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The State of the Social Investment State in the Field of Employment Policy

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Abstract

This article takes issue with a simple history of welfare regimes that divides the post-1945 years into a golden age and an era of retrenchment. Rather, we claim that it is more appropriate to describe three moments in liberal welfare regimes. Essential to this reconceptualisation is the observation of a gradual introduction, since the middle of the 1990s, of new social policies that move beyond the realm of "cuts." They provide new visions of welfare and delineate novel parameters of social discourse and action. We term this the moment of the Social Investment State in liberal welfare regimes. The Social Investment State is not simply guided by neo-liberal precepts, nor is it even simply a reworking of Thatcherite policies. Instead it is a new form of welfare. In order to understand how the recent period (1995-2003) can be distinguished from the period of austerity (1980-1995), this article presents in chronological order the reform of the principal instruments of employment policy used in Canada and the United Kingdom. This new model of welfare, however, is not necessarily without negative effects; the Social Investment State leaves many groups without protection.

Cette article s'oppose à une vision simpliste de l'histoire des régimes d'État providence qui veut que depuis la seconde guerre mondiale, ceux-ci aient connu un "âge d'or" puis une période de "retrait". Nous soutenons plutôt que les régimes libéraux d'État providence ont connu trois moments historiques. En considérant l'introduction graduelle, depuis le milieu des années 1990, de nouvelles politiques sociales qui ne s'apparentent pas à des actions de "coupures des dépenses publiques", nous pouvons caractériser ce troisième moment. Ces nouvelles politiques

sociales fournissent de nouvelles visions du bien-être social et produisent de nouveaux paramètres aux discours et aux actions dans le champ social. Nous nommons cette période "l'État d'investissement social" dans les régimes libéraux. L'État d'investissement social n'est pas uniquement guidé par des préceptes néo-libéraux, ni une version remaniée des politiques tatchériennes. Il s'agit davantage d'une nouvelle forme d'État providence. Pour comprendre comment la période récente (1995-2003) peut être distinguée de la période d'austérité (1980-1995), cet article présente en ordre chronologique la réforme des instruments principaux des politiques d'emploi utilisés au Canada et en Grande-Bretagne. Ce nouveau modèle de bien-être n'en est pas pour autant dépourvu d'effets négatifs, l'État d'Investissement social laissant beaucoup de groupes sans protection.

Introduction

Current characterisations of Welfare State transformation suggest that the "Golden Age" of the Welfare State lasted approximately thirty years, from its emergence following the Second World War, until its collapse at the end of the 1980s. Employment policies are often drawn on to demonstrate this evolution, as they have been a basis of State intervention in the creation and development of national systems of social protection. In analysing the field of employment policy in Canada and the United Kingdom, we wish to suggest that this periodisation of Welfare State transformation proves insufficient as a means for understanding the changes that have occurred during the post-WWII period.

According to our analysis, there are not two but three periods of Welfare State development within liberal wel-

fare regimes. After the Second World War, both Canada and the United Kingdom instituted the principal tools for the protection of workers. From the beginning of the 1980s these systems found themselves in difficulty. The protections provided were increasingly reduced, notably in the case of employment policy. Since the beginning of the 1990s, however, the social protection of workers has been the focus of new social policies. These reforms of social protection systems are significant, because they frequently move beyond the realm of "cuts" (Daniel and Palier, 2001), and because they provide new visions of social action, and delineate novel parameters of discourse and action. It is this latest period that characterises for us the Social Investment State in the liberal welfare regime. This State can neither be described as exclusively guided by neo-liberal precepts, nor can it be conceptualised as simply a reworking of Thatcherite policies (Schmidt, 2000: 243). This State represents a new form of welfare. This new model of welfare, however, is not necessarily something desirable, as the Social Investment State leaves many groups without protection.

In order to understand how the recent Social Investment State period (1995-2003) can be distinguished from the period of austerity (1980-1995), we will chronologically present the principal tools of employment policy used in Canada and the United Kingdom. The first part of the paper will examine the post-WWII rise of the Welfare State. The second part will analyse the period of austerity. The final section will address the current incarnation of the Welfare State, the Social Investment State, and its negative implications for certain population groups.

Part 1 – The Post-War Period: Protection Against Exclusion from Employment

At the risk of constructing a caricature of the post-war era, one could argue that the British and Canadian Welfare States were established on the foundations of an image of social stability. Within this conceptualisation, the dominant norms were that of stable families with generally, but not exclusively male earner (Lewis, 1998), as a stable wage was characteristic of most employment. Moreover, the labour market was relatively accessible for those who wished to work, and the unemployment rate was generally low (Schmidt, 2000). Thus, the primary risk faced by citizens was exclusion from the labour market as a result of sickness or the incapacity to work due to age (Ewald, 1983).

In the United Kingdom, during the first period, a system of protection against the accidental loss of employment was constructed with the institution of unemployment insurance. Although the Poor Laws and the system of unemployment insurance instituted in 1911 served to protect some workers on a limited basis, the first social assistance system designed to help all those in need was established in 1948. Contrary to the inter-war public assistance that offered material support only to contributors, the new social aid system offered, for the first time, monetary coverage based on need (Hill, 1990: 27). Although attempts (such as the 1966 Supplementary Benefits Commission) were made to remove many of the Poor Laws' residual elements of stigmatisation, social assistance policies retained the old concepts of the 'worthy poor' – those incapable of working – and the 'unworthy poor', who were considered at fault for their own unemployment, and were consequently excluded from certain forms of assistance for fear that it would dissuade them from searching for employment (Social Security Advisory Committee, 1991: 28). With regard to unemployment insurance, the National Insurance Act of 1948 established a system of standard obligatory social contributions, covering unemployment, sickness, maternity and retirement, that were later made income-contingent by the 1973 Social

Security Act.

In Canada, the federal and provincial governments are the principal actors involved in employment policies. The former is responsible for the system of unemployment insurance, as well as for partnering with the provinces in managing employment activation programs, while the provinces, for their part, are responsible for the social assistance system. It was not until 1940 that Canada instituted a system of unemployment insurance that offered identical protection to the unemployed in all regions of the country, although this protection was limited to those employed in industry and commerce. In 1971, the Unemployment Insurance Act added sickness, maternity and retirement as conditions for which one had the right to benefits, and introduced a regional dimension for the calculation of benefits, conditions, and duration of admissibility. Since 1971, the costs of the system grew considerably¹ and the effects of regional redistribution on the configuration of the Canadian economy became increasingly evident. While the Canadian unemployment insurance system appeared more complete and more generous than its British counterpart, provincial social assistance programmes served only to provide the bare minimum for those incapable of working.

Beyond social assistance and unemployment insurance programs, workers in both Canada and the United Kingdom could also rely on education and occupational training policies for economic security. These policies were relatively autonomous from employment policies.

While the male breadwinner model provides an adequate description of the British situation, it masks certain characteristics of the Canadian system, which was always more open to the participation of women in the labour market. In Canada, since the end of the Second World War, women were able to 'choose' not to participate in the labour market and to devote themselves to childcare and housework. The availability of such a decision was recognised by public policy, via both the exemption of taxes for spouses and the particular nature of assistance programs that recognised the right of single mothers to substitute employment for childcare.

Despite its limits, Canadian public policy in this field was aimed to encourage (or at least not to discourage) the wage labour of mothers.

In the United Kingdom, women's employment was comparatively less legitimate. Not only was the question of universal childcare (although addressed by British feminists) absent from the British political agenda during this period (Timpson, 2001: 4), but the maternity leave programme remained very limited until the middle of the 1970s. It was not until 1975, with the introduction of the Employment Protection Act, that maternity benefits became a guaranteed right for female workers, and began to resemble a maternity leave².

By the end of the 1970s, in both Canada and the United Kingdom, 'classical' employment policies had been implemented. Unemployment insurance covered the risk of loss of employment, education and occupational training policies assured good preparation for employment, and the social assistance system took responsibility for those who were incapable of working. At the beginning of the 1980s, concerns began to emerge relating to the viability of these systems. Primary amongst these concerns, and the first to be addressed, were finances. Thus began a period of adjustment at the base of the social protection system, with the unemployed as the first to pay the price.

Part 2 – The Period of the Retreat of the State: Personal and Systemic Adaptation to the New Economic Situation

The period between the beginning of the 1980s and the middle of the 1990s was a time of profound change for social protection systems with new links forged between social security and the labour market. Increasingly, benefits became the instruments of employment policy. The purpose of income replacement or minimum income support was overtaken by the development of employability measures. These institutional transformations echoed the changes in types of employment and unemployment that had put into question the logic of post-war employment policies. The substantial increase in unemployment rates in both countries, the appearance of atypical forms of

work, the rise in self-employment, and the massive development of women's employment all created uncertainty about the stability and uniformity upon which traditional employment policies had been based.

The persistence of higher rates of unemployment (as evident in Graph 1) symbolically marked the end of an era, and cast doubt over the notion of full-employment as a realisable objective. More concretely, the phenomenon of massive unemployment exposed the inadequacy of existing social protection systems. The rise in part-time employment, short-contract work, and under-employment³ resulted in an increasing number of workers who were not covered by the unemployment insurance systems designed for a stable, uniform, and accessible labour market. Accompanying the evolution in the nature of employment towards greater contingency and instability, was the idea of the necessity of a reduction in those social expenditures that were deemed unproductive or 'bad' for people (Schmidt, 2000: 234). The intersection of these two elements drove, in large part, the major reforms of the unemployment-insurance system.

Graph 1



Source: OECD Employment and Labour Market Statistics.

Throughout the period, the idea of assuring economic security through insurance became replaced by that of maintaining the 'employability' of the unemployed - promoting the reintegration of the unemployed into the workforce, so that they did not become settled in a state of 'dependence'. The principle objective of these programmes was no longer the protection of the employed worker, but the facilitation of the 'exit' of the unemployed worker from social programmes. Accordingly, it was believed that the unemployed would have an incentive to return to work if they were denied

access to generous unemployment benefits. Moreover, it was thought that 'employability' measures could combat long-term unemployment by conserving a worker's potential, and maintaining their proximity to the labour market. This rhetoric favoured the promotion of two central ideas: that the worker must adapt to changes in the market (rather than the opposite), and that the 'exit' from unemployment is principally the responsibility of the individual.

In the United Kingdom, a qualified approach to these ideas prevailed in the recasting of the system of unemployment protection (Pierson, 1994). The principle object was to reduce the financial aid available to the unemployed. Beginning in the 1980s, accessibility to the unemployment insurance program was progressively reduced and by 1998, only 25% of the unemployed received insurance benefits (Sinfield, 1995). The Jobseeker's Allowance of 1996, which was specifically available to those deemed able to work, included an allowance based on contributions, as well as a non-contributive allowance paid on the basis of income. The old income support social assistance program, therefore, began serving only the unemployed who were not forced into the JSA program (parents with children under 16 years of age, and those incapable of working). One of the major impacts of the JSA reforms was a reduction in the duration of contribution-based benefits, from 12 to 6 months. Moreover, payment of unemployment benefits became increasingly conditional, and could be suspended (Dufour, Boismenu and Noël, 2003). Each unemployed individual was required to sign a contract obliging them to participate in largely underfunded (King and Wood, 1999) training programs, and to accept any job deemed satisfactory. Thus, an attempt was made to surmount the problem of unemployment with policies that focused on individual and family responsibility (Schmidt, 2000: 239).

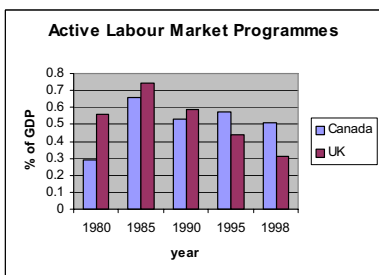
The reformation of Canada's system of unemployment insurance, and the institution of 'employment insurance' (commenced in 1994, achieved in 1997 and modified in 2000), was not simply a demolition of the existing program, but was also a method for the

redeployment of policy for the purpose of attaining three overarching objectives: creating savings, ending regional disparities, and adapting the system to the new labour market realities. In 1990, Bill C-21 introduced changes in the rules of admissibility to employment insurance, and reduced the duration of benefits in relation to the regional unemployment rate. A further decrease in the costs of the regime was generated by the 1993 reduction in benefit rates, and the complete exclusion of those who quit their jobs without a viable reason and those who were 'fired' from receiving benefits. Beyond the cuts in duration, benefits and accessibility, the most apparent innovation of the new employment insurance policies concerned the regulations for calculating who qualified for employment insurance. Under the new regime, qualification was no longer based on the number of weeks worked. Instead, qualification for employment insurance was determined by the number of hours an individual worked during the 16 to 20 weeks (based on regional unemployment rates) prior to unemployment. In 2000, approximately 49.9% of unemployed individuals were eligible for compensation through employment insurance, compared to over 80% who received compensation in 1989 (Statistics Canada, 1999, 2002c). The new system also entrenched differential treatment based on type of unemployment, through the introduction of the concept of the 'rule of intensity'. This rule (abolished in 2000), was aimed directly at the system's regional redistribution dimension, penalising frequent users of the system and thus particularly affecting seasonal workers. The third element concerned the introduction of an income supplement for low-income families. This element reinforced the 'income security' aspect of unemployment insurance by targeting 'those in the greatest need' of benefits, rather than continuing the logic of income replacement. Finally, the new system focused on professional training and employability measures for the purpose of the continual acquisition of knowledge and the adaptation of workers to the demands of the market (Human Resource Development Canada, 1994a and b: 7 and 15). However, the govern-

ment's concrete propositions within Bill C-12 did not address employability measures or training, which was entirely downloaded to the provinces. Re-employment benefits and support were primarily directed toward employers in the form of aid or loans. As a result, employment insurance became a last resort of financial security for those between jobs (Human Resource Development Canada, 1995: 14).

In both the United Kingdom and Canada, despite differences in discourse (with Canada more completely adopting the rhetoric of employability), institutional practices in the management of unemployment can be viewed as a retreat of the State in relation to the protection of the unemployed. Activation measures remained limited, as the primary concern was a reduction in costs (the results of which can be seen in Graph 2). Moreover, the primary focus of employment policies was no longer the employed worker, but was instead the unemployed individual.

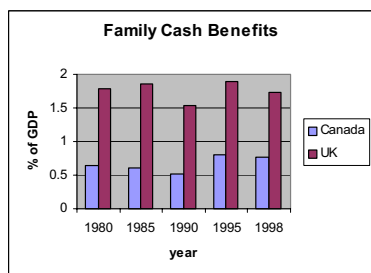
Graph 2



Source: OECD Social Expenditure Database.

As in the case of employability measures, no significant expenditures were made during this period in the area of family-work articulation (see Graph 3), despite escalating needs (Mahon and Phillips, 2002: 192). While the increasing feminisation of labour provoked an acute questioning of the need for childcare, the solutions offered essentially relegated the issue to the

Graph 3



Source: OECD Social Expenditure Database

sphere of the individual and the family. Female employment continued to be perceived as an individual (or family) choice, and consequently the management of issues related to this 'choice' were to remain outside the reach of State intervention.

In Canada, however, measures were taken to support the families of low-income workers. A new conception of the connection between family and work arose, in accordance with which the market became a prerequisite for family support. As Phillips and Mahon have outlined, the idea of establishing a universal childcare system progressively disappeared from government discourse during the 1990s, with the issue becoming increasingly tied to the necessity of unemployed parents re-entering the labour market (Mahon and Phillips, 2002: 205). In the United Kingdom, the second period was marked by a growing acceptance of the employment of single mothers (Randall, 2002: 230). As in Canada, the issue of childcare increasingly attained a distinct significance in a context where the Conservative government wished to fight against the inactivity of the unemployed and the 'dependence' of those receiving social assistance benefits, with the objective of cost reduction.

The principal consequence of the changes in employment policies was a rapid increase in poverty and the appearance of new 'social risks', which would become the target of public policy in the third period. In the United Kingdom between 1995 and 2000, for example, close to 10 million individuals, representing 5.7 million families (20% of the population) received benefits from the Income Support program, compared to 4.4 million people representing 2.9 million families who received benefits from the equivalent Supplementary Benefits program in 1979 (Rhodes, 1998: 54). Between 1979 and 1994, the number of individuals with incomes of less than half the national average doubled from 5 to 10 million (Piachaud, 1998, 1999). In Canada, the intensity of poverty also rose during the 1990s, despite a positive growth in the GDP, and a falling unemployment rate (Picot et al., 2003: 5).

Part 3 – The Social Investment State

Since the middle of the 1990s, the focus of employment policies has returned to employed workers. However, the form that these policies are taking is quite distinct from that of the first period. Employment policies no longer aim to provide protection for all workers against possible job loss, but rather, to ensure that the 'opportunity' of employment exists for all. If these opportunities do not supply a sufficient living wage, other programmes are meant to provide wage support. Alternately, highly-skilled workers have increasingly become the target of discourses concerning the promotion of 'excellence', and the necessity of 'life-long learning'.

