

- 12 Now were there differences of opinion about eh the poor's moral culpability for their for their state, I mean was there a shared agreement that to some extent at least the poor were responsible for their own misfortune?

The point is that that generated a fundamental difference of emphasis, you see the Charity Organisation Society rejected those that they regarded as undeserving and they were precisely the people that General Booth and and all his friends were focusing their primary attention on, because they were the ones in greatest need.

Oh I see, so those who were the most drunken, the most debauched, eh who the Salvation Army were looking at, were rejected as really eh being eh you know architects of their own downfall and therefore they should be left on one side.

The Charity Organisation Society believed that, but of course General Booth felt these these are the people that we want most.

- 13 At the end of the nineteenth century eh we get a bit of shift here, we now do get, Julian, don't we, this is eh we now get a move away from the concentration upon the poor, to the concept of poverty, the idea that there are here social conditions which are responsible for the state of these people.

Yes, I think that eh it's interesting to look at the growth of the welfare state since the war and the principles of the ideological architects of the welfare state were reacting quite strongly against what they saw as the Victorian habit of blaming the poor eh for what they were doing. They believed that fundamentally eh these that's the ideologues after the war, that the poor were essentially victims of circumstance, they were not responsible eh for their own actions but society was fundamentally responsible for their plight and it was in society's lap that the solution lay.

- 14 How would you characterise our present view of the poor?

Well I think we've seen a shift eh we've seen a shift away from the view that the poor are entirely victims of circumstance. In fact, if anything, a new villain has been identified and this is particularly coming from the new right or what we now call the middle-aged right I suppose eh particularly in the United States but the view that the new villain is actually the welfare state itself, that the welfare state has set up all kinds of incentives, all kind of perverse structures, that actually encourage people to behave in self-destructive ways. If it is more sensible, if they can make more money through eh through working eh off the benefit, or if they can make more money through breaking up with their partner and going being a single parent, it's perfectly rational for them to do so. The fault lies not with them, but with the welfare state.

Slot

Graham Bowpitt and Julian LeGrand, thank you very much. Let's give the last words on poverty today to a nineteenth-century worker.

This version is by Roy Bailey.

*Poverty poverty knock,
Me loom it is saying all day.
Poverty poverty knock,
The gaffer's too skinny to pay.
Poverty poverty knock,
We all has one eye on the clock.
I know I can guttle
When I hear me shuttle
Go poverty poverty knock.
Up every morning at five...*