'look for anything' or reported that they were seeking 'any hands on work' or simply 'factory work'. However, individual experiences of claiming benefits were extremely varied. It was possible to identify three broad groups:

- Those that use the benefits system to manage the financial uncertainties of being caught in a cycle of precarious employment and worklessness.
- Individuals that were unable to work and spent most of their free lives on benefits.
- Prisoners actively avoiding engaging with the welfare system.

For the majority of those interviewed keeping rather than finding work was the main difficulty encountered. Drink and drug addictions were a contributory factor in some cases. However, for most it was the nature of the work that they are able to realise in the post-industrial labour market. Work was often physically demanding but required no particular skills and was chronically insecure. Individuals reported moving from one short-term job to another. Jobcentre Plus was primarily viewed as agency for claiming benefits during periods of worklessness.

Since leaving school a white male aged 23 years had 'done everything'. This had included stints in the British Army, construction, landscape gardening, childcare and retail. During periods of unemployment he had claimed Jobseekers Allowance (JSA). He was due for imminent release and intended to live with his sister. He indicated that he would look for any full-time permanent work with a 'proper wage'. Although he would use his local Jobcentre past experience suggested that the most fruitful avenue would be through social contacts and registering with a temporary employment agency. The individual reported that he didn't need any resettlement assistance other than help with signing-on.

Most had extremely negative perceptions of the agency which are partly tied up with its role in policing benefit entitlement. A 28 year old prisoner spoke for many when he reported: *'They are the scourge of my life'*. A frequent complaint was that advisers did not

understand offenders and had little time for them. *'You spend an hour waiting for an appointment. Then its 30 seconds and you're out'*. There was also a strong sense that the agency was an impersonal bureaucracy that made arbitrary punitive decisions. A 28 year old reported that he had been unable to claim any benefits immediately prior to his most recent period in prison. *'I had no money and I was being ringing them on a daily basis. I was being passed backwards and forwards between the JSA and Income Support people'*. Following imprisonment his council tenancy had not been closed down. *'I had a letter last week telling me that I'm in arrears with the rent. I owe £299. There's no way I can afford that'*.

Some of those interviewed had very little employment experience and had claimed benefits throughout their time in the community. These individuals often had long standing drug or alcohol addictions. A 40 year old white male serving an 18 month custodial sentence for burglary had, for example, served numerous prison sentences. *'I've been in and out of prison all my life'*. A long-term drug addiction, few skills and regular churning through the criminal justice system meant that he had very little work experience other than a short stint working in a factory over twenty years ago. He was due to be released in three weeks to a coastal resort some 30 miles away. Yet he was still dependant on drugs and his speech was slurred and virtually inaudible. It was a little ironic that he felt that prison-based drug treatment services had improved. *'You can now get help straight away'*. He had not taken part in any pre-release training activities and confided that: *'I have not thought about finding work'*. Sorting out his benefits was, however, a priority. The individual was apparently unconcerned about the prospect of having nowhere to live. *'I'm not bothered. I might be able to live with my girlfriend'*.

Some of those interviewed would not use Jobcentre Plus either to claim benefits or to seek work. A few were returning to their own businesses. However, it was clear that many would turn to kin, the informal economy or criminal endeavours to exist. Practitioners acknowledged that: *'Some offenders want nothing to do with us because they will be resuming their usual way of life in which prison is seen as a just one of the risks'* (Jobcentre Plus staff). The difficulties encountered securing formal employment, welfare reform which has resulted in higher levels of surveillance of the activities of claimants and the prevalence of informal work in some key sectors such as construction were key factors pushing some away from the benefits system (Fletcher, 2008).

A 26 year old white male, serving a two year sentence, had been 'self-employed in construction' and had rarely been out of work for long. He had never used Jobcentre Plus either to claim benefits or to look for employment. The latter was usually secured through word of mouth and social contacts. He was actively seeking work in construction and would do so through his usual channels. The individual was confident about getting work despite the recession. *'I could get a job [in construction] in two minutes by word of mouth'*. The individual had used the opportunity provided by his incarceration to complete a Level 2 Carpentry course. He had a home to go to and did not have any drug or alcohol addictions. He had no intention of claiming benefits.

Discussion and conclusions

Piven (2010) and Dean (2012) argue that workfare reinforces the low wage and insecure work that has burgeoned over the past four decades. It is in this context that Standing (2011) has identified a new class in the making, the 'precariat' comprising flexible workers with under-valued skills and little work-based identity. The 'precariat' is characterised by extremes of social and economic marginality and whose members spend their lives in and out of insecure, temporary low wage labour and unemployment. The management of the 'precariat' has become a major component of penal and social policy (Squires and Lea, 2012).