With the reduction in unemployment insurance, employment income has remained the principal source of income for the majority of citizens. In Canada in the year 2000, 75% of the total income for families came from employment, and only 12% from government transfers⁴. By comparison, in the United Kingdom in that same year, wages constituted 50% of the total income of families, while 24% of income came from government transfers (United Kingdom, National Statistics Online). According to the OECD, at the end of the 1990s, 8.6% of poor Canadian couples had at least one partner employed, while 3.3% of couples where both partners were working were poor. In the United Kingdom, the rates were 11.5% and 0%, respectively (OECD, 2001a).

Working and remaining poor has become the primary risk to which both States have responded to. Although the unemployment rate has remained low in the United Kingdom (4.8% in 2001) and has continued to diminish in Canada since 1992 (Statistics Canada, 2002), the question of employment quality has become central. During the current period, employment is no longer a gauge of economic security for most working people. Low-wage work has become a risk that employment policies have attempted to address through work support measures such as tax credits. The objective of these policies is not to make work more lucrative, but to supplement wages in order

to allow individuals to remain in the workforce. From this perspective, the objective of compelling everyone to gain and retain employment, which was present in the previous period, has intensified. However, the issue is now posed not as one of the motivation or dependence of the unemployed, but as the possibility of living with a 'bad job'.

At the other end of the employment policy spectrum, new policies aim to support highly-skilled workers in increasing their labour market value through training, facilitating geographic mobility and support for research and innovation. In the United Kingdom, with the election of the New Labour Party, education obtained a new place of priority. There is no longer, however, an attempt to educate the entire population, but to make education a veritable industrial policy, favouring the development of a competitive and high-performance labour force for the context of the 'new economy' and the globalisation of commercial trade (Stedward, 2003: 140). At the heart of this new education policy is the notion of 'life-long learning'. The goal of such policies is to insure the formation of an elite class of workers who will be able to participate in the new global labour market. However, only modest concrete action has been taken.

In Canada, the orientation of education policy has been similar, as is particularly evident in the documents "The Policies of Excellence and Innovation in Canada." (Human Resource Development Canada, 2002; Industry Canada, 2001). These policies aim, in part, to create an elite group of highly qualified workers, primarily in the research and development sectors, as well as creating an elite labour force that is educated, trained in the latest technologies, and competitive in terms of productivity.

Since the middle of the 1990s, the instrumentalisation of social policies for economic ends has become not simply a transitory element, as in the previous period, but an integral element in the renewal of the welfare regime. The investment of public funds in the social domain has recovered a certain legitimacy for those who cannot attain financial autonomy through their participation in the labour market. However,

these social expenditures must demonstrate economic soundness such as long-term benefits or future savings. Their purpose is no longer only to adapt social policies to the flexibility of the market, but to 'influence the social'. This new phase is characterised by a central element, namely, the desire to increase the universality of 'employment opportunities', rather than create full employment.

This objective marks the point of departure for all of the recent measures taken in the fight against poverty (of both children and workers), in work-family articulation, and in education and life-long learning (United Kingdom, 2001). In conformity with the idea of the 'active society', developed during the retrenchment era, work today must be made 'profitable'. Women (particularly single mothers) are to be supported in their entrance into the workforce, those excluded from the market are to be included, and the highly-qualified are to be supported in their efforts to strive for excellence. These new ideas are accompanied by new forms of intervention that take, for the elite worker, the form of the "processes of life-long training", and for the most vulnerable, policies of prevention of social exclusion (Visser, 2000; Begg et al., 2001; Green-Pedersen, 2001; and Ferrera and Rhodes, 2000). The prevention of exclusion is addressed today in large part by measures of low-wage support, aimed at avoiding the exclusion of individuals (in the case of the United Kingdom) or the exclusion of children later in life (as in Canada).

In the United Kingdom, the most empirically significant measure was the adoption of a minimum wage in 1999. Benefits tied to wages were also provided for low-income workers and those who left unemployment assistance and social aid programs. These programmes aimed to promote reinsertion into the labour market through the acceptance of low-paying jobs. The most well known programme, the Family Tax Credit (introduced in 1999) has now been broadened to include all of the working poor, offering a progressive complement to wages, even if the quantity of work is low. In order to get the unemployed to view part-time work

as a preliminary step towards full-time employment, the New Labour Government instituted the Back-to-Work Bonus in which those receiving JSA are also authorised to gain wages up to \$ 2425.80⁵. Along the same lines, the Job Grant serves as a non-taxable allowance of £100 for those returning to work. Furthermore, many grants were made available to enterprises, with the goal of 'making work pay'.

Beyond benefits of this nature, the New Labour government introduced a series of programmes for the unemployed through employment services, in collaboration with the Department of Employment and Education, labelled the New Deal. Also known as the Welfare to Work Programme, it was aimed at, among others, youth, the long-term unemployed, and single mothers, offering them employment assistance and training. Unemployed youth, between 18 and 24, who had been receiving the JSA for six months, had to participate in the New Deal programme of intensive personal counselling and short-term training. If, after the period of assistance, the youth had not found employment, they had to choose between community-oriented service or full-time education in order to retain full benefits (refusal resulted in a 40% decrease in benefits)⁶. While the New Deal involved an obligation to participate in certain programmes, it should not be lumped together with American-style workfare, as it offers a variety of choices, including an option of training, and the jobs it provides participants are not inferior to those of other workers (Kidal, 2001).

In Canada, the employment policy instruments are similar. Since the institution of the National Child Benefit, which aimed to fight child poverty through the supplementing of the parent's income, the principal expenditures by the federal government with regard to employment policy have been linked to low income individuals and parents, rather than all workers. At the provincial level, the reform of the social assistance system during the third period has generally tightened admission criteria and reinforced the training of those receiving benefits, with aid becoming increasingly conditional (Dufour, Boismenu, and Noël, 2003).

The reform of unemployment insurance during the previous period had direct repercussions on provincial assistance, as the severity of the admissions criteria pushed many unemployed individuals into the social assistance program. Those demanding social assistance, therefore, were no longer only those incapable of work. Furthermore, the government abolished the Canadian Assistance Plan (CAP), a federal transfer that had contributed to social services, and replaced it with the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST). Accompanying this change was a reduction in transfers of 15.5% between 1997 and 1998 (Roach, 1997: 12), which resulted in the provinces adjusting their policies and programs. Although provincial policies vary significantly, many of the unemployed have lost access to any aid, as they do not qualify for employment insurance or for social assistance (McIntosh and Boychuk, 2000).

As a whole, policies for the prevention of, and the fight against social exclusion are directly linked to the labour market. Not only have those individuals incapable of work become the minority in social assistance programs (that were originally designed for this risk), but not working has also become increasingly illegitimate. Activation policies have become more popular with governments, and have replaced those forms of support deemed passive. Paradoxically, while admitting that full-employment is no longer a realistic objective, and that market wages may be insufficient, work is promoted as the primary tool in the struggle against poverty and unemployment.

The State's social investment is also marked by the support and development of the human capital of future workers – children. Educational and, to a greater extent, early childhood policies are increasingly oriented toward the objective of work-family articulation, which has become an important aspect of policy in the third period. As family structures became less stable, the number of single mothers grew considerably, accentuating the risk of child poverty. Thus, work-family articulation is also central for these non-traditional families.

In the United Kingdom, during the last few years, the issue of family has been at the centre of the political arena. Since the first National Childcare Strategy in 1998, parental leave and more generous maternity leaves have been introduced (Miller, 2001: 217). Until 1999, when an unpaid 13 week leave was introduced, no parental leave existed in the United Kingdom. In the spring of 2003, the duration of paid maternity leave was increased from 18 to 26 weeks. Since 2003, the British government has also made a priority of the guarantee of quality child care for all children under four years of age, and for 70% of all children in the next three years (see the website <http://www.politiquestociales.net>).

As in the United Kingdom, the existence and availability of childcare services in Canada is very poor, with an absence of a national policy in this field. It is estimated that in 2001 only 12% of Canadian children under 12 years of age had a place in a childcare facility (Friendly, Beach, and Turiano, 2002). Nevertheless, since 1980, federal governments (both Conservative and Liberal) have invested in a childcare system on a national scale, essentially through fiscal policy (with the exception of parental and maternity leave) (Jenson, Mahon and Phillips, 2003: 139). Canada does not offer parents any real funding for childcare, but instead, makes these expenses non-taxable. In the field of anti-poverty politics, the federal government transfers funds to the provinces for the purpose of investment into early childhood development programs. Many provinces use these funds to consolidate already existing programs, rather than creating a true network of childcare facilities (Jenson, Mahon and Phillips, 2003: 145). In contrast, Québec has, since 1997, progressively developed a network of childcare facilities that charge a fixed rate of \$5 per day and are available to all children. Moreover, for parents receiving social aid benefits, the province guarantees free childcare. Finally, since the year 2000, Canada has extended the duration of parental leave from 26 to 52 weeks at 55% of normal salary.

Conclusion

In the field of employment policy, the Social Investment State in liberal welfare regimes, which emerged during the middle of the 1990s, is clearly distinguished from the previous period of Welfare State retrenchment. It is characterised, most notably, by a polarisation of discourses that target two distinct groups of workers. Rather than a clear separation between the employed and the unemployed (which existed until the end of the 1980s), we currently observe an increasingly salient division between good and bad jobs. While public measures primarily concern the most needy (those in bad jobs), governmental discourses increasingly valorise the development of excellence policies. From this perspective, social assistance has become the principal instrument of employment policies. These policies are oriented increasingly toward the promotion of employment and decreasingly towards the economic security of workers. Moreover, a new field of public policy has emerged under the label of 'work-family articulation (or conciliation)'.

From a more normative perspective, these changes have accompanied the emergence of new forms of social inequality. In the Social Investment State, single adults, without children and without employment, are less and less supported by the State, and more and more obligated to rely on themselves for survival. In the same way, new demarcation lines have been drawn between men and women in terms of the division of labour (as various tasks associated with care have again become largely the responsibility of women), and in terms of economic security. Finally, significant inequalities exist between workers in terms of income and employment regulations.

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¹Between 1970 and 1975, the cost of benefits increased fivefold (\$730 million to \$3.3 billion). Geoffrey E. Hale, "Reforming Employment Insurance: Transcending the Politics of the Status Quo", *Canadian Public Policy – Analyse de politiques* 24, 4 (December 1998), 429-452.

²Under the previous 1948 and 1953 pro-

grammes, a right of return to employment was not guaranteed. Maternity leaves remained short. However, in 1979 certain rules requiring all employers to provide maternity leave were abolished. See (Brown and Small, 1985).

³Defined as those employed in part-time positions that are willing to accept but unable to find full-time employment

⁴The other 11% was provided by pensions (6%) or income from investments. Statistics Canada, *The Daily*, 18 July 2002.

⁵See the website of the Benefit Agency: www.dss.gov.uk/ba/

⁶Alan Deacon, 1997, "Welfare to work: Options and Issues", *Social Policy Review* 9: 41.

Contributions of the Social Economy to the renewal of policies and practices in the area of welfare to work in Quebec during the years 1983-2003

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Introduction

La r cession de 1981-1982 a  branl  les fondements de l' tat-Providence au Canada. Au Qu bec comme dans plusieurs provinces, on assiste alors au d but d'une profonde remise en question du mod le d'intervention reposant essentiellement sur l'action et la responsabilit  du secteur public. Cette pr occupation atteint son apog e au milieu des ann es 1990 au moment o  on s'appr te   rapatrier au Qu bec certains programmes f d raux de formation de la main-d' uvre et   impulser une importante r forme de la s curit  du revenu. Ces changements ne manqueront pas d' branler les politiques et pratiques qui pr valaient avant 1995 en mati re de formation de la main-d' uvre et d'insertion socioprofessionnelle des prestataires de la s curit  du revenu. Dor navant, le d veloppement de la main-d' uvre ainsi que la r vision des pratiques d'assistance aupr s des sans-emploi deviennent des orientations pr pond rantes dans la conception des politiques publiques li es   l'emploi et l'aide sociale. Au Qu bec, comme dans les autres provinces, on se retrouve confront    la n cessit  de r former en profondeur les strat gies d'intervention, en ayant pour objectif de miser davantage sur des mesures actives d'aide et de soutien   l'emploi.

Cependant, les initiatives qu b coises qui prendront forme dans ce nouveau contexte institutionnel seront davantage orient es vers l'implication des acteurs de la soci t  civile par le biais d'organismes   but non lucratif. Voil  une exception propre au Qu bec, diront certains analystes, puisque la majorit  des provinces ont pr f r  miser sur les organisations du secteur priv  ou sur une combinaison d'organisations du secteur priv  et du secteur  

but non lucratif (Gorlick et Brethour, 1998). C'est justement cette configuration particuli re dans l'activation de la politique de main-d' uvre qu b coise qui nous am ne   examiner l'apport de l' conomie sociale dans le renouvellement des formes d'intervention aupr s des sans-emploi. Notre compr hension des transformations des politiques de formation de la main-d' uvre et de « welfare to work » survenues au Qu bec au cours des vingt derni res ann es nous incite   faire l'hypoth se que les initiatives de l' conomie sociale ont  t  porteuses d'innovations sociales importantes dans ce domaine de politiques publiques au Canada. Ces innovations qu b coises, tout en  tant originales sur la sc ne canadienne, le sont moins sur la sc ne internationale. En effet, elles trouvent des correspondances en contexte nord-am ricain et europ en comme en t moignent nombre de recherches qui s'apparentent aux n tres sur les relations entre l' tat et le tiers secteur aux Etats-Unis (Austin, 2003; Sommerfeld et Reisch, 2003) et en Europe (Spear et al., 2001).

Dans cet article, en nous appuyant sur des recherches r centes men es au LAREPPS (Laboratoire de recherche sur les pratiques et les politiques sociales),   l'ARUC (Alliance de recherche universit s-communaut s) en  conomie sociale et au CRISES (Centre de recherche sur les innovations sociales dans l' conomie sociale, les entreprises et les syndicats), nous dresserons un portrait g n ral des transformations du contexte institutionnel ayant pr sid    la r forme majeure des ann es 1990, en mettant l'accent sur la tentative d'introduire une nouvelle forme de gouvernance plus d mocratique au sein des institutions qui interviennent au Qu bec dans le champ de la formation de la main-d' uvre et de

l'insertion socioprofessionnelle. Cette nouvelle forme de gouvernance se reconna t au fait qu'elle conf re une place plus grande   la participation de la soci t  civile et notamment des acteurs de l' conomie sociale en ce qui concerne la d finition des orientations et la mise en  uvre des politiques publiques dans ce domaine. Pour illustrer ces changements, nous examinerons plus pr cis ment les diff rents dispositifs issus de l' conomie sociale et ayant pour mission d'aider et d'accompagner les individus dans un « parcours vers l'insertion, la formation et l'emploi » (MSR, 1996).   cet effet, nous structurerons notre article en quatre parties. Dans une premi re, nous donnerons la d finition de l' conomie sociale utilis e dans le texte et livrerons quelques donn es sur la pr sence concr te de l' conomie sociale au Qu bec. Dans une deuxi me partie, nous reviendrons sur le *background* historique qui permet de cerner l' mergence, le d veloppement et la reconnaissance publique des pratiques de l' conomie sociale dans le champ du « welfare to work » au cours des 20 derni res ann es au Qu bec. Dans une troisi me partie, nous dresserons un inventaire des principales fili res d' conomie sociale pr sentes dans les pratiques et les politiques d'insertion socio- conomique des sans-emploi. Puis, dans une quatri me partie, nous identifierons quelques enjeux touchant les relations entre l' tat et l' conomie sociale dans le domaine des politiques et pratiques d'insertion et de formation de la main-d' uvre. Enfin, en conclusion, nous fournirons une synth se de notre propos.

I- D finition et r alit  de l' conomie sociale

La d finition de l' conomie sociale

que nous retenons repose sur le consensus réalisé entre les acteurs socio-économiques et politiques présents au Sommet sur l'Économie et l'Emploi de l'automne 1996, à partir d'une contribution faite par le Chantier de l'économie sociale (1996). En effet, c'est à ce Sommet socio-économique que les participants et le gouvernement du Québec ont convenu de reconnaître l'apport spécifique de l'économie sociale, en retenant une définition et en appuyant une douzaine de projets concrets qui seront dans les années ultérieures soutenus par les pouvoirs publics (Vaillancourt et Tremblay, 2002; Vaillancourt, 2003).

Essentiellement, la définition retenue par le Chantier de l'économie sociale et réaffirmée par la suite repose sur les caractéristiques et objectifs suivants: La mission et les finalités recherchées par les organisations reposent sur le service aux membres et aux collectivités plutôt que sur la primauté des profits;

- La gestion est autonome par rapport à l'État;
- Un processus de décision démocratique qui implique à la fois les usagers et les travailleurs;
- Les personnes priment sur la répartition du capital;
- La responsabilité individuelle et collective, la participation et l'empowerment constituent les principes moteurs de l'action. (Chantier de l'économie sociale, 2000 : 5)

Cette définition large et inclusive, influencée par des auteurs belges, met en lumière le caractère innovateur lié aux valeurs et principes qui sous-tendent cette nouvelle articulation entre viabilité économique et satisfaction des besoins sociaux des individus et des communautés. L'économie sociale comprend entre autres des associations (ou organismes communautaires), des coopératives de diverses sortes et des mutuelles (Quarter, Mook et Richmond, 2002 : chap. 2; Vaillancourt et Tremblay, 2002; Vaillancourt, Aubry et Jetté, 2003). On retrouve des initiatives d'économie sociale notamment dans les secteurs des garderies, de l'habitation communautaire, de l'aide domestique, de la transformation des déchets, des médias communautaires, du tourisme

social, de la culture, de la santé mentale, de l'alimentation, de l'exploitation forestière, de l'insertion socio-économique, etc.

