

## Journal of Social Policy

### Editorial

The *Journal of Social Policy*, first published in January 1972, has established itself in the last 23 years as a leading academic journal of international repute. Its current position owes much to the support of the Social Policy Association and Cambridge University Press as well as to the devoted work of past editors, Review and Digest editors along with members of the Editorial Board and countless anonymous referees. Nor should the skills of those who produce, print and market the *Journal* be forgotten. It is timely for us, as new editors, to take stock. Foremost in our minds as we write this editorial are you, our readers and contributors, and what we want to offer you, given that we are two 'firsts' for the *Journal* – joint Editors and women.

The *Journal* was founded to strengthen social administration (as it was then called) as a relatively new academic subject by providing a specialist publishing outlet for the dissemination of knowledge and stimulation of debate in this field. Looking back through the *Journal*, it is clear that it both reflects developments in social policy and stimulates these developments. We can identify two distinct phases. First, a period when the concerns of those involved in social administration were largely descriptive and concerned with policy implementation. In the second phase we can discern the development of a more critical approach and one which also reveals the fruits of a changed emphasis in research, including more empirical studies from large-scale externally funded research projects and more theoretical as well as empirical work. Social policy is an eclectic field which straddles the boundaries of academic disciplines and in recent years has moved from being multidisciplinary to being interdisciplinary. At the same time the national/international context within which social policies are formulated and debated has changed enormously, as has social policy as a social scientific endeavour.

The substantive areas or topics with which contributors to the *Journal* have been concerned have changed. Initially Beveridge's 'five giants' – want and squalor, idleness, disease and ignorance – were the

key topics of concern, given that they were seen to be *the* issues of the welfare state. However, some of these areas have never loomed large in the pages of the *Journal*, given that there are and have been other publishing outlets. For instance, education has never been a central concern but issues of social security and income maintenance as well as social services and social care have. On the other hand, and perhaps more curiously, given the plethora of other outlets, health has always attracted and continues to attract a large amount of research interest.

As editors we welcome contributions which continue to reflect the interdisciplinary and international nature of social policy and which illustrate ways in which theories drawn from the social sciences can be applied to social policy. Whereas many articles are likely to address substantive areas of knowledge which evoke Beveridge's 'five giants', still very much alive, we welcome rigorous analysis and articulation of other contemporary issues, including some which may not traditionally have been associated with social policy as an academic subject.

We seek perspectives which uncover the hitherto occluded and wish to highlight, for instance, questions of age, class, disability, ethnicity and race, gender and sexuality. We would also like to encourage more people from abroad and from non-traditional institutions with non-traditional interests to send us their critical perspectives, reviews and considerations of policy evaluation and policy relevance. Some contributions are likely to reflect the results of research findings arising from large externally funded projects, but it is also important to present the results of smaller scale and/or early-stage research. In this context we remind potential contributors that short articles, tentative critiques, reviews of the state of the art, notes, responses and debates can also be submitted.

As members of the Editorial Board we originally took over as joint editors in October 1993 for a 'caretaker' period, during which time we relocated the editorial office, dealt with a substantial backlog of articles and set up new editorial systems. We are very grateful to all colleagues who rallied round to referee swiftly and to authors who were tolerant of delays. In February 1994 we were appointed as permanent joint editors until September 1996. This is the first time that the *Journal* has been co-edited and this is in part a recognition of the increasing amount of work involved in editing a major academic journal at a time when the work load of academics has been fast expanding and the volume of articles fast multiplying.

Because of this growing competition, sadly we do have to reject a lot of articles, some of very good quality. However, we hope that the comments in this editorial will not discourage potential contributors, including those at the beginning of their academic careers. Contributions are refereed anonymously and usually provide quite full and constructive comments. We want your contributions to be presented in anti-sexist and anti-racist language and in ways which show respect for social groups that are often the butt of forms of discrimination. We now require three copies of each article submitted, with details of the word length.

Finally, one of our strategies is to ensure that our audience is familiar with our procedures and clear about the ways in which we work. We are now giving the dates when articles have been received and when finally accepted so as to demonstrate both the time-lag of publication and our attempts to be more up-to-date. Through our system of anonymous referees we are also trying to speed up the process of review and, to acknowledge the importance of peer review, we are also publishing an annual list of those referees on whom we have relied. If you wish to be a referee and/or a reviewer we would be delighted to hear from you. Thus we are trying to create a clear and coherent system on which we can all rely and ensure that our best endeavours bear fruit as speedily and professionally as we would all like.

**Miriam David & Dulcie Groves**