Wacquant (2009) argues that an expansive, intrusive and proactive penal apparatus seeks to contain the disorders generated by social insecurity and deepening inequality. Furthermore, prison is said to function like workfare in that it regenerates large numbers of marginal labourers that can be super-exploited. However, Piven (2010) draws attention to the heavy toll imprisonment exacts on those incarcerated which undermines their ability to undertake wage labour. This is because: 'once labelled felons they are permanently stigmatized and consigned to the economy of the street' (Piven, 2010, page 113). The present study has shown that many prisoners are indeed simply incapable of holding down a paid job. However, it has also underlined Mayer's (2010) point about the dangers of grouping the 'precarious population' together. Many ex-prisoners are active in peripheral sections of the secondary labour market where they undertake chronically insecure forms of work which do not offer a route out of poverty and may be criminogenic.

It is in this context that UK policy makers have extended the active welfare state into the criminal justice system where there has been a renewed focus on preparing offenders for the labour market. 'Prison should be a place where work itself is central to the regime, where offenders learn vocational skills in environments organised to replicate as far as practical and appropriate, real working conditions' (Ministry of Justice b, 2010, page 15). The development of a new type of prison- the working prison- is signalled to achieve this transformation. There are also nearly 140 prison-based Employment and Benefit Advisers to help prisoners claim benefits on their release. Furthermore, the Coalition Government has increased the support available to offenders in the community by bringing forward the mandatory JSA entry points to the Work Programme to 'day one' of their release from custody and is piloting an additional payment to incentivise providers to support offenders, linked to lower re-offending rates (DWP, 2012).

Promoting attachment to the secondary labour market has economic and symbolic value. In terms of the former, recent analysis of a one-off data share project has shown the high cost of benefit claims made by offenders. In terms of the latter, it extends the civic obligation to work to some of those most marginalised groups and allows them to atone for their past sins. The Ministry of Justice (2010 b, page 16) maintains that: 'it is important that prisoners see work as a way to pay the debt that they owe to society and to victims of crime'. Consequently, work for offenders in the post-industrial labour market is to be simultaneously their redemption and punishment.

The 'centaur state' requires the joining up of welfare and penal policies to control the poor but the present study has underlined the difficulties faced by policy makers seeking to change front-line practice. Lipsky (1980) has shown that the intentions of policy makers may be frustrated by the behaviour of public service workers operating in a 'corrupted world of service'. A context of acute resource constraints, growing caseloads and job cuts have meant that many front-line staff have focused on their core duties. Probation staff still subscribe to a rehabilitative imperative that for some precludes close working with Jobcentre Plus. This conclusion is supportive of Robinson's (2008) contention that offender rehabilitation has adapted and survived by appealing to dominant 'late modern' penal narratives such as utilitarianism. Rehabilitation is now justified in utilitarian terms i.e. its capacity for reducing crime and thus protecting the public.

Nevertheless, both Jobcentre Plus and the Probation Service increasingly subscribe to the 'cultural trope of individual responsibility' and share a behaviourist philosophy (Wacquant, 2009). Van Berkel (2007) has shown that the shift towards active welfare states and the introduction of new forms of governance, inspired by private sector management techniques, have transformed the culture of welfare-to-work organisations from a primary concern with determining benefit eligibility towards more personal conversations about clients' behaviours. Jobcentre Plus exemplifies this change from 'people sustaining' activities towards a 'people transforming' role (Meyers et al, 1998). Similarly, policy makers have sought to undermine the social work ethic of Probation by repealing the need for probation officers to hold a social work qualification.

Jones (2010) argues that a lack of historical focus means that Wacquant is prone to exaggerate the degree of change taking place in recent times. This is surprising since the concept of the 'centaur state' was derived from history to help throw explanatory light on the present. Gramsci took over from Machiavelli the image of power as a centaur: half man, half beast, a necessary combination of consent and coercion. Hegemony prevails when the consensual aspect of power is at the forefront. Coercion is always latent but is only applied in marginal, deviant cases (Cox, 1983). Hegemony is usually enough to ensure conformity of behaviour in most people most of the time (Cox, 1983). Yet the present article has shown that during times of economic crisis the state wields a greater degree of coercive power. This is a recurring pattern over time.

For Wacquant the 'centaur state' is predicated on the notion that over the past four decades there has been an historical rupture in the approach taken to social marginality. However, historical analysis reveals the important continuities between the contemporary and inter-war state regulation of the poor in times of economic crisis. The Great Slump and economic liberalism also led to the 'double regulation of the poor' in the inter-war period exemplified by rising prison populations and the introduction of workfare in the brutalising form of British labour camps. That we currently have a UK Government presiding over a historically high prison population and whose primary instinct is to balance budgets and cut public spending and has introduced measures to force benefit claimants to work for their benefit illustrates the incredible shortness of memory of policy makers. 'It also provides a vivid illustration of society's need for historians, who are the professional remembrancers of what their fellow-citizens wish to forget' (Hobsbawm, 1994, page 103).

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