L'économie sociale, au Québec comme ailleurs, comprend des générations plus anciennes (ex. : le Mouvement des caisses Desjardins et d'autres composantes plus récentes, ce qui fait qu'on utilise souvent l'expression *nouvelle économie sociale* pour désigner les initiatives apparues depuis les années 1970. Lorsqu'on tient compte de notre définition large et des composantes anciennes autant que nouvelles, le secteur de l'économie sociale au Québec représente approximativement 160,000 emplois et 7% du PIB (Vaillancourt et al, Forthcoming)¹. Elle constitue donc une dimension importante de l'économie réelle de plusieurs régions du Québec.

Dans le champ de la formation de la main-d'œuvre et de l'insertion au travail des sans-emploi, nous constatons que diverses formes de contributions de l'économie sociale participent à la transformation des programmes et modèles d'intervention. Dans toutes les régions du Québec, ces transformations s'appuient notamment sur des principes de développement local au sein desquels nous retrouvons une diversité de groupes communautaires spécialisés dans l'insertion et le développement de l'employabilité des clientèles sans-emploi présentant des difficultés (Favreau et Lévesque, 1996; Favreau dans Spear et al., 2001; Comeau, et al., 2001; Assogba, 2000). L'influence de ces dispositifs d'insertion va de pair avec l'action des groupes de défense de droits, puisque c'est l'ensemble des actions de ces acteurs de la société civile qui permet de modifier les politiques d'emploi et d'assistance dans le sens d'un gain démocratique et d'un plus grand pouvoir au niveau des collectivités locales. Cet apport des organismes de défense de droits a été bien mis en lumière dans la démarche exemplaire du Collectif pour un Québec sans pauvreté qui s'est déployée depuis 1997 et qui a été analysée avec finesse par Alain Noël (2002).

II- Genèse et émergence d'un modèle spécifique au Québec

Historiquement au Québec, en rai-

son notamment de la prégnance de la question nationale, la société civile a souvent manifesté son attachement aux valeurs de coopération et de solidarité et su mettre en œuvre des projets novateurs pour répondre aux besoins sociaux. Ainsi, cet apport innovant du mouvement communautaire et de l'économie sociale a souvent créé des initiatives qui ont par la suite été reconnues et institutionnalisées par les pouvoirs publics. On pense ici aux garderies populaires ainsi qu'aux cliniques de santé communautaire. On pense également à l'apport de l'économie sociale dans l'émergence de nouvelles pratiques et politiques sociales visant à favoriser l'insertion sur le marché du travail de personnes socio-économiquement vulnérables.

Le virage économique des mouvements sociaux à partir de 1983

Nation minoritaire francophone en Amérique du Nord, la société québécoise se distingue par son désir de prise en charge par les citoyens de leur destinée. Des pratiques de soutien, des outils collectifs et des espaces de coopération furent développés afin de concrétiser un projet de société par et pour les gens.

L'action communautaire traditionnelle déploie ses premières initiatives socio-économiques en réponse à la rareté des pratiques d'accompagnement et de formation provenant des secteurs public et privé pour répondre adéquatement aux besoins des personnes sans-emploi. Ces initiatives étaient aussi une façon pour les acteurs associatifs de s'introduire dans la sphère économique dans le but d'agir concrètement sur les conditions locales d'emploi. Elles s'inscrivent aussi dans la recherche d'un modèle de développement capable de s'affranchir de la soumission à la seule logique marchande, sans pour autant s'en remettre à l'approche purement étatique. Entre une vision d'un « tout au marché » ou d'un « tout à l'État », se dessine alors une vision solidaire où l'État devient partenaire des communautés locales (Favreau, 2000; Vaillancourt, Aubry et Jetté, 2003 : chap. 1). Ainsi, la crise du début des années 1980 sera le moteur d'une forte remise en question des politiques sociales fordistes et permettra l'arrivée

de nouvelles réponses innovantes pour tenter de faire mieux et autrement (Favreau et Lévesque, 1996; Vaillancourt et Tremblay, 2002; Vaillancourt, 2003).

Dans les mouvements sociaux, cette crise stimule l'émergence d'une nouvelle forme de militantisme économique qui représente bien la prise de conscience collective qui surgit en regard de l'inadéquation des institutions socio-économiques prévalant à cette époque. Le mouvement syndical, par exemple, n'a pas attendu que le gouvernement à lui seul s'affaire à redresser la situation économique en déclin. Par exemple, il participa au développement des corporations de développement économique communautaire (CDEC) et d'autres projets de développement local et régional. En 1983, la Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec (FTQ) mettait sur pied le *Fonds de Solidarité FTQ* afin de générer une nouvelle forme de capital d'investissement au Québec. La Centrale des syndicats nationaux (CSN) a également fondé en 1996 le *Fondation CSN pour la coopération et l'emploi*. Ces nouvelles pratiques et institutions, portées par les mouvements sociaux dans un paysage économique redessiné par l'addition de nouveaux acteurs, témoignent de la recherche de nouvelles formes de gouvernance et de partenariat. Elles participent à la mise en place de nouvelles formes de régulation entre l'État, le marché et la société civile. De plus ces nouvelles pratiques d'investissement intègrent dans leurs décisions des principes éthiques, environnementaux et sociaux qui respectent la pérennité et l'intégrité de la société québécoise (Comeau et al., 2001).

C'est à partir de 1983-1984 que l'on verra émerger les toutes premières expérimentations de l'économie sociale dans le champ du développement et de la formation de la main-d'œuvre (Favreau et Lévesque, 1996). Ainsi, au fil des ans, une nouvelle génération d'organismes communautaires voit le jour et se développe partout au Québec. Ces organismes constituent de nouvelles filières de développement soit : le développement local et l'économie sociale (Comeau et al., 2001). Ces nouveaux acteurs impliqués dans le développement et l'économie sociale

ont gagné une forme de reconnaissance en matière d'accompagnement au niveau de l'insertion au marché du travail. Ils se sont vus reconnus, puis soutenus financièrement, par les deux paliers de gouvernement qui partageaient à l'époque le mandat de développer l'employabilité ainsi que la formation de la main-d'œuvre. Il faut toutefois reconnaître qu'au départ ces actions communautaires ont suscité une certaine méfiance de la part du ministère responsable de la sécurité du revenu². D'entrée de jeu, cela n'a pas favorisé l'ouverture d'un dialogue constructif entre le ministère et les acteurs de l'économie sociale. Un tel dialogue aurait permis à l'État de reconnaître la contribution de l'économie sociale et, éventuellement, de s'en inspirer dans la recherche de nouvelles stratégies dans le domaine de l'insertion sociale et professionnelle.

Entre 1984 et 1995, on remarque que le contexte socio-économique au Québec est traversé par deux logiques d'action dans le champ des pratiques assistancielles. D'une part, des citoyens s'impliquent au sein d'organismes communautaires pour tenter de trouver des alternatives à la crise de l'emploi et finissent ainsi par développer des initiatives salutaires qui contribuent à soutenir les sans-emploi et à résoudre en partie les effets pervers de la crise de l'emploi. D'autre part, les institutions publiques et leurs programmes en matière d'emploi et de sécurité du revenu ont de la difficulté à se départir d'une culture organisationnelle hiérarchique, centralisée et rigide. Une profonde remise en question est à l'ordre du jour puisque ces institutions sont incitées à revoir leur stratégie pour répondre aux nouveaux défis qui se présentent (Robitaille, 2003).

Avant le Sommet sur l'Économie et l'Emploi de 1996 : le capharnaüm de l'aide à l'emploi

L'inadéquation qui caractérise le système de développement de la main-d'œuvre qui prévaut au Québec au milieu des années 1990, est attribuable essentiellement à la dispersion des services ainsi qu'à la rigidité structurelle qui en émane. En effet, c'est à un véritable labyrinthe que se heurtent les entreprises, les intervenants, les

chômeurs, les prestataires de la sécurité du revenu ainsi que toute personne sans emploi désirant obtenir un soutien lié à son intégration au marché du travail. Les services sont alors dispensés à travers trois réseaux d'institutions publiques, répartis au sein des deux paliers de gouvernement (au Québec, les centres Travail-Québec et la Société québécoise de développement de la main-d'œuvre; au fédéral, les centres d'emploi du Canada). Cette configuration complexe entraîne un lot de difficultés. La responsabilité de la réinsertion demeure floue, le rôle inégal des institutions ainsi que les disparités territoriales dans la prestation de services semblent représenter des obstacles majeurs. Tout cela, sans compter l'existence d'une jungle de mesures (au nombre de 112) et de programmes, ayant pour effet de réduire le travail des agents d'aide des réseaux publics à la gestion de multiples règles administratives et mesures de contrôle (MSR, 1996; Conseil de la santé et du bien-être, 1996; Robitaille, 2003; Dufour, Boismenu et Noël, 2003).

En plus d'être inefficace pour le développement de l'emploi et l'insertion des personnes sans-emploi, ce dispositif n'est pas propice aux innovations sociales. Le contrôle étatique, qui se fait particulièrement sentir au sein du réseau public provincial, limite l'autonomie et l'initiative des communautés locales en plus d'accorder très peu de moyens et de marges de manœuvre aux institutions publiques régionales et locales. Bref, on se retrouve en présence d'un système centralisé, hiérarchisé et bureaucratisé. Pour répondre aux besoins du marché du travail et agir sur l'offre de main-d'œuvre, le dispositif devra être substantiellement révisé.

Le Sommet de l'Économie et de l'Emploi de 1996 : un tournant historique

C'est précisément lors du Sommet sur l'Économie et l'Emploi en 1996³, que le gouvernement du Québec entreprend de relancer l'emploi en sollicitant la participation et la contribution d'une diversité d'acteurs socio-économiques. Il faut prendre en note ici que le Sommet socio-économique de 1996 représente une innovation politique par

rapport au modèle tripartite des sommets traditionnels expérimentés en Europe. Dans le modèle de concertation traditionnel, on se contente de faire appel aux représentants de l'État, des syndicats et du patronat. Mais, dans le cas du Sommet de 1996, l'originalité de l'initiative provient de ce que la concertation entre divers partenaires sociopolitiques et socio-économiques ait pu être enrichie grâce à l'attribution de places autour de la table de délibération à des représentants d'un quatrième groupe d'acteurs provenant de la société civile, notamment du tiers secteur de l'économie sociale. Dans ce contexte, une nouvelle ère s'amorce et laisse présager un renouvellement du régime québécois en matière de politique sociale et de développement économique. Tout cela se passe dans un contexte budgétaire contraignant marqué : à Ottawa, par la réingénierie brutale des politiques sociales fédérales qui fut impulsée par le ministre des Finances, Paul Martin, au milieu des années 1990 et qui a attisé le déséquilibre fiscal entre le fédéral et les provinces; à Québec, par la poursuite de l'objectif « déficit zéro » au cours des années 1996-2000 (Vaillancourt, Aubry et Jetté, 2003; Noël, 2003).

La réforme de la sécurité du revenu, amorcée en 1996, illustre bien l'esprit dans lequel a été repensé l'avenir de l'emploi et de l'économie au Québec avec une visée partenariale. La Société québécoise de développement de la Main-d'œuvre (SQDM), mise sur pied par le gouvernement libéral de Robert Bourassa en 1993, avait déjà amorcé un changement majeur appelé à avoir des incidences sur certains traits du modèle québécois. En effet, la SQDM, avec son mode particulier de gouvernance, se trouvait à convier des partenaires de la société civile (entreprises privées, syndicats, organismes communautaires) à participer aux côtés de représentants de l'État à l'élaboration de stratégies de formation et d'emploi de la main-d'œuvre. La participation des représentants des organismes communautaires de développement de l'employabilité au sein du Conseil d'administration de la SQDM ne fut pas obtenue aisément. Elle fut arrachée grâce aux pressions provenant de la Coalition des organismes communau-

taires en développement de la main-d'œuvre (COCDMO) et à l'appui de certaines composantes syndicales. Une nouvelle forme de gouvernance, qui se distanciat de l'approche de gouvernance traditionnelle, prenait alors naissance au Québec. Cette nouvelle gouvernance acceptait de prendre en compte les logiques collectives et associatives dans l'orientation du développement (Bourque, 2000; Lévesque, Bourque et Vaillancourt, 1999; Vaillancourt, 2003; Saint-Martin, 2001; Robitaille, 2003). Cependant, cette expérimentation d'une nouvelle gouvernance n'allait pas se produire sans générer des tensions entre la société politique et la société civile, tensions qui allaient s'exprimer au grand jour avec la crise de la SQDM au tournant des années 1997 et 1998.

En plein cœur d'une vaste réforme de la sécurité du revenu, la SQDM enclenche un processus de rapatriement à Québec des pouvoirs fédéraux en matière de main-d'œuvre qui mènera à la création d'une nouvelle entité paragonnementale, Emploi-Québec, au lendemain de la signature de l'entente avec Ottawa en décembre 1997. Pour Denis Saint-Martin (2001) qui a étudié la forme de gouvernance qui traverse la création et le développement de la nouvelle agence gouvernementale, cette dernière poursuivait à la fois des objectifs de déconcentration administrative plus que de décentralisation politique. Le remplacement de la SQDM par Emploi-Québec en pleine turbulence générée par le rapatriement à Québec des anciens programmes fédéraux de formation de la main-d'œuvre a entraîné la réorganisation des dispositifs institutionnels, notamment en fusionnant plusieurs d'entre eux, de façon à réorganiser les services de formation et d'employabilité offerts aux communautés locales comme s'ils devaient relever d'un guichet unique. En effet, on intègre les prestataires d'aide sociale à l'ensemble de la main-d'œuvre, on réduit drastiquement le nombre de ministères et d'institutions publiques en les fusionnant et on regroupe les ressources humaines au sein d'une même agence tout en tentant d'introduire une gestion partenariale dans les objectifs de mise en œuvre.

Le défi est de taille et deux mod-

èles de gouvernance se disputent l'orientation de cette réforme. En effet, on tente d'une part de favoriser une gestion associative qui implique la participation de nouveaux réseaux de partenaires et associations sectorielles, ce qui induit un nouveau partage des pouvoirs décisionnels. D'autre part, on s'emploie à réorganiser une structure étatique réfractaire à l'approche partenariale aux niveaux administratif et politique. À la faveur de ces bouleversements résultent des tensions inévitables lorsqu'une nouvelle forme de gouvernance émerge et tente d'introduire des acteurs privés et associatifs à la fois dans la sphère de la fourniture de services et dans les processus de décisions stratégiques (Stoker, 1998).

En actualisant une nouvelle politique de développement local et en réformant celle de la sécurité du revenu, c'est un chantier sans précédent que l'on voit s'ériger avec le développement d'Emploi-Québec et des nouveaux leviers de développement local. Les difficultés inhérentes à la fusion des cultures institutionnelles en présence (sécurité du revenu, assurance-chômage, développement de la main-d'œuvre et développement économique local) représentent les grands enjeux liés à la concrétisation des nouvelles dispositions et orientations politiques.

Dans les relations qui s'instaurent entre les travailleurs du dispositif public renouvelé et les collectivités locales, des tensions ne tardent pas à apparaître. D'une part, les acteurs étatiques doivent se défaire d'une solide culture de contrôle héritée de trois décennies de gestion autoritaire de l'aide sociale, pour ouvrir le dialogue avec les acteurs du tiers secteur d'économie sociale plus habitués à favoriser l'*empowerment* des sans-emploi dans leurs pratiques d'insertion au sein des communautés locales. D'autre part, les acteurs du tiers secteur sont conscients des risques liés à l'institutionnalisation, soit celui de perdre de vue leur mission et d'être instrumentalisés par l'État dans un rapport de sous-traitance.

Un parcours vers l'insertion, la formation et l'emploi

Intitulée « Un parcours vers l'insertion, la formation et l'emploi », la

réforme de la sécurité du revenu amorcée en 1996 s'appuie sur un partage des responsabilités, articulé autour d'un principe de réciprocité entre l'État, les individus et les communautés (MSR, 1996). Constatant l'échec des programmes de développement de l'employabilité des années 1980 et du début des années 1990, le gouvernement du Québec entend redéfinir les paramètres de l'intervention auprès des sans-emploi de façon à ce que les services puissent répondre aux besoins particuliers de chaque individu en articulant un processus d'accompagnement permettant d'établir un projet de réintégration. Le parcours de la personne en cheminement apparaît ainsi comme un élément indispensable pour assurer la qualité de l'activation des mesures et programmes dans un tout nouveau système opérationnel. À cet effet, une coopération entre l'État et les organismes communautaires est souhaitée :

Ce renforcement de l'accompagnement des personnes devra également reposer sur l'établissement de rapports étroits entre les centres locaux et les organismes communautaires oeuvrant sur le territoire afin que des services complémentaires à ceux des centres soient plus largement accessibles. (MSR, 1996 :40.)

Ce nouveau système laisse miroiter l'objectif de la décentralisation des services. Mais sur le terrain, on aura souvent affaire à de la déconcentration plutôt qu'à de la décentralisation. Au niveau de l'ensemble du Québec, on érige la Commission des partenaires du marché du travail (CPMT) qui aura pour mandat de conseiller le ministre sur la définition et les orientations de la politique de main-d'œuvre. Au niveau régional, on institue également des conseils régionaux des partenaires du marché du travail (CRPMT) chargés d'identifier les priorités de leur territoire en matière d'emploi et de développement (voir Annexe A). Mais c'est au niveau local, que foisonnent les changements les plus éloquentes.

En effet, le guichet unique, incarné dans les 150 centres locaux d'emploi (CLE), entend travailler de pair avec les centres locaux de développement (CLD) qui eux, sont chargés d'impliquer les acteurs et élus locaux dans la

définition d'un « plan local d'action concertée pour l'économie et l'emploi » (PLACÉE) répondant aux besoins des localités. Paradoxalement, sur le plan local, le CLE, à la différence du CLD, n'est pas un organisme public muni d'un conseil d'administration. Par contre, son directeur général siège d'office à celui du CLD.

À ces nouvelles structures que sont la CPMT, les CRPMT et les CLE, se greffent une panoplie de dispositifs d'accompagnement que nous conviendrons d'appeler, dans la présente, les organismes d'insertion et/ou de développement de l'employabilité. Selon une étude du Comité sectoriel de main-d'œuvre de l'économie sociale et de l'action communautaire, les organismes œuvrant dans le secteur de l'emploi et de l'insertion sociale constituaient pas moins de 40 % des organismes ayant vu le jour dans ce domaine entre 1995 et 2000 (CSMO, 2000). C'est donc dire qu'un nouveau champ d'intervention, en relation étroite avec l'État, s'inscrit depuis peu dans l'histoire du développement de l'action communautaire au Québec.

III- Typologie des formes de contribution de l'économie sociale

Depuis le rapatriement d'Ottawa à Québec des pouvoirs et mesures dans le domaine de la formation de main-d'œuvre et en vertu de l'*Entente de principe Canada-Québec relative au marché du travail* ratifiée avec Ottawa en 1997, le gouvernement du Québec se retrouve responsable du développement de l'ensemble des services et programmes d'aide à l'emploi (MAI, 1997). Au cours de l'année 2001-2002, 653.5 millions \$ ont été transférés au Québec par Ottawa à même la caisse de l'assurance-emploi (Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale, 2002). Au cours de la même période, 131 millions \$ seront destinés spécifiquement aux ententes de services conclues entre le ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale et les organismes d'insertion relevant du tiers secteur, identifiés comme des « ressources externes » (Secrétariat à l'action communautaire autonome, 2002).

Le rapatriement des sommes fédérales consacrées à la formation de la main-d'œuvre a profondément modi-

fié l'ampleur de l'action du ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale dont le budget consacré aux ressources « externes », à la suite de ces ententes, a connu une hausse significative. En 1997-1998, 31 millions \$ étaient alloués à ces ententes avec les ressources externes. L'année suivante, cette enveloppe quadruple et passe à 125 millions \$. Cet investissement considérable dans un ministère qui n'a jamais réellement déployé de stratégies avec des intervenants externes aussi nombreux, aura une influence sur le processus d'approvisionnement des deux cultures. En effet, le défi de la réorganisation des services et des responsabilités des uns et des autres aura tôt fait d'introduire certaines tensions dans les rapports entre les organismes communautaires d'insertion et les services publics d'emploi. Nous reviendrons sur cet aspect dans la section sur les enjeux.

Afin d'illustrer notre bilan des vingt dernières années dans le champ du « welfare to work » au Québec, nous avons dressé un tableau des initiatives de l'économie sociale les plus significatives dans le domaine de l'insertion socioprofessionnelle, du développement de l'employabilité ainsi que de la défense des droits.

Organismes et institutions de développement économique local

Bien qu'ils ne fassent pas partie de l'économie sociale, les centres locaux d'emploi (CLE) ainsi que les centres locaux de développement (CLD) constituent, au niveau local, des dispositifs publics étroitement liés à la mise en œuvre de la politique active du marché du travail. Les CLE sont appelés à actualiser les services d'Emploi-Québec à la manière d'un guichet unique. Les CLD, pour leur part, sont chargés d'amener les partenaires locaux à se concerter entre eux afin de déterminer un « plan local d'action concerté pour l'économie et l'emploi » (PLACÉE). Ils accordent également des subventions et des investissements aux initiatives des composantes « marchandes » de l'économie sociale.

De leur côté, les corporations de développement économique communautaire (CDEC) et les sociétés d'aide au développement communautaire

(SADC), davantage associées à la grande famille de l'économie sociale, permettent aux collectivités locales de prendre en main le développement économique de leur milieu en favorisant la concertation des acteurs. Ces deux formes d'aide au développement économique local ont ceci de particulier qu'elles instituent une nouvelle forme de gouvernance locale autour de fonds d'investissement et de développement.

Pratiques d'insertion socioprofessionnelle et de développement de l'employabilité

Depuis le début des années 1980, un nombre significatif d'initiatives communautaires relevant de l'économie sociale ont été reconnues par les pouvoirs publics en fonction de leur capacité de répondre aux besoins des chercheurs d'emploi, surtout les plus défavorisés. C'est ainsi qu'au fil du temps, une partie de ces initiatives ont été soutenues financièrement par l'État fédéral jusqu'en 1997, afin de réaliser des activités de développement de la main-d'œuvre complémentaires aux activités étatiques. C'est ainsi que l'on a pu constater l'importance croissante des organismes de développement de l'employabilité appartenant au Regroupement québécois d'organismes en développement de l'employabilité (RQUODE), des clubs de recherche d'emploi (CRE) ainsi que des services spécialisés de main-d'œuvre (SSMO) dans le champ de l'intervention auprès des chômeurs et des prestataires de la sécurité du revenu. On remarque que l'action de ces organismes est influencée par les stratégies de ciblage des clientèles dans l'activation des mesures. En effet, pour chacun des regroupements d'initiatives, il existe une particularité d'intervention qui leur est propre. Les 33 SSMO par exemple, sont reconnus pour l'expertise développée en matière d'accompagnement des personnes handicapées, des personnes immigrantes, des femmes, ainsi que des jeunes en difficulté.

Les carrefours jeunesse-emploi (CJE) quant à eux, se sont vus massivement investis par l'État québécois dès 1995 afin de constituer un vaste réseau d'organismes voués aux jeunes 16-35 ans, un réseau qui ressemble de près à

celui des missions locales en France. Issus d'une toute première expérience de mobilisation communautaire en Outaouais pour tenter de solutionner les difficultés liées à l'insertion et l'emploi des jeunes de la région, les CJE se sont retrouvés rapidement dans un processus d'institutionnalisation dont le but était d'offrir, partout au Québec, des services et des pratiques alternatives adaptés aux besoins socioprofessionnels des jeunes (Assogba, 2000). En 2001-2002, les CJE du Québec recevaient un financement de base de près de 33 millions \$ en plus de certaines sommes additionnelles obtenues pour des projets spécifiques. Ce réseau compte 106 organismes en 2003 (voir Annexe B).

La constitution de ce vaste réseau dédié à l'emploi et à l'accompagnement des jeunes vers le marché du travail participe étroitement à la prolifération des services destinés à cette clientèle. Ainsi, à Emploi-Québec, on reconnaît que dans toutes les régions c'est près de deux tiers des ressources externes qui s'adressent spécifiquement aux jeunes (Emploi-Québec, 2000). Cet état de situation est directement lié au fait que le quart des prestataires de la sécurité du revenu qui participaient à des mesures actives entre 1998-1999 étaient âgés de moins de 25 ans et qu'au cours de la même période, plus de 155 millions \$ avaient été alloués par Emploi-Québec spécifiquement pour la clientèle âgée de moins de 30 ans dont 114 M \$ investis dans des activités de formation qualifiante. Bien sûr, l'objet de la présentation actuelle n'est pas de dresser un état de situation en regard de l'intervention catégorielle en direction des jeunes. Cependant, nous ne pouvons passer sous silence le fait que le Québec a développé une approche particulière en matière d'accompagnement et d'insertion des jeunes et que cette approche fait appel aux ressources de l'économie sociale. En outre, elle contribue à modifier certains paramètres de l'action gouvernementale en matière de coordination de la prestation de services à travers les différents ministères afin de placer la personne au centre du processus (emploi, formation, santé et services sociaux, justice, etc).

Les entreprises d'insertion (EI) regroupées au sein du Collectif des entreprises d'insertion du Québec

(CEIQ), une autre composante de l'économie sociale, quant à elles, étaient un modèle bien particulier d'aide à l'emploi. En effet, ces entreprises sociales offrent une formation dans un contexte de production afin de développer chez les participants des habiletés de travail générales et spécifiques. Elles conjuguent leur mission d'insertion sociale à une forme d'autofinancement par le biais d'activités marchandes. Pour les participants impliqués dans un parcours de requalification dans ce type d'entreprise, les activités de formation, l'accompagnement individuel et de groupe ainsi que la resocialisation dans un cadre de travail rémunéré, représentent un tremplin efficace pour favoriser l'insertion économique (Landry-LaRue, 2003a et 2003b; Reuzé, Tremblay et Jetté, 2000; Guay, Corbeil et Descarries; 2002; Kearney, 2003).

En somme, les mesures actives relevant des organismes d'insertion appartenant au tiers secteur permettent aux individus de se mettre en mouvement dans un contexte où le soutien individualisé et adapté à l'ensemble des besoins se conjugue étroitement à une approche collective et respectueuse de l'adhésion libre des personnes dans les activités qui leur sont suggérées, quoique de plus en plus prescrites. Peu importe le type d'organisme d'insertion, un fait marquant demeure. Ces organismes se font référer par les pouvoirs publics les clientèles les plus vulnérables et les cas présentant des difficultés majeures. En d'autres mots, ce que l'intervention étatique n'est pas en mesure de résoudre, c'est souvent au tiers secteur qu'en incombe la responsabilité. Entre les besoins de plus en plus criants des clientèles et les exigences des ententes de services, les organismes doivent donc assumer leur mission tout en répondant aux exigences de l'efficacité. À l'intérieur même de ces espaces intermédiaires entre la société civile et les pouvoirs publics d'emploi, la participation démocratique peut représenter à la fois une finalité et un moyen judicieux pour générer des pratiques d'intervention innovantes sur le plan du développement des personnes impliquées, mais aussi au niveau du développement et de la revitalisation des territoires locaux (Leclerc et Béland, 2003). La démocratisation des

services de main-d'œuvre peut alors apparaître comme une avenue salubre qui permet de respecter l'autonomie des acteurs en présence ainsi que leurs responsabilités.

Les organismes de défense de droits des sans-emploi

Les actions et revendications des mouvements sociaux québécois ont toujours joué un rôle incontournable dans la définition des politiques sociales et dans l'édification du projet de société dans son ensemble. Les contributions de certains de ces mouvements, comme le Front commun des personnes assistées sociales du Québec (FCPASQ) ainsi que la Fédération des femmes du Québec (FFQ) ont souvent influencé la teneur des discussions relativement à la pauvreté et à la qualité de vie des citoyens les plus démunis. Le Front d'action populaire en réaménagement urbain (FRAPRU) a également sensibilisé les décideurs à la pauvreté plus particulièrement sur la question du logement social et abordable.

La pauvreté, secteur commun des actions de mobilisation, a ainsi été investie historiquement par les mouvements sociaux afin de faire pression sur les autorités publiques pour influencer la teneur des décisions. La récente loi 112, adoptée en 2002 et visant à lutter contre la pauvreté et l'exclusion, trouve son origine dans cette large mobilisation des acteurs sociaux qui s'est déployée dans toutes les régions du Québec depuis 1997. En effet, le Collectif pour un Québec sans pauvreté, qui est à l'origine de la mobilisation des acteurs sociaux, représente sans contredit la plus large coalition formée à ce jour pour lutter contre le problème de la pauvreté au Québec⁴. Le projet de loi proposé par le Collectif qui découle d'un processus de délibération large et inclusif, démontre tout le potentiel citoyen pour l'édification d'une société plus juste et solidaire qui intègre, théoriquement du moins, la lutte à la pauvreté dans les plans d'action de tous les ministères. Selon Alain Noël (2002), la Loi 112 constitue un exemple éloquent de démocratisation du social puisqu'elle amène l'État à appuyer les acteurs sociaux dans les propositions qu'ils mettent de l'avant.

La Coalition des organismes com-

munautaires en développement de la main-d'œuvre (COCDMO) est elle aussi, à sa façon, un regroupement de défense des droits inséparable des changements d'orientation dans l'activation des mesures. Fondée en 1991 afin de militer pour la reconnaissance du mouvement communautaire au sein des instances partenariales de la Société québécoise de développement de la main-d'œuvre (SQDM), cette coalition constitue présentement un espace de représentation précieux pour les organismes concernés. C'est grâce à cet acteur collectif que les organismes d'insertion et de développement économique communautaire participent, au même titre que les patrons et les syndicats, aux discussions portant sur la question de l'emploi et du développement économique.

IV- Les enjeux concernant les relations entre l'État et le secteur de l'économie sociale

Le développement d'un volume croissant de pratiques d'insertion relevant des organismes du tiers secteur de l'économie sociale ne s'est pas fait sans provoquer quelques heurts au chapitre des façons de faire et des finalités à atteindre. Au Québec, comme ailleurs en Amérique du Nord, les organismes du tiers secteur dans le domaine de l'insertion veulent entrer en relation avec l'État et le secteur public sans pour autant perdre leur autonomie et leur identité. Ils veulent échapper à l'imposition de rapports de sous-traitance ou de tutelle qui tendent à les instrumentaliser sur le plan économique et politique (Austin, 2003; Sommerfeld et Reisch, 2003). À cet égard, les enjeux qui concernent les acteurs de l'économie sociale dans le domaine de l'insertion au travail ne sont pas très différents de ceux que nous avons documentés et analysés dans l'étude d'autres domaines de politiques sociales où l'État entre en dialogue avec les acteurs de l'économie sociale (Vaillancourt et Tremblay, 2002). Arrêtons-nous sur certains de ces enjeux reliés à l'activation de la politique de main-d'œuvre québécoise.

Partenariat ou tutelle ?

Dans un premier temps, il nous paraît évident que le passage d'un modèle d'intervention étatique à un modèle

pluriel, ouvert aux acteurs des communautés locales dans la prise en charge des services, entraîne son lot de difficultés quotidiennes. Celles-ci relèvent directement de la cohabitation conflictuelle qui traverse les relations qui s'instaurent entre les organismes de l'économie sociale et le dispositif étatique d'Emploi-Québec, chargé de rendre la politique opérationnelle. Les travaux des comités de réflexion, institués sous l'égide d'Emploi-Québec, témoignent parfois d'une forme d'emprise administrative tutélaire qui empêche de maximiser l'apport des organismes de l'économie sociale dans l'établissement des orientations et des résultats à atteindre (Saint-Martin, 2001; Robitaille, 2003). Malgré les profondes transformations, l'imputabilité relève toujours d'une conception traditionnelle de reddition de comptes du bas vers le haut (*bottom-up*). À cet effet, Leclerc et Béland (2003) soutiennent que la difficulté à concilier les exigences de l'imputabilité à l'implication de personnes non élues dans le développement entraîne un lot de questionnements relatifs au partage des responsabilités entre les élus, la société civile et les communautés locales. Toutefois, ces nouvelles passerelles existent et ont permis de développer des pratiques novatrices là où jadis il n'y avait qu'un modèle d'intervention hégémonique pour répondre aux réalités plurielles. En effet, les nombreux comités consultatifs ainsi que les groupes de travail mis en place afin de faciliter les activités partenariales témoignent d'une volonté gouvernementale d'introduire au cœur de ses principes des pratiques consultatives qui influencent de façon significative l'adaptation des mesures et des programmes, ainsi que les conditions dans lesquelles elles sont réalisées.

La négociation des ententes et des modalités d'évaluation : un test délicat pour le partenariat entre l'État et l'économie sociale?

Ainsi, lorsque les intervenants du secteur public et du tiers secteur se concentrent sur la question des besoins des individus aidés (plutôt que sur leurs divergences en regard des pratiques et contextes d'intervention), la qualité des partenariats devient plus palpable. Il n'en demeure pas moins que ces

épisodes de relation partenariale de qualité sont fragiles et entrecoupés de moments de fortes tensions notamment lors des périodes de négociation des protocoles et ententes de services qui lient les organismes d'insertion relevant du tiers secteur au réseau d'Emploi-Québec. Ces indices de coopération conflictuelle apparaissent également dans les moments où il faut se préoccuper des indicateurs de performance. La plupart du temps, ces indicateurs tiennent peu compte de la qualité des services et de l'approche globale avec laquelle ils sont dispensés par les organismes du tiers secteur. Au contraire, ils reposent essentiellement sur l'évaluation de la quantité de placements, de retours en formation et d'emplois créés (Robitaille, 2003).

Quelle forme de reconnaissance au chapitre de la prévention?

De façon plus générale, notons la difficulté de reconnaître stratégiquement le rôle et la valeur ajoutée des pratiques d'insertion sur le marché du travail relevant de l'économie sociale et cela, sur un horizon qui prend en compte les impacts à long terme. En ce sens, les pourparlers actuels entourant le rendement à court terme de ces initiatives socio-économiques, illustrent bien la nature des débats en cours. D'une part, le gouvernement reconnaît et planifie des économies découlant de l'action des organismes du tiers secteur, mais rarement au-delà d'un plan d'action triennal. De plus, les économies envisagées le sont souvent en fonction d'une vision réductrice de sorties de l'aide sociale plutôt qu'en fonction d'économies générées en regard des coûts liés à la non-utilisation des services étatiques (socio-sanitaires, judiciaires, scolaires, etc) par effet de prévention. C'est ce qui explique en partie la pratique actuelle du financement par ententes de services (coûts forfaitaires) au détriment d'un financement à la mission de base et à l'autonomie de gestion qui avait été chèrement acquise par certains regroupements d'organismes communautaires.

Vers une démocratisation des services de main-d'œuvre ?

Quoiqu'il en soit, avec l'arrivée de telles pratiques relevant de l'économie

sociale dans le domaine de l'insertion, les personnes plus démunies (i.e. les utilisateurs des parcours d'insertion) peuvent avoir voix au chapitre dans une organisation de services qui, jadis, laissait peu de place à la libre décision et à la mise à contribution du potentiel citoyen des individus. De plus, l'intégration de tels organismes à la planification des services de main-d'œuvre, permet une gestion participative qui admet que les travailleurs (i.e. les intervenants sociaux des organismes) peuvent également être reconnus pour leur savoirs et leurs connaissances des besoins spécifiques des usagers (Dumais, 2001a et 2001b; Leclerc, Filteau et Bourassa, 2002).

L'implication des travailleurs devient, à cet égard, une autre source de démocratisation des services afin de les rendre plus adaptés à l'évolution des réalités locales (Vaillancourt *et al.*, 2003; Vaillancourt, Aubry et Jetté, 2003 : chap. 1).

En outre, ce phénomène de démocratisation des services conteste l'organisation du travail que l'on retrouve dans les institutions du secteur public (i.e. dans les Centres locaux d'emploi). En effet, dans ces institutions publiques, en raison d'une tradition établie dans les ministères s'occupant de l'aide sociale, l'organisation du travail est demeurée hautement tayloriste. Le syndicalisme qui prévaut dans les services publics de main-d'œuvre et de sécurité du revenu est demeuré très largement traditionnel, ce qui explique que les relations développées par Emploi-Québec avec les ressources du tiers secteur ont été le plus souvent vues avec suspicion et, à l'occasion, dénoncées avec virulence.

On se retrouve alors dans une situation paradoxale où les intervenants des CLE sont contrôlés par leurs supérieurs hiérarchiques à l'intérieur d'une organisation pyramidale du travail, tandis que les usagers sont contrôlés à leur tour par le personnel des organismes publics à l'intérieur d'une organisation des services qui demeure providentialiste dans la mesure où elles ne laisse pas de place à la participation des utilisateurs de services (Vaillancourt *et al.*, forthcoming). Ce climat est néfaste pour la confiance que les agents d'aide à l'emploi oeuvrant au sein des organismes publics devraient avoir envers leur

employeur, Emploi-Québec. En effet, ils estiment que leur expérience, leur savoir-faire et l'efficacité de leurs pratiques ne sont pas exploités à leur juste valeur dans le développement des services (Leclerc, Filteau et Bourassa, 2002). Cet enjeu touche aussi les rapports de confiance ou de méfiance qui s'instaurent entre l'État et les organismes du tiers secteur. Même si ces organismes réaménagent leur vie démocratique à la faveur de la participation des travailleurs et des usagers, ce qui comporte des retombées positives sur la qualité des services (Dumais, 2001a et 2001b; Vaillancourt, *et al.*, 2003 et forthcoming), il n'en demeure pas moins que la difficulté des organismes de l'économie sociale à avoir un mot à dire dans les décisions qui les concernent tend à les enfermer dans un rapport de sous-traitance qui tend à rétrécir leur productivité sociale et économique.

Les études menées par le LAREPPS documentent les formes de gouvernance et les pratiques innovantes issues d'organismes de l'économie sociale œuvrant auprès des personnes exclues. En plus de générer des pratiques novatrices ayant un impact socioéconomique significatif, ces entreprises d'économie sociale actualisent une nouvelle forme d'apprentissage et d'exercice du travail (Mathieu *et al.*, 2001; Landry-LaRue, 2003a et 2003b), tout en rappelant que ces initiatives sont souvent soumises aux aléas des changements politiques et économiques. Toujours les entreprises doivent réaffirmer leur mission tout en maintenant l'équilibre entre la finalité sociale et la finalité économique (Reuzé, Tremblay et Jetté, 2000; Dumais, 2001a; Guay, Corbeil et Descarries, 2002).

Conclusion

Au Québec, ces 20 dernières années, dans le champ du « welfare to work » où jadis l'État avait une position hégémonique, l'économie sociale a réussi à se tailler une place importante. Elle a commencé par faire ses marques en se positionnant elle-même sur la première ligne d'intervention, et cela dès le début des années 1980. En effet, au sortir de la récession de 1981-1982 qui avait rapidement démontré les limites

des dispositifs publics dans leur mission de développement de la main-d'œuvre en contexte de fort chômage, les mouvements sociaux et des leaders du milieu se sont rapidement déployés dans des secteurs encore neufs pour eux, le développement économique et social, l'employabilité et l'insertion. Les organisations syndicales ont bâti des fonds d'investissements destinés à la création et au maintien de l'emploi (Fonds de solidarité-FTQ et Fondation-CSN.) Des territoires ont mis sur pied des Corporations de développement économique et communautaire (CDEC) et des Sociétés d'aide au développement communautaire (SADC). D'autres ont créé des services spécialisés de main-d'œuvre (SSMO). D'autres encore ont développé des clubs de recherche d'emploi (CRE) ou des Carrefours jeunesse-emploi (CJE). Enfin, sont nées les premières entreprises d'insertion (EI). Toutes ces initiatives ont en commun d'être issues du milieu, d'avoir une finalité sociale plutôt que lucrative, d'être conduites collectivement et démocratiquement en autonomie par rapport à l'État et de tabler sur la participation, la responsabilité et l'empowerment des individus et des groupes. Ces initiatives se déploient en mode d'économie sociale. C'est une contribution majeure au renouvellement des pratiques de première ligne.

L'économie sociale a aussi fait ses marques en se faisant reconnaître comme acteur dans le champ des pratiques de main-d'œuvre. Elle y est parvenu, d'abord en regroupant ses initiatives (RQUODE, COCDMO et CEI); en cultivant ses alliances avec les mouvements sociaux (CSN, CSQ, FTQ, FFQ, FRAPRU, FCPASQ, Collectif pour un Québec sans pauvreté, etc.) en se donnant des capacités de conduire des débats publics (Chantier de l'économie sociale), en entrant en interaction avec les dispositifs publics et en négociant avec eux (SQDM, devenu EMPLOI-QUÉBEC, CPMT, CRPMT, CLE) Le tournant historique a été le Sommet sur l'Économie et l'emploi de 1996 où, pour la première fois, la société civile et sa composante de l'économie sociale siégeaient autour de la table comme tous les autres acteurs : les syndicats, le patronat et les pouvoirs

publics. Alors, l'économie sociale a été pleinement reconnue.

L'économie sociale a également fait ses marques en contribuant à la décision de l'État québécois de réorganiser ses structures de soutien au développement économique et social au niveau des régions (CRD, CLD) de telle manière qu'elles soient davantage partenariales, que l'économie sociale soit prise en compte et que ses acteurs soient mis à contribution au même titre que les autres dans l'élaboration des plans de développement (PLACÉE).

Enfin, au niveau des pratiques, l'économie sociale a fait ses marques en développant des approches qui lui sont propres. Ses interventions sont habituellement plus larges, davantage collectives, plus régulièrement en amont de problèmes et essentiellement centrées sur l'empowerment des individus et des groupes. L'économie sociale a ébranlé le caractère hégémonique d'une approche étatique plutôt curative, centralisée et bureaucratisée. Dans les faits, elle a imposé la pluralité des pratiques. Ce faisant elle a fait se remettre en question les pratiques dominantes, au point où ces dernières ont reconnu la pertinence et l'efficacité des approches neuves des organismes de l'économie sociale en leur faisant une place au sein de leur propre plan global d'intervention.

Rien de cela n'est allé et ne va sans difficulté. Des enjeux majeurs demeurent encore d'une grande actualité. Dans un rapport de force inégal à l'État, comment se prémunir d'une érosion de son autonomie? Comment se mettre à l'abri des tentatives d'instrumentalisation ou de sous-traitance? Devant la volonté légitime de l'État de recevoir des comptes sur les sommes qu'il rend disponibles aux organismes de l'économie sociale, comment comptabiliser les gains liés à leur pratique originale? Ceux liés à la prévention notamment? Comment les dispositifs publics pourraient intégrer les innovations développées dans les organismes de l'économie sociale? En se démocratisant davantage par une grande place faite aux usagers, à la communauté et à leurs propres salariés?

En aucun cas, les organismes de l'économie sociale ne se présentent en tant qu'alternatives aux dispositifs

publics. Au contraire, la pratique a voulu qu'ils soient eux-mêmes des incubateurs de dispositifs publics (CLSC, Aide juridique, etc.) Aujourd'hui, ils souhaitent voir l'État intégrer dans ses pratiques des caractéristiques des leurs et considérer les leurs comme composantes des politiques publiques. L'universalisation de la politique de garde sous le mode des Centres de la petite enfance en pérennisant leur statut de coopérative ou d'OSBL illustre, en la comblant, cette attente.

En cette période de changements politiques, quel sort sera réservé aux innovations portées par l'économie sociale? Une gouvernance néo-libérale voudra-t-elle tout instrumentaliser ou transformer ces champs en autant d'occasions d'affaires pour le secteur privé? L'heure est à la vigilance active.

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ANNEXE A

**Portrait institutionnel pour la mise en œuvre en 1997 de la
Politique active du marché du travail (PAMT) au Québec**

AU NIVEAU NATIONAL		
Commission des partenaires du marché du travail (CPMT)	<p>Instance nationale où les principaux partenaires du marché du travail se concertent en vue principalement de participer à la définition :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - des politiques d'emploi et de main-d'œuvre; - des objectifs et des stratégies concernant le marché du travail. <p>Les partenaires sont également impliqués dans la gestion des services, la révision des mesures et programmes de main-d'œuvre ainsi que dans la préparation du plan d'action annuel d'Emploi-Québec.</p>	<p>Composition de la CPMT:</p> <p>Le ministre de l'emploi 2 sous-ministres 6 représentants des associations de salariés; 6 représentants des entreprises 2 représentants du milieu communautaire 3 représentants du milieu de l'enseignement 4 membres ministériels d'office (sans droit de vote)</p>

AU NIVEAU RÉGIONAL		
Conseil régional des partenaires du marché du travail (CRPMT)	<p>Les conseils régionaux analysent les problèmes de chacune des régions et recommandent à la Commission des partenaires du marché du travail des <i>plans d'action concertés pour l'économie et l'emploi</i> (PLACEE) qui prennent en compte les besoins locaux. Ils sont aussi responsables de l'adaptation des mesures et services d'Emploi-Québec aux particularités de leur région respective.</p> <p>(emploi.quebec.net/francais/organisation/commpartenaires/conseils_regionaux.htm, 2003)</p>	<p>Composition des CRPMT: (similaire à l'instance nationale)</p> <p>6 représentants des entreprises, 6 représentants de la main-d'œuvre, 4 représentants des réseaux d'éducation, 2 représentants des organismes communautaires, le directeur régional d'Emploi-Québec, 3 représentants d'autres ministères (sans droit de vote)</p>

AU NIVEAU LOCAL			
Corporation de développement économique communautaire (CDEC)	<p>Amélioration du milieu et du cadre de vie par :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - création et maintien d'emploi; - développement de la main-d'œuvre; - soutien à l'entrepreneurship privé et social; - soutien à la réalisation de projets; - initiatives de revitalisation du territoire. <p style="text-align: right;">(les CDEC du Québec, octobre 2000)</p>	17 CDEC sur le territoire québécois, dont 11 dans la grande région de Montréal	1984: l'initiative issue du mouvement communautaire voit le jour à Montréal
Centre local de développement (CLD)* (*financés à 70% par Québec et 30% par les municipalités)	<p>Les CLD ont pour mission la mobilisation de l'ensemble des acteurs locaux dans une démarche commune tournée vers l'action en vue de favoriser le développement de l'économie et la création d'emplois sur son territoire dans le cadre d'un partenariat entre le gouvernement et la communauté locale.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(www.acldq.qc.ca, en 2003)</p> <p>Les CLD gèrent l'attribution des subventions aux entreprises d'économie sociale des localités et sont chapeautés par des Conseils Régionaux de développement (CRD)</p>	<p>Au nombre de 119 selon l'Association des CLD du Québec (ACLQ) en 2003</p> <p>Les CLD sont formés de conseils d'administration sur lesquels siègent divers représentants de la communauté</p>	<p>Mise en place du réseau dès 1997</p> <p>Budget de 43 M \$ pour 1998-1999 auxquels s'ajoutent 40 M \$ issus des municipalités</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Comeau <i>et al.</i>, 2001, p.102)</p> <p>Pour 2002-2003, le budget total était établi à 130 M \$</p>
Centre local d'emploi (CLE)	Dispositif administratif étatique conçu pour la prestation de services intégrés à l'emploi pour les individus (mesures de l'Assurance-emploi, sécurité du Revenu) ainsi que pour les entreprises.	150 établissements liés à 17 directions régionales	Mise en place du réseau en 1997.

<p>Société d'aide au développement des collectivités (SADC)*</p> <p>* dispositif financé par le gouvernement fédéral</p>	<p>OBNL offrant des services d'aide et d'accompagnement pour tout ce qui touche le développement des milieux par le biais de trois programmes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - financement d'entreprises (fonds d'investissement) - stratégie jeunesse - programme d'accès communautaire <p>(Comeau et al., 2001)</p>	<p>Le Programme national de Développement des Collectivités (PDC) soutient financièrement :</p> <p>57 SADC, en régions rurales;</p> <p>9 Centres d'aide aux entreprises (CAE) en zone péri-urbaines;</p> <p>14 CDEC dans les zones urbaines défavorisées.</p>	<p>Nés en 1995, suite à la réorganisation des Centres d'aide aux entreprises (CAE) et des Comités d'aide au développement des collectivités (CADC)</p>	<p>Fond d'investissement établi à hauteur de 140 M\$</p> <p>1.3 M \$ pour un fond jeunesse</p> <p>(Comeau <i>et al.</i>, 2001, p.97)</p>
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ANNEXE B

Principales formes de contribution de l'économie sociale dans le champ du « welfare to work » au Québec

1.0 Insertion socioprofessionnelle et développement de l'employabilité

Services spécialisés de main-d'œuvre (SSMO)			
Offrir aux personnes handicapées, aux jeunes en difficulté et aux personnes immigrantes des services adaptés et personnalisés dans le but de développer leur employabilité et leur autonomie personnelle pour intégrer le marché du travail, dans un emploi valorisant et adapté à leur besoin, d'effectuer un retour aux études ou une mesure d'insertion (www.semo-saguenay.ca , 2002)	33 SSMO et multiples points de services dans les régions (www.ophq.gouv.qc.ca/Thematiques/D_Semo.htm , 2002)	1983 : Début des activités des Services externes de main-d'œuvre (SEMO) au Québec	Leur budget total s'établissait à 5.5 M \$ en 1997 (Comeau <i>et al.</i> , 2001)
Carrefour jeunesse emploi (CJE)			
Les CJE ont pour mission d'offrir des services d'orientation scolaire et professionnelle, d'aide à la recherche d'emploi et d'accompagnement aux jeunes adultes âgés entre 16 et 35 ans afin de faciliter leur insertion socioprofessionnelle.	106 CJE en 2003, présents dans toutes les régions du Québec incluant celle du grand nord	1983 : expérience initiale issue de l'Outaouais par un CCJE (Assogba, 2000) 1995 : institutionnalisation et expansion 1997 : fondation du Réseau des CJE	Financement de base 2001-2002: 33 M \$ Fonds jeunesse Qc (2002-2004) : 5 M \$
Club de recherche d'emploi (CRE)			
Les CRE ont pour mission de lutter contre l'exclusion sociale en offrant un soutien et une aide assistée de façon à ce que la clientèle sans-emploi intègre le plus rapidement possible le marché du travail.	48 clubs de recherche d'emploi au total (www.cre.qc.ca , 2003)	1984 : Ouverture des premiers clubs par le biais d'une initiative de la Commission de l'emploi et de l'immigration du Canada	

Entreprises d'insertion (EI)			
<p>Mission d'intégration professionnelle et sociale de personnes en situation d'exclusion, en fonction de 7 critères de reconnaissance :</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. mission d'insertion sociale ; 2. caractéristiques des participants en difficulté ; 3. entreprise véritable ; 4. statut de salarié aux travailleurs en formation; 5. accompagnement personnalisé ; 6. formation globale (personnelle, sociale et technique) ; 7. partenariat avec les acteurs du milieu. 	<p>38 membres du Collectif des entreprises d'insertion (CEIQ) dont 20 uniquement à Montréal</p> <p>(www.collectif.qc.ca, 2003)</p>	<p>1982 : apparition des premières expérimentations isolées, concentrées dans la région montréalaise</p> <p>1996 : fondation du CEIQ</p>	<p>Plus de 18 M \$ de revenus autogénérés annuellement par la vente de produits et services aux clients, aux entreprises ainsi qu'aux consommateurs</p>
Organismes de développement de l'employabilité (Rquode)			
<p>Le Rquode se donne pour mission de favoriser l'intégration au travail des personnes éprouvant des difficultés sur le plan de l'emploi.</p> <p>(www.savie.qc.ca/rquode/AccueilQuiSommesNous.htm, 2001)</p>	<p>46 membres</p>	<p>1970 : émergence d'initiatives</p> <p>1987 : fondation du regroupement</p>	

2.0 Promotion et défense de droits

Collectif pour un Québec sans pauvreté		
<p>Initialement formé afin de mettre sur pied une proposition de loi pour éliminer la pauvreté.</p>	<p>Regroupe 22 organisations nationales dont les centrales syndicales, le milieu coopératif, communautaire, religieux et étudiant.</p>	<p>1997 : début des discussions sur la proposition de loi-cadre formulée par le Collectif</p> <p>2002 : adoption de la loi 112, loi visant à lutter contre la pauvreté et l'exclusion sociale</p>

Coalition des organismes communautaires en développement de la main-d'œuvre (COCDMO)		
<p>La COCDMO vise la pleine reconnaissance du droit à la formation et du droit au travail pour toutes et tous, dans un principe d'équité entre les hommes et les femmes. L'action de la coalition repose sur les objectifs suivants :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assurer un accès libre et volontaire aux programmes; - Assurer une place équitable aux populations marginalisées; - Assurer le développement des collectivités et l'accompagnement du cheminement des personnes; - Assurer la reconnaissance des organismes communautaires comme partenaires à part entière et autonomes dans le développement de la main-d'œuvre. <p>(www.cocdmo.qc.ca/bienvenue.htm, 2000).</p>	19 groupes et regroupements membres	<p>Fondée en 1991 afin de voir à l'attribution d'un bloc de sièges aux organismes communautaires sur les instances régionales et nationales de la Société québécoise de développement de la main-d'œuvre (SQDM).</p> <p>La SQDM qui deviendra Emploi-Québec, maintiendra la participation des représentants COCDMO à la Commission des partenaires du marché du travail (CPMT)</p>
Front commun des personnes assistées sociales du Québec (FCPASQ)		
Le FCPASQ fait la Promotion des intérêts des personnes assistées sociales et voit à la défense de leurs droits collectifs et individuels.	Une trentaine d'organismes locaux et régionaux	Défense de droits des prestataires depuis 1977
Fédération des femmes du Québec (FFQ)		
<p>La FFQ travaille solidairement, et dans une perspective féministe, à l'accès des femmes à l'égalité, à l'équité, à la dignité et à la justice sociale dans tous les domaines. Ses objectifs généraux consistent à promouvoir et à défendre les intérêts et les droits des femmes, en assumant un rôle de critique, de concertation et de pression.</p> <p>(www.ffq.qc.ca/presentation/index.html, 2003)</p>	<p>160 membres associatifs</p> <p>860 membres individuelles</p>	<p>1966 : la FFQ voit le jour</p> <p>1995 : Marche « Du pain et des roses »</p> <p>2000 : Marche mondiale des femmes</p>

Front d'action populaire en réaménagement urbain (FRAPRU)

Le FRAPRU lutte pour le développement du logement social. (www.frapru.qc.ca , 2003)	24 organismes nationaux, régionaux et locaux actifs dans toutes les régions du Québec	Intervient depuis 1978 pour la défense et l'amélioration des conditions de logement et de vie de la population à faible revenu.	Aujourd'hui, plus de 62 000 logements HLM (Habitations à loyer modique) et 23 000 logements coopératifs ainsi que des milliers d'autres logements gérés par des organismes sans but lucratif.
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A Bad Time to be Poor in BC¹

Andrea Long, SPARC
BC

In January 2002, the BC government announced that it intended to implement a dramatic program of welfare restructuring. A 30% (\$609 million) cut to the operating budget of the Ministry of Human Resources was announced, along with significant reductions in numbers of local welfare offices and full time staff. These budget savings are being achieved by a combination of cuts to welfare benefits and a further tightening of eligibility rules, making it more difficult for people in need to access the welfare system.

I. BC's southern inspiration

The inspiration for many of BC's new welfare policies came from US welfare restructuring. However, what was imported from our neighbours to the south was selective. BC only borrowed American welfare policy 'sticks' – measures with which to push and keep people off the system, such as time limits, tightened eligibility requirements, and tough sanctions for non-compliance. These are all policy moves introduced in the US in its 1996 overhaul of welfare legislation.

What BC has not imported are US-style supports – measures that help welfare recipients make the transition to paid employment, including enhanced child care, transportation support, training and educational opportunities, and earnings exemptions. Whereas the US increased funding for child care by \$3 billion, BC has scaled back provincial child care support.² Whereas the US expanded the use of earnings exemptions – measures that permit welfare recipients to keep a portion of earned income to promote workforce attachment and encourage skill development – BC has completely eliminated earnings exemptions for all welfare recipients except those with disabilities. Whereas the US expanded transition to work supports, BC has actually reduced or eliminated many of these programs, contradicting the government's often

stated intention of helping welfare recipients move into paid work.³

The decision to emulate only American welfare policy sticks highlights the fact that budget-cutting remains a central objective of BC's welfare reform process. More restrictive welfare policies that reduce the number of people receiving benefits are needed to achieve mandated cost savings, particular when provincial budgets for health and education are frozen. Conversely, US welfare restructuring was not driven by a fiscal imperative to cut spending. Notwithstanding tough new rules, the US increased spending on programs for low-income people during the post-1996 welfare reform period.

II. Surprise, surprise! Why BC's welfare changes were unexpected

There are a number of reasons why the adoption of punitive US style welfare measures came as a surprise in BC. First, the previous government had already cut welfare benefits in the mid 1990s to levels that were insufficient to meet even basic needs. Prior to the Liberal's new legislation, SPARC BC research found that the maximum welfare income available to a single parent with one child covered only 65% of minimum living costs.⁴ With the new round of benefit reductions, these families are expected to make do with \$43 less each month. When this change in benefits is combined with the elimination of exemptions on earned income and child support payments, it will be practically impossible for many to make ends meet.

A second reason why welfare restructuring came as a surprise to BC residents is because a new welfare policy package was not a part of the campaign platform of the provincial Liberals. The party's *New Era* document said nothing about reforming or cutting welfare. When Gordon

Campbell was asked during the 2001 election campaign whether a new Liberal government would lower benefits, he replied with an unequivocal "We have no intention of reducing welfare rates."

Third, welfare changes were unexpected given that they were implemented during a period of economic slowdown. BC continues to struggle with persistently high unemployment in many parts of the province, with the result that there is considerable competition for scarce jobs. This is compounded by the fall out from the 2003 forest fires, and the fact that workers in resource dependent communities are still dealing with the implications of the softwood lumber dispute and exhausting their employment insurance coverage. According to the 2004 BC Budget, there are few bright spots on the horizon. Average unemployment is expected to remain above 7% until 2008, which effectively means that unemployment will not return to the level it was prior to the election of the Liberals until after their current mandate expires.⁵

III. BC's employment focused welfare policies

Perhaps the greatest surprise of all about the welfare changes is the nature of the reforms themselves. BC has gone further than any other Canadian jurisdiction in linking welfare to employment, introducing policies like a two year time limit on the receipt of welfare, and a requirement for two years of financial independence to establish eligibility. This policy package marks a significant departure from historical commitments in Canadian social policy.

There are two facets to the way in which a focus on employment has been enshrined in BC's welfare policies: the imposition of direct job search or training conditions on the receipt of welfare benefits; and changes in eligibility requirements. With respect to the former, BC has not done anything par-

ticularly new or surprising. We do not have workfare in the Ontario sense – there is no mandatory participation at specific jobs in order to retain access to welfare benefits. However, all BC welfare applicants are required to complete an employability screen (to evaluate individual barriers to employment) and a client employability profile. These instruments are used to develop legally binding employment plans that address personal barriers to employment. Failure to meet the terms of one's employment plan results in a reduction or suspension of benefits.

While BC may not be on the cutting edge in terms of imposing job search as a condition of receiving income assistance, the second way in which welfare policy has been reoriented towards employment is unprecedented in Canada. This second channel is about redefining eligibility.

The provincial government's rationale for tightening of eligibility rules is that restricting access to the system ostensibly provides new 'incentive' for benefit recipients to look for work. There is a whole spectrum of policies that contribute to this end. Four particularly surprising moves are discussed below: the two year time limit; the two year independence test; the three week wait period; and changes to lone parent work exemptions.

Two year welfare time limit

The time limit policy states that 'employable' welfare recipients are now only eligible to receive welfare benefits for a cumulative total of 24 months (two years) within a 60 month (five year) period. Once the two year limit is reached, recipients either have their benefits reduced or suspended. In effect, this means that welfare can be denied to people who may lack any other source of income based on an arbitrary time period. This is an unprecedented move in Canada's social landscape. No other jurisdiction has adopted a policy of this kind, including Alberta and Ontario where there has been significant welfare restructuring.

The time limit policy is set to come into effect in BC on April 1, 2004. In response to considerable public outcry concerning the number of people who will incur additional hardship, the BC

government has expanded the list of people exempted from the time limit rule.⁶ Of particular note is the new exemption that persons complying with their employment plans are exempt from the time limit. This exemption effectively makes the time limit policy redundant, since non-compliance with employment plan obligations can already lead to the reduction or suspension of benefits. With this new exemption, the number of people facing time limit sanctions is significantly reduced. However, the fact that these persons will still be left with limited or no support makes the time limit policy a dangerous precedent to keep on the books in BC. To this end, the BC Public Interest Advocacy Centre is pursuing a constitutional challenge of the time limit policy.⁷

Two year independence test

The two year independence test policy states that welfare applicants age 19 and over must demonstrate that they have been financially self-sufficient for two consecutive years in order to be eligible to apply for welfare. This includes any time spent receiving employment insurance benefits. The independence test rule represents another first for Canadian social policy. It is particularly burdensome for young people, many of whom may not have had sufficient time to accrue the required two years of independence when leaving home or completing an educational program. While comprehensive evidence is difficult to collect, anecdotal data suggests that this policy has already resulted in increases in the number of young adults using emergency drop in and shelter facilities.

Three week wait period

Persons who turn to BC's welfare system for assistance can no longer receive benefits right away under most circumstances. They are given 'Reasonable Work Search Guidelines', instructed to attend a pre-application orientation session, and told to return in three weeks with evidence of an employment search. Before persons are deemed eligible to actually apply for welfare, their job searches must be completed to the satisfaction of Ministry of Human Resources workers.

Although the minimum wait period is three weeks, we know that in practice, it can last as long as six weeks. Since persons who turn to welfare for assistance have typically already exhausted available resources, the wait period is creating significant additional hardship. It is difficult to look for work without money to pay for food, accommodation, child care, or transportation.

Lone parent work exemptions and child care

The treatment of lone parents has changed significantly under new welfare rules. Lone parents were previously exempted from work-related obligations until their youngest child reached age seven. This age exclusion has been reduced. Lone parents are now subject to all 'employability' requirements when their youngest child reaches age three. This change affected approximately 8,900 lone parent families whose status changed from 'temporarily excused from work' to 'expected to work'.⁸ This move has particular implications for women, since they still constitute the majority of lone parents.

What is particularly startling about this change is that it was accompanied by a move away from support for child care. Maximum child care subsidy rates for the lowest income families remain unchanged, although the full subsidy falls far short of the actual costs of care.⁹ However, the total monthly income that a family may have to be eligible for the child care subsidy has been reduced by \$185. In addition, the province now claws back more of the subsidy from modest income families. Together, these changes mean that the value of the subsidy has been substantially reduced for many families.¹⁰

The simultaneous increase in lone parent work requirements and decrease in provincial support for child care is surprising given that research has repeatedly demonstrated that child care is a key employment support for lone parents, and low income families more generally. The provincial government repeatedly claims that the motivation for its welfare restructuring is to promote self sufficiency through employment, and to create incentives for people to leave the welfare system for work. In the case of lone parents, the

effect of the new welfare policies is contradictory to this stated aim.

IV. (Mis)measuring success

Whereas the first way that the government of BC is reorienting welfare towards employment punishes benefit recipients for not fulfilling their job search obligations, the second reorientation around eligibility effectively keeps people off of the welfare system altogether, either from the outset with wait periods, or once they have been deemed to be on the system for too long. Unsurprising, this two pronged strategy has been remarkably successful at reducing the welfare caseloads.

Despite high rates of unemployment in the province, the BC government has reached its welfare caseload reduction target ahead of schedule. The forecast was for a 25% drop over three years (April 2002 to April 2005), but data for December 2003 indicates that the caseload has already fallen by that amount. As of December 2003, there were over 35,000 fewer cases – over 64,000 individuals – receiving welfare in BC. The BC government surpassed its caseload reduction target despite the fact that it was based on achieving an unemployment rate of 6.9%. As noted above, unemployment has remained well over 7% since the election of the provincial Liberals in 2001.

The BC government is eager to claim the reduction in welfare caseloads as an indication of the success of their new policy package. What underpins these claims is the assumption that people are leaving the welfare system for paid employment. However, the 2004 Budget indicates that only 26,000 income assistance recipients found jobs through the government's Job Placement programs since June 2001.¹¹ Over the same period, there are 100,000 fewer individuals receiving welfare.¹²

As for the rest of the people who have left welfare, we just do not really know what has happened to them. Although the government instituted an exit survey process to try and track welfare leavers, the instrument is flawed.¹³ First, the sample only includes welfare recipients who remain off the system for six months. As a result, survey findings essentially state the obvious: people who stay off of welfare for six

months can do so because they have a job. Defining the sample in this way also means that the exit surveys by definition fail to capture all those who cycle back onto welfare in less than six months. The cyclical nature of welfare caseloads is well established in historical trend data. Indeed, the BC's government's own analysis indicates that 49% of welfare recipients receive benefits for three months or less, and 81% remained on the system for less than twelve months.¹⁴

The second set of problems with the exit surveys concerns the number of people who actually participated in the data collection process. The surveys only managed to attain response rates between 32% and 37%. In many cases, close to half of those sought for the surveys did not have a phone number in service, and another one quarter to one fifth declined to be interviewed or could not be reached. Together, these weaknesses indicate that statements about the 'success' welfare leavers enjoy with respect to finding employment are overstated.

V. Conclusion

BC Ministry of Human Resources exit surveys do not make any attempt to track whether persons exiting the welfare system are encountering hardship, even if they are leaving welfare for paid work. Performance measures for the Ministry also fail to include any evaluation of whether welfare recipients are facing unacceptable levels of hardship. In the absence of government attention to the well-being of some of the most vulnerable residents in our province, it is vital for other groups to play an active role in monitoring the impact of BC's new welfare rules. More research is needed to track what is happening to welfare recipients, as well as those leaving the welfare system. Despite claims about what we can and cannot afford on the social policy front in BC, the priorities we set are a matter of choice – and there are always different choices to be made.

¹⁴This article is based on a larger report entitled *A Bad Time to be Poor. An Analysis of British Columbia's New Welfare Policies*. This report is co-authored by Andrea Long (SPARC BC)

and Seth Klein (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives – BC Office). It was released in June 2003.

²United States General Accounting Office. 1999. *Welfare Reform: Assessing the Effectiveness of Various Welfare-to-Work Approaches*. Washington.

³For example, supports for people moving from welfare into work previously included transition to work benefits of up to \$150 a month for 12 consecutive months, and a workforce entry benefit of up to \$200. Both of these programs have been eliminated. Replacing these initiatives is the Confirmed Job Program, which offers one time grants of up to \$250 to welfare recipients who have found work, but require assistance to purchase an essential item. Unlike previous programs, child care is not an eligible expense.

⁴Andrea Long and Michael Goldberg. 2002. *Falling Further Behind: A Comparison of Living Costs and Employment and Assistance Rates in British Columbia*. Vancouver: SPARC BC.

⁵BC Budget and Fiscal Plan – 2004/04 to 2006/07. Table 3.5 – Ministry of Finance Economic Forecast: Key Economic Indicators, p. 95.

www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca

⁶For a full list of exemptions to the time limit rule, go to www.mhr.gov.bc.ca/PUBLICAT/VOL1/Part7/7-16.htm.

⁷For more information on the constitutional challenge, go to www.bcpiaac.com.

⁸Lesley Moore. 2002. *Income Assistance After the Cuts: Client and Caseload Statistics for March to July 2002 and Annual Savings Projections for MHR*. Vancouver: End Legislated Poverty.

⁹Long and Goldberg. 2002.

¹⁰See page 24 of the full report for a table outlining child care subsidy claw backs.

¹¹BC Budget and Fiscal Plan – 2004/04 to 2006/07, p. 63.

www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca

¹²BC Employment and Assistance Monthly Caseload Statistics.

www.mhr.gov.bc.ca/research/index.htm

¹³To view exit survey reports, go to www.mhr.gov.bc.ca/research/reports/index.htm.

¹⁴William Warburton. 1999.
*Comparison of the Income Assistance
Caseload and Applicants for Income
Assistance with Outstanding Indictable
Warrants*. Victoria: Ministry of Human
Resources Economic Analysis Branch.

'Good Jobs in Good Workplaces': Reflections on Medium-Term Labour Market Challenges

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Introduction

The central argument of the paper is that labour market policy will fail if it does not take full account of the fact that 'macro' employment policy outcomes are largely determined in workplaces. The emerging focus of Canadian labour market and social policy on social inclusion through paid employment is broadly appropriate (with significant caveats), but positive outcomes for workers critically depend upon the existence of 'good jobs in good workplaces.' While there are many dimensions to 'good jobs,' the paper highlights pay and access to opportunities for the development of skills, capacities and capabilities.

'Good jobs in good workplaces' are needed if individuals are to be able to develop their talents and capacities, to actively participate in society, and to enjoy a broad equality of life-chances. However, 'precarious employment' is a major risk for many Canadians - those with relatively low levels of formal education; women, especially single parents; recent immigrants; Aboriginal persons; and persons with disabilities. A key issue for labour market policy is the increased segmentation of the job market between 'precarious jobs' and 'core jobs.'

Macro-economic factors and the 'social safety net' can play a major role in countering the growth and social implications of precarious work, as well as the problem of work intensification in core jobs. However, the task of creating 'good jobs' cannot be left to the market alone. Labour market regulation which impacts at the level of the workplace is also needed. The example of many European countries shows that labour market regulation through collective bargaining helps achieve better

employment outcomes at no cost in terms of labour market adaptability, employment and productivity.

The paper highlights the need for greater knowledge of workplace conditions and calls for policy measures which would gradually lead to the development of a more inclusive Canadian labour market model. A start can be made by establishing a 'living wage' and workplace-based training entitlements for all workers.

Labour Market Policy and Social Inclusion Through Paid Work

In recent years, much has been written in Canada and elsewhere about a 'new architecture' for social and economic policy. The general thrust has been to insist upon the critical importance to 'social inclusion' of high rates of participation of the working-age population in paid employment. A sub-theme has been the need for investment in 'human capital' to secure higher quality employment and successful transition to the 'new, knowledge-based economy.'

Employment is rightly seen as a critical source of income and of personal well-being, of access to economic resources as well as capabilities for individual development within an 'active society.' The goal of inclusion through work is often contrasted to 'dependency' upon state income support programs, which have been variously seen as creating 'disincentives to work' because of overly 'generous' substitutes for wage income (as in the neo-classical economic paradigm), or (in the progressive social policy paradigm) as barriers to inclusion and poverty traps because of poor program design and inadequate twinning with 'activating' social investments in areas like child

care, training and employment assistance.

A policy focus on social inclusion through employment is appropriate, and not very different from the long-standing, social-democratic goal of 'full employment' (which stressed high employment at family wages for men). But, some caveats must be entered. If we want to achieve high employment for both men and women, as we should to equalize economic resources as well as opportunities for self-development, then full account must be taken of the 'caring needs' of households. To some extent, these can be taken care of through the expansion of high quality public services, such as child care and home care. But, society should not expect single parents with young children to work as a condition for economic security, and it is problematic to expect two-parent families with children to hold down two full-time jobs in a context of rising hours and greater demands in 'core jobs.' Intensification of work and long hours pose a threat to 'socially inclusive employment' and active social participation outside work. As well, full-time paid work may not be appropriate for many persons with mental and physical disabilities who deserve decent income and social supports.

A strategy of social inclusion through employment must recognize that the macro-economic context is absolutely critical to both high employment and good employment outcomes. Involuntary unemployment remains a cyclical problem, and can also result from structural economic change driven by changes in trade, technology, etc. Further, orthodox monetary and fiscal policies with their fixation on a 'natural' or 'non-accelerating inflation rate of unemployment' or NAIRU can and

do deliberately raise unemployment to fight perceived inflationary threats. A high employment policy demands a facilitative macro-economic context, and strong employer demand for workers is critically needed to improve conditions in workplaces. For example, the degree of slack in the job market is a huge influence upon employer investment in training for the unskilled, attention to the unrecognized skills and credentials of new immigrants, relative pay levels by skill, employer willingness to balance demands of work and family, and so on. The very low unemployment rates reached in the US after 1995 significantly reduced the incidence of low pay and earnings inequality, as well as pay and opportunity gaps based upon race (Mishel et al., 2002) and there is no doubt that falling unemployment since the mid-1990's has also had positive impacts in Canada.

The general thrust of labour market policy in Canada in the 1990's has been to promote higher employment and lower unemployment through ‘flexible’ labour markets. EI and welfare benefits were reduced, not just to balance government budgets, but also to counter supposed ‘rigidities’ and ‘disincentives to work’ by explicitly increasing worker dependence on wage income. At the same time, it has been increasingly recognized by policy makers that promotion of employment requires carrots (‘make work pay’) and not just sticks. The ‘welfare wall’ has been addressed (in a still very limited way) through income supplements and the continuation of welfare benefits into work for low income working families, and, more in theory than in practice, by the provision of supports and services, such as child care and employment supports for persons with disabilities. However, income supplementation for the working poor is still very limited, and cuts in EI and welfare transfers to lower income working families have not been fully offset by wage income supplements and ‘activation’ investments. An income tax threshold of below \$8,000 is very low (particularly when compared to the US after the enhancement of the Earned Income Tax Credit). The rhetoric of investment in skills has not been accompanied by major new training initiatives for the unemployed or

precariously employed, and Canada spends far less on such programs than leading OECD countries. We have just begun the task of developing a coherent national child care policy, and provision of affordable, quality child care is very limited despite widespread recognition of its crucial importance to inclusion through employment. Employment supports to persons with disabilities and new immigrants are woefully deficient.

In sum, the ostensible goal of social inclusion through employment has not been adequately reflected in the needed changes to social and labour market programs. That said, it could be optimistically maintained that the basic trajectory of change is in the right direction (the beginnings of a national child care program, the continuing increase in the National Child Benefit, baby steps to an employment program for persons with disabilities, labour market inclusion policies for new immigrants, etc.). However, the workplace dimension is relatively absent from conceptualization let alone implementation of the ‘new’ labour market policy package in Canada.

The New Face of Jobs: Implications for Social Inclusion

By some measures, Canada has done well on the job front since economic recovery began in earnest in the mid-1990's. The employment rate is at an all-time high, and long-term adult unemployment is very low. Job creation has been tilted to relatively highly skilled occupations, particularly among women (though the recent shift is no more rapid than the long-term trend).

As shown in Table 1, from the late 1990's, rising employment has boosted the market incomes of lower- and middle-income families after several years of decline. And, annual earnings inequality seems to have stabilized since 1997. But, earnings inequality is at a significantly greater level than in 1989, as indicated by both the gap between the top and the middle and the top and the bottom of the annual market income distribution.

Male median earnings have stagnated for two decades, while, from the mid-1990's, there has been an increase in the proportion of men with ‘high’ annual earnings of more than \$60,000.

For women, the pattern of stagnation of real median earnings is less pronounced, while the trend to more ‘high income’ earners is much more pronounced. The trend is to increased annual earnings inequality among both men and women, particularly the former, and to somewhat reduced earnings inequality between women and men (until the late 1990's). (See Beach, Finnie and Gray, 2003, for a wealth of supporting empirical detail.) Earnings inequality is a close proxy for other aspects of employment, such as access to health benefits and pensions.

Turning to the after-tax and transfer distribution of income, it is striking that the income share of the top 20% of families has continued to increase even in a period of strong employment growth. It is only the top 40% or so of working families who have been relatively insulated from increased income insecurity and stagnation of real incomes in the 1990's. However, poverty rates for the working-age population, particularly families with children, have fallen (but remain somewhat above the level of 1989). In sum, rising employment in the late 1990's recovery has had modestly positive impacts on real incomes, but there is a disturbing longer term trend towards a much more polarized society.

Low paid workers who manage to find full-time, full-year jobs may escape poverty, depending upon family circumstances, but it is clear that low pay combined with a high risk of unemployment is a major factor behind the structural increase in after-tax/transfer family income inequality and poverty. There is a clear link between low pay on the one hand, and after-tax income inequality and risk of poverty on the other. This is particularly the case given the erosion of income transfers in the 1990's, as well as more recent reductions in income taxes which have been tilted to the more affluent.

Restructuring in both the private and public sectors, driven by ‘globalization,’ technological change, contracting-out, and spending cuts, has increased labour market segmentation. At one pole, we have seen an increased incidence of ‘precarious work,’ relatively concentrated among youth (including young adults) and ‘high risk’ groups

Table 1
Family Income Trends in the 1990's

	1989	1997	2000	% Change 1989-2000	% Change 1997-2000
Market Income					
Bottom Quintile	\$3,088	\$1,746	\$2,780	-10%	59.2%
Middle Quintile	\$39,627	\$34,475	\$38,685	-2.4%	12.2%
Top Quintile	\$109,752	\$111,377	\$122,638	11.7%	10.1%
Share of Top Quintile	42.4%	45.5%	45.1%		
Ratio of Top/Bottom	35.5	63.8	44.1		
Ratio of Top/Middle	2.8	3.2	3.2		
Post Tax/Transfer Income Shares					
Bottom Quintile	7.7%	7.3%	7.3%		
Next Quintile	13.6%	12.9%	12.8%		
Middle Quintile	18.2%	17.9%	17.6%		
Next Quintile	23.6%	23.6%	23.5%		
Top Quintile	36.9%	38.4%	38.8%		

(Data are for Economic Families of Two Persons or More.) Statistics Canada. Income in Canada CD-Rom. Table T701.

Constant \$ 2000

Poverty (Post Tax LICO)

All Persons	10.0%	13.5%	10.9%
Children	11.5%	16.0%	12.5%
18-64	9.3%	13.5%	11.0%
65 plus	10.9%	8.6%	7.3%

Statistics Canada: Income in Canada CD-ROM. Table T802.

such as single parents, recent immigrants, Aboriginal Canadians, persons with disabilities, and adults with limited education or in-demand skills, particularly women. Precarious work can be permanent full-time employment which is frequently interrupted by unemployment; employment in temporary jobs; underemployment in involuntary part-time jobs; or employment in low income 'own account' self-employment. Precarious work overlaps with the growth of 'non-standard' work such as temporary jobs and own account self-employment, both of which increased significantly as a share of the labour force in the 1990's. But, it is perhaps best defined by the combined risk of unemployment and relatively low pay.

The limited data that we have from longitudinal surveys (e.g., Drolet and Morissette, 1998; Finnie, 2000; Beach, Finnie and Gray, 2003) suggest that

most adult low paid workers (particularly women and those with low levels of education) remain low paid, and that many working poor families cycle in and out of poverty and near poverty as they find, or fail to find, enough weeks of work at decent wages in a year. Even full-time, full-year jobs must pay about \$10 per hour just to keep a single person above the pre-tax LICO line in a large city, and the incidence of annual unemployment among low-wage workers is at least double and even treble the average monthly rate. Throughout most of the 1990's, between one-quarter and one-third of Canadian families experienced at least one spell of unemployment in a given year, and the risk of unemployment is concentrated among the relatively uneducated and unskilled. (Adults with less than a high school education have about double the unemployment risk of high school graduates, and three to four times the unemploy-

ment risk of college and university graduates.) The risk of both periodic unemployment and low pay is highest among youth, single adults, recent immigrants, Aboriginal Canadians, and persons with disabilities.

As shown in Table 2, about 1 in 4 Canadian workers are low paid, defined as earning less than two-thirds of the national median hourly wage (or less than about \$10 per hour in today's dollars). About 1 in 5 men and 1 in 3 women are low paid, and about 1 in 10 'core working-age' men and 1 in 5 'core working-age' women are low paid. Data for Canada reported by the OECD (1996) show that the incidence of low pay among full-time workers (also defined as less than two-thirds the median) is 30% or more in clerical, sales, service, and labouring occupations, and generally quite low outside these clusters. The table shows that the incidence of low-paid work has been

Table 2
Employed in Low-Wage Jobs

Low Wage defined as earnings less than two-thirds the National Median Hourly Wage

	1997	2002
All	25.0%	25.3%
Men	19.4%	19.4%
Women	31.1%	31.5%
15-24	68.7%	67.3%
25-54	16.0%	16.0%
55+	19.2%	19.8%
Men 25-54	10.3%	10.2%
Women 25-54	22.1%	22.2%
Full-Time	18.4%	18.2%
Part-Time	53.9%	57.0%
Union	7.1%	8.4%
Non-Union	34.0%	33.0%

Source: Labour Force Survey.
(Median Wage: \$14.00/hr. in 1997;
\$15.65/hr. in 2002.)

stable since 1997, despite falling unemployment. At the other end of the scale, the incidence of high pay - defined as two times the median hourly wage - increased from 7.5% to 8.3% between 1997 and 2002.

The connection between precarious work (low pay and high unemployment risk) on the one hand and poverty and social exclusion on the other is much greater for single parents and single adults who must depend upon one wage income, as well as larger families. Low income dynamics are strongly influenced by family circumstances (as well as changes in household composition as a result of marriage and divorce). The implications of precarious work for poverty and social exclusion are, then, particularly serious for singles (single parents, many older workers, many persons with disabilities) and those with large families (most recent immigrants and many Aboriginal families).

With longitudinal surveys, such as SLID still in their infancy, we lack good data and analysis on medium and long-term labour market trajectories of precarious workers, and the role played by education and skills (including recognition of foreign skills and credentials); discrimination in employment

on the basis of race, gender and ability, and the role of structural change which can quickly devalue skills and experience). Beach, Finnie and Gray (2003) find that there has been a significant widening of longer term or 'life cycle' earnings differentials and life-chances in the 1990's, particularly among men. Inter-generational differences have also grown significantly, as the relative position of younger workers in the job market has been eroded. This trend to inequality has been driven both by more unstable employment and by increased earnings inequality even among those with relatively few major earnings interruptions. To some extent, the dominant policy focus on poverty has distracted attention from this wider phenomenon of growing social distance and inequality of lifetime opportunities and outcomes driven by labour market developments.

Precarious work involves much more than low pay, limited access to benefits, such as pension and health benefits, and a high risk of unemployment. It also carries a high risk of not being 'developmental,' not leading to the development of skills and capacities which increase the ability of workers to access better jobs, to start and proceed on lifetime career ladders, and to better handle labour market risks, such as permanent layoffs. In the economic jargon, the accumulation of job experience and on-the-job training are sources of 'human capital' which enable workers to make upward progress in the job market and better deal with uncertainty. Almost by definition, precarious workers are excluded from the internal labour markets of large establishments. Job experience in a sequence of 'dead-end' jobs may be worth something compared to long-term unemployment, but not much in periods when labour markets are slack and skill requirements for 'good jobs' are rising.

Second, precarious work and 'dead-end jobs' do not allow for the exercise of skills, capacities and capabilities on the job. Inclusion in the labour market means more than having a job which provides an income and a modicum of 'human capital.' It also means being able to derive some meaning and fulfilment from work. Jobs are valued by workers not only for purely

economic reasons, but also to the extent that they provide interesting work, self-dignity and respect, and good relations with co-workers and supervisors.

We lack good data on working conditions in Canada, notably lacking a major survey such as that undertaken by the European Union. (An EU institution, the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, conducted major surveys of European working conditions in 1990, 1995 and 2000.) We know that just 4 in 10 workers report a lot of freedom over how to work, and that lack of control is much more pronounced among women and lower skilled workers. Data from the EU survey - which we do not have for Canada - show that about 1 in 3 workers, with a heavy concentration among the relatively unskilled, have little or no influence over the pace of work, the order in which tasks are performed, or break times. Many machine operators and clerical and service workers report continuously working at high speed. It is well-established that the combination of low job control and high work demands is very stressful, with negative implications for both physical and mental health.

A significant minority of workers feel that their skills and qualifications are under-utilized at work, in part, because many jobs are deliberately structured so as to minimize the need for skills and discretion. Literacy, numeracy and other skills of young adults and recent immigrants trapped in 'dead-end' jobs atrophy from lack of use. The lack of developmental opportunities on the job for precarious workers is also underscored by the fact that it is the least skilled and least educated who get the least access to employer-sponsored and on-the-job training. Those with a highschool education get only one-fifth the workplace training of those with a university education, locking in differences in lifetime labour market trajectories from the point of entry into the labour market. Precarious workers also have great difficulty accessing training and education opportunities because of low income and unpredictable and unsocial working hours.

The key point is that most low-pay jobs held by adults are not just inse-

cure, they also tend to be 'dead-end' jobs which offer little or no opportunity to develop skills, capacities and capabilities which are important from the perspective of social inclusion.

It could be argued that many jobs are intrinsically low-skill jobs, and that low worker control and high demands are needed to raise productivity. But, there is significant variation between countries in terms of job characteristics, with little apparent difference in productivity outcomes. And, micro-level studies show that objectively similar work (such as assembling cars or nursing patients or providing clerical support to professionals) can be structured in quite different ways. Different combinations of technology, skills and work processes can be utilized by firms producing the same products and services, with very different implications for workers. Countries such as Germany and the Scandinavian countries which relatively emphasize investment in the skills of the bottom third of workers, including manual and routinized service workers, have done relatively well in productivity terms, while also producing more satisfying jobs and more opportunities for workers to follow developmental career paths. (See ILO, 2003.)

The key point is that not all jobs are equal from the perspective of inclusion. Workplace conditions matter a great deal, and it cannot be assumed that these conditions are consistently determined by industry, sector, kind of production, etc.

At the other end of the job spectrum, there is accumulating evidence that 'core jobs' - reasonably secure, full-time, full-year jobs in larger workplaces - are becoming more intense, more demanding and more stressful. Such jobs generally require higher levels of education and skills (particularly when 'routinized' work can be contracted out to small firms employing peripheral workers); often involve the use of skills and discretion on the job; and provide access to lifetime career ladders. For professionals and skilled workers, work reorganization and new technology can, and often do, produce more interesting and developmental jobs. But, there has also been a lot of old-fashioned work intensification in

the 1990's in the form of greater demands and longer hours. Surveys (e.g., Duxbury and Higgins, General Social Survey) consistently report high and rising levels of stress among core workers from very long hours, demands to 'do more with less' in the wake of 'downsizing,' the intrusion of paid work into the home, and reduced ability to balance the demands of paid work with those of family and community. Given the gendered division of household labour, much of the negative impact of work intensification falls on women.

To date, the intensification of work in core jobs has taken place in tandem with increased entry of women into such jobs. It is generally recognized that provision of child care, access to home care, and flexible hours and leaves are needed to better balance work and household demands. But, it is also clear that progress to date has been quite limited, and that only a minority of employers provide genuine flexibility of hours. There remain substantial barriers to the full participation of women in the most demanding jobs, particularly in the private sector. Working conditions are thus a major barrier to inclusive employment for women.

Less well studied is the impact of changing work conditions on the retirement decision. There is some evidence that voluntary early retirement is related, not just to access to decent pensions, but also to the incompatibility of work demands with the needs of older workers. For example, early retirement is common among nurses partly because the physical demands of hospital nursing are great, and partly because older workers are less willing to work shifts and unsocial hours. There are major workplace level barriers to the desire of some older workers to work shorter hours, but to remain in the workforce, not least the provisions of defined benefit plans.

To summarize, workplace conditions in 'core jobs' also increasingly run counter to the goal of promoting high levels of socially inclusive employment.

The Workplace and Labour Market Policy

Good employment outcomes for workers - in terms of pay, opportunities for development, and working conditions - depend upon conditions in workplaces. Yet, labour market policy in Canada, to a large degree, has been about compensating for labour market failure as opposed to being about creating better workplaces.

To take the most obvious example, it is widely recognized that 'making work pay' is an important part of employment policy. The 'welfare wall' for parents, particularly single parents, has been addressed through the National Child Benefit, which now provides a significant income supplement to working poor families with children. In a similar way, there are many advocates of increasing the Disability Tax Credit to make it a more effective income supplementation program for low income workers with disabilities, and some very limited steps have been taken in this direction. These are important initiatives. But, they beg the question of what level of wage income should be supplemented by the state. Should governments not expect employers to provide at least a 'living wage' sufficient to maintain a single person above the poverty line, if only to reduce the burden of taxes? Similarly, in the area of training and 'human capital development,' the focus (which itself remains very far from realization) is upon public provision of training for the unemployed as opposed to those employed in precarious jobs. Only Quebec expects employers to meet a minimum training level (defined as a percentage of payroll) for the already employed, and no jurisdiction has established an employee right to training or leaves for training. In short, pay, training and 'human capital development' are all largely left to the market.

To be sure, the federal and provincial governments maintain a framework of legislated minimum (or minimal) employment standards covering hours of work, paid time off, unsafe working conditions, and minimum pay. But, as Battle (2003) has recently shown, minimum wage incomes fall well below accepted poverty lines, even if it is somewhat improbably assumed that

minimum wage workers work full-time for a full year. Employment standards legislation has nothing to say about workplace governance issues, and it is striking that the vast majority of complaints (more than 90%) are filed after severance of the employment relationship.

Governments also play a modest role in workplace governance to the extent that they facilitate access to collective bargaining. Bargaining tends to be associated with higher levels of worker access to training and better working conditions, and it is well-established that collective agreement coverage raises the relative pay of lower paid and lower skilled workers and compresses wage differentials within the unionized sector between the skilled and the unskilled, as well as between men and women and between racial groups. Union coverage reduces low pay for both men and women and reduces wage inequality, particularly among men. (For recent Canadian evidence, see Card, Lemieux and Riddell, 2002.) But, union coverage extends to only 1 in 3 workers overall, and just 1 in 5 private sector workers. Coverage in the private sector is concentrated in larger firms in transportation, communications, utilities, manufacturing, and the resource sector, as well as in construction, but is marginal - covering no more than 5% to 10% of workers - in the small firms in the service sector where most precarious workers and most new jobs are to be found. The 'Wagner Act' model of workplace by workplace representation makes unionization difficult to achieve and maintain in private services, because of small workplace size and the fact that it is difficult to achieve wage gains for the low paid unless higher pay and standards are generalized across a sector, an occupation or a geographic locale. (See *The Collective Reflection on the Changing Workplace: Report of the Advisory Committee on the Changing Workplace*. Human Resources Development Canada, 1997, particularly the contributions of Alex Dagg, Serge Brault and Lars Osberg.)

The deregulated Canadian labour market model, like that of the US, differs profoundly from that to be found in many European countries. It is common

to distinguish 'welfare regimes' based upon the level of income transfers and public services. But, it is also important to note that the social-democratic countries of Scandinavia and the 'social market' countries, such as Germany and the Netherlands, are also distinguished by the fact that the labour market and the workplace are collectively regulated by the 'social partners.' In these countries, collective bargaining coverage is very high (and generally quite stable) because of high union membership in combination with the de facto or sometimes legal extension of agreements on a sectoral or regional basis. Wage floors set by bargaining protect the great majority of non-professional/managerial workers, including most part-time and even temporary workers. Bargaining covers more than 80% of workers in Germany and the Scandinavian and Benelux countries, as well as France and Italy, and is very much the preferred instrument of regulation. Statutory minimum wages are, perhaps surprisingly, significantly higher than in Canada as a percentage of average earnings in only a few countries (notably France). Also, unions and legislatively mandated works councils mean that there are strong elements of joint workplace governance over such issues as training and working conditions.

Countries with high levels of bargaining coverage have relatively equal earnings distributions and high wage floors, so that the incidence of low pay and earnings inequality are much lower in the Scandinavian and social market countries than in Canada and other 'deregulated' labour markets. (See OECD 1996.) About 1 in 4 full-time workers in Canada in the mid-1990's (23.7%) were low paid - defined as earning less than two-thirds of the median national full-time wage - compared to just 1 in 20 (5.2%) in Sweden and only 1 in 8 in Germany and the Netherlands. Earnings distributions differ profoundly between OECD countries mainly because of institutional differences, notwithstanding common exposure to the forces of globalization and technological and organizational change. The incidence of low pay is highly correlated to collective bargaining coverage and declines in coverage

are associated with rising wage inequality in deregulated labour markets, particularly among men (Card, Lemieux and Riddell, 2002; Aidt and Tzannatos, 2003).

Many low paid workers, particularly youth, live in middle-income households. But, there is a clear relationship between regulated labour markets on the one hand, and low levels of after-tax/transfer income inequality on the other. (Smeeding, 2002). Indeed, there is a very close link between a low incidence of low pay and a low level of after-tax income inequality, and countries with high wage floors have much more equal distributions of income. In part, this is because countries with more regulated labour markets also tend to have relatively 'generous' income transfers such as EI and welfare, and many offer earnings supplements to the low paid. But, it is mainly because the task of redistributing income and opportunities on the part of the state is made far easier when the initial labour market distribution is more equal. A combination of a high level of employment and a low level of earnings inequality and low pay is almost guaranteed to produce a low level of after-tax/transfer inequality and poverty. Such a fortunate combination is to be found in the Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands which are the most equal and inclusive advanced industrial countries.

It is commonly assumed and argued that high wage floors and low earnings inequality come at the price of growth and jobs. But, summaries of research by the ILO (1995, 1996-97) OECD (1996) and World Bank (Aidt and Tzannatos, 2003) show that relative earnings equality and high unionization are quite consistent with high rates of employment, productivity and job growth. Denmark and the Netherlands both performed very well in both economic and social terms in the 1990's, certainly much better than Canada. (Jackson, 2001; Auer, 2000; ILO, 2003.) There is substantial evidence that unions and wage floors can help promote firm level productivity through good workplace relations, and unionization is quite consistent with maintaining adaptable labour markets and wages which are responsive to changing

macro-economic conditions. (ILO, 2003.)

The central point is that labour market outcomes are significantly improved if the labour market and workplaces are regulated jointly by 'the social partners' with the support of governments. While the evidence is clearest for the impact on pay differentials, collective bargaining and institutions of joint governance such as works councils are also closely associated with higher levels of training, more equitable access to training, and better workplace conditions. (Auer, 2000; ILO, 2003.)

Canada cannot, of course, just produce a new labour market model out of thin air by copying others. There may be some constraints and challenges posed by close economic integration with the US, which tilts even more heavily to the deregulated model than does Canada. Moreover, European systems developed historically out of specific national circumstances, as the result of conscious efforts by social movements and other social actors, not just governments. While governments can facilitate change, it is mainly up to unions to organize workers, and up to business and labour to develop a good climate of labour relations. What counts above all is a broad and genuine national commitment to goals of equality, solidarity and social inclusion.

The key labour market policy challenge is how to push Canada in this direction over the next decade.

Towards a 'Living Wage'

In principle, a wage floor should be sufficient to maintain a single person working full-time/full-year at the poverty line, so that income supplementation of low earnings by governments is concentrated on dealing with unemployment (good EI benefits) and family or personal circumstances (e.g., through family income-tested benefits, such as child benefits and GST credits, disability tax credits, etc.). There are several key arguments for a wage floor. It places some obligation on employers and the labour market to generate adequate incomes. Because it applies to all employers, it stops the most irresponsible and unscrupulous firms from undercutting the efforts of the more socially responsible. It 'makes work pay' and

can provide strong work incentives. It allows limited government resources to be directed to other purposes (including employment supports and services, and employment relevant programs such as child care). As noted above, wage floors create a more equal distribution of earnings and reduce poverty. Wage floors also tend to minimize the problem of high marginal tax rates for low income earners and households which can be associated with income-tested supplements, depending upon their design.

There are two major arguments against a wage floor. The first is that many low wage workers (particularly youth, but also many working women) live in middle- or even higher income households. This argument glosses over the fact that most adult low-paid workers live in lower income families and that working poor families by definition hold low-paid jobs. In any case, a wage floor should not be seen only as an anti-poverty measure (let alone the only anti-poverty measure). Rather, it should be seen as an instrument for achieving a higher level of earnings equality and for compressing wage differences based on gender, age, race, and disability. A wage floor is an instrument of social inclusion.

The most serious argument against a wage floor is that it reduces employment, allegedly hurting those whom we want to help. Here, it is important to distinguish between different wage floor designs. As noted above, wage floors in most of Europe are set by bargaining more than by statute. As such, effective 'minimum' wages often vary by sector, occupation and industry and bargaining makes the floors responsive to market conditions. Moreover, bargaining has the effect of compressing the distribution of wages. This means that higher wages at the bottom are paid for in part by lower wages for those at the middle and top. Unskilled workers and women make more, so the more highly skilled and men make a bit less. Because bargaining redistributes wage income, it does not necessarily raise the total wage bill. The wage share of national income is no higher in Sweden than in Canada and returns to capital are no lower just because there is a much higher wage floor.

Economists tend to argue that introducing or raising a statutory minimum wage destroys jobs by artificially truncating the wage structure, pushing some low productivity workers into unemployment. This may be true in theory, given that countries with minimum wages typically have a big spike in the wage distribution at and very near the statutory minimum wage level. But, in practice, it has been found that there are offsetting positive effects. Minimum wages tend to reduce worker turnover, reducing employer recruitment and training costs. Further, there is no negative employment effect if a higher minimum wage just reduces excess profits due to excessive employer bargaining power. Finally, higher minimum wages boost demand for goods and services. The economic evidence, as comprehensively summarized by the OECD (1998), indicates that there are minimal negative effects from minimum wages on the employment of adults aged 20 and over. And, it can be noted that, even if there is a small negative effect on hours worked, low-wage workers can still benefit by working somewhat fewer hours at higher hourly wages.

An appropriate policy conclusion is that minimum wages in Canada could be gradually increased from the current very low levels, raising the real wage floor over time so that the job market has a chance to adjust. The federal government could adopt a new standard in its own jurisdiction, and attempt with others, such as unions and social development organizations, to persuade the provinces to raise their own minimum wages to this level so as to produce a 'national' and not just federal living wage. (Currently, there is no federal minimum wage as such, and workers in the federal jurisdiction are, by federal regulation, covered by the provincial minimum wage.) One approach might be to raise the minimum wage to two-thirds of median hourly earnings (i.e. to about \$10 per hour), and to index it to this base. This would be at about the pre-tax LICO level for a single worker in a large city, which could be twinned with other initiatives, such as higher GST credits, an earned income tax credit, or a higher tax threshold. The new 'national' minimum wage could be

seen as a benchmark for responsible corporate behaviour and a focus for community and labour-based living wage campaigns.

In the UK, the national minimum wage re-introduced by the Labour Government was set on the basis of recommendations from an expert committee, including employer and labour representatives. In several European countries, statutory minimum wages are negotiated nationally by business and labour organizations. Similarly, the task of designing a national minimum wage along the lines suggested could be delegated to a Commission with representation from employers and unions. This would help set the stage for a bargained national wage floor.

Towards a Right to Training

As noted, precarious work is closely bound up with lack of access to 'developmental' work and training opportunities, and thus with limited worker ability to deal with labour market changes and to progress in the job market. Many circumstances militate against individual participation of precarious workers in training, including financial and family circumstances and working hours.

For all of the rhetoric of 'lifelong learning,' little or nothing has been done to increase training opportunities for those in 'dead-end' jobs. The policy objective should be to increase training and skill development opportunities, and to develop joint workplace level institutions to promote skill development and the use of skills.

A good way forward would be to introduce a training benefit under EI on the model of income replacement for the classroom portion of apprenticeship training. Workers should qualify for income replacement during periods of training or educational leave provided that the training is also relevant to labour market needs. The CLC has proposed that a training benefit under EI should be available only where joint employer/labour training committees (at a firm or sector level) are in place. In short, the proposal seeks to expand both training and joint institutions to plan training. Discussion of training needs would help promote joint discussion of the use of skills on the job, how

new technology and new work practice are introduced, etc.

The employer contribution to training under EI would come from premiums, and from an agreement to maintain employment of workers on leave. The employee contribution would come from premiums, and the fact that the EI income replacement would be lower than the normal wage. A training benefit under EI could be initially developed in specific sectors where training needs are particularly high. For example, in the health sector, skills shortages are looming, there is a strong desire for greater access to training on the part of nurses and others, and there is widespread under employment of recent immigrants, whose skills and qualifications could and should be recognized and upgraded.

Conclusions

'Good jobs in good workplaces' are needed to counter poverty and exclusion and to promote social inclusion. Such jobs promote a broadly equitable distribution of wages and after-tax income. And, they are socially inclusive in the sense that they underpin the ability of working people to develop their talents and capacities, to actively participate in society, and to enjoy a broad equality of life-chances.

In Canada today, a large minority of the adult workforce hold precarious jobs which do not adequately provide for their economic needs, and also offer little or no opportunity to develop skills, capacities and capabilities.

Labour market and social policy have emphasized the importance of employment, and have begun to emphasize the need for 'active' labour market policies and income supplementation. The missing, but necessary, element in the policy package is labour market regulation.

The task of creating 'good jobs in good workplaces' cannot be left to the market alone. Labour market regulation, which impacts at the level of the workplace, is also needed. The example of many European countries shows that regulation through collective bargaining and relatively limited use of statutory instruments helps achieve better employment outcomes at no cost in terms of labour market adaptability,

employment and productivity.

While European models cannot be simply imported, the federal government could help promote and develop new labour market institutions by promoting a 'living wage' and a right to training and lifelong learning.

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