THE PROBLEM OF POVERTY :
IDEOLOGY, THE STATE AND THE 1972
ROYAL COMMISSION ON SOCIAL SECURITY

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ERRATA

1. Page 11, Line 1 - 'others' should read 'others '

2. Page 172, Line 18 - 'Ryan's (1977)' should read 'Ryan's (1974)'

3. Page 199, Line 8 - 'persistence,' should read 'persistence'

4. Page 213, Line 27 - 'stress,' should read 'stress'

5. Page 220, Line 11 - 'meting' should read 'meeting'

6. Page 227, Line 27 - 'consider' should read 'considers'

7. Page 240, Line 26 - 'Loney (1987)' should read 'Loney (1986)'

8. Page 259, Line 8 - 'on a a' should read 'on a'

9. Page 275, Line 23 - 'Raban (1987)' should read 'Raban (1988)'

ABSTRACT

The concept of ideology, understood as linked to structures of domination in society, is crucial in explaining the state's response to poverty through social security. Ideological processes work to keep the focus of social security provision on the poor and behaviour of the poor, rather than on the pattern of society's income distribution, a pattern which creates poverty. Ideological forces underlie and explain the contradictory nature of state social security provision. This contradictory nature arises from the need for the state to respond to poverty while at the same time concerning itself with the interests of the dominant and powerful.

The 1972 Royal Commission on Social Security provided the first comprehensive review of social security since the passage of the 1938 Social Security Act. The review took place at a time of increasing real poverty for beneficiaries. The process and outcome of that Commission reflected the workings of ideological processes, displayed fundamental ideological struggles about the role of the state, the nature of poverty, the purposes of social security and how the financial needs of the poorest in society should be responded to. This thesis uses the concept of ideology to examine those struggles and arguments, and to explain the political outcomes seen in the recommendations of the Commission and the subsequent legislation.

The thesis concludes with a discussion of the implications for the use of the concept of ideology as an explanatory tool in social policy development generally. Locating social security within the wider patterns of income distribution is essential to both good research and effective policy provision. Ideology is a key concept in unlocking discussion of this wider societal location of the state's response to poverty.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

sustained interest beyond reasonable expectations. That assistance and interest has been vital in completion of the thesis. Without that assistance, completion would have been impossible.

EDITORIAL NOTE

Books, journals and reports are referenced in the usual way. The Report of the Royal Commission itself is referenced by using the page number(s) only. Submissions to the Commission were largely undated, and in some cases were not paginated. Throughout the text, therefore, submissions from which quotations have been drawn are identified by the name of the group or person making the submission and the page number. Where more than one submission is made by the same person or organisation, the submission being quoted is identified by placing the submission number, allocated to each submission by the Commission secretariat, in square brackets at the end of the quotation. The exception to this general approach is the submissions from the Department of Social Security. The Department prepared twenty-two papers, a background paper, and a further submission in the form of a letter at the end of the presentation of submissions. The papers, including the Background Paper, are identified by the number assigned to the paper by the Department of Social Security. The final letter submitted by the Department is identified by the use of the number allocated by the Commission secretariat. Appendix One at the end of the thesis lists all submissions made to the Commission, whether used in the thesis or not.

Parliamentary sources drawn on in chapter ten are referenced in the usual way, namely by year and page number in the text.

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CHAPTER ONE

IDEOLOGY AND SOCIAL SECURITY

Social security is a central feature of the state's response to poverty. Indeed, it is the central feature.[1] It is my contention, in this thesis, that in addition to political and economic factors, the form and shape of state provision of social security can only be fully understood and explained by taking the concept of ideology seriously. It is ideology, the struggles surrounding ideas, and the relationship between ideas and the structure of interests in the society that is crucial in any explanation of the framework of rules and regulations for providing social security, and the consequent setting of benefit levels.

Ideology is a vital component in explaining the level of assistance paid to beneficiaries, the acceptance of benefit levels (which are often inadequate) and the difficulties in affecting change in benefit provision. The fundamental importance of benefit levels to beneficiaries, who by definition are among the poorest in society, makes careful study of social security essential. The concept of ideology ensures a comprehensive answer to questions about the reasons why benefit levels are low and why the rules surrounding benefit provision were created and are maintained. Social security and poverty are then both material and ideological. They are obviously material in that they are about money (and the lack thereof). They are ideological because the social security response to poverty reflects the outcome of ideological struggles surrounding income distribution and redistribution. These struggles are intimately concerned with the structure of interests and the patterns of domination in society. The approach to ideology used in this thesis is discussed fully in the next section of this chapter. We cannot fully explain why people endure poverty and inadequate social security benefits, often with little complaint, without recourse to the concept of ideology.

The ideological features that form the basis of social security arrangements have been ignored in much of the literature on social security provision. Significant attention has been given in the literature to economic and political factors surrounding social security. (See Hill, 1990;

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[1] The other substantial feature is the taxation system, which can also be used to relieve poverty.

McCarthy, 1986). While these considerations are important, they have been discussed to the almost total neglect of how ideology affects the provision of financial assistance to the poorest members of society. However, as the thesis demonstrates, social security cannot simply be described as 'giving money to the poor'. The provision of social security does not stand apart from the factors and forces which determine the distribution of income and the shape of income inequality in advanced capitalist societies. This broad context is essential to securing an adequate understanding of social security.

Ideology is reflected in how, and to what extent, the state responds, and in the links that are made (or not made) between social security, poverty and inequality. It is ideological analysis which permits an effective analysis of the total context of social security. Ideology affects all aspects of social security.

Before moving to the discussion of ideology, I want to make a brief comment about the nature of the state, the mechanism through which social security is provided. The state is an active participant in those ideological struggles and processes surrounding social security. The impact of ideology on social security benefits and regulations referred to above is expressed through the state. It is the state which is both the object of ideological contest and an active participant in that contest. Ideology is clearly exhibited in the contradictory nature of state activity surrounding social security. (The reasons for the focus on the state, and the contradictory role of the state are both discussed in chapter two). The state is not isolated from those factors and forces which determine the distribution of income and the shape of income inequality in advanced capitalist societies, but is inextricably involved with those factors and forces. Thus, social security, poverty and the role of the state are not isolated phenomena; rather they occur within a political, economic and ideological context in which income inequality is a core ingredient. The activities of the state in providing social security occur within a much broader context represented by abundance at one end and by destitution at the other.

This thesis focuses on the state's response to social security as a response to poverty, using ideology as an explanatory concept with which to explain and explore that response. The concept of ideology allows an examination of the struggles surrounding social security, of the form and shape of the state's response and the ways in which the provision of social security and the responses to poverty are linked to and reflect wider issues surrounding income

distribution in the society.[2] Ideology then provides a bridge between the problem of poverty and the state's response to that problem through the provision of social security.

The 1972 Royal Commission on Social Security, the object of this study, is an important specific conjuncture where those ideological arguments are expressed and resolved. The Commission also represents a specific state response to poverty and to social security. Its status as a Royal Commission and its historical location in the development of social security in New Zealand make the Commission an important object of study.[3] (There is a fuller discussion on the Commission later in this chapter, and in chapter four).

As noted above, the approach to ideology used in this thesis is set out below. The section includes a discussion of key aspects of the extensive theoretical debate on ideology. The emphasis on ideology in the literature has been the subject of strong criticism in recent years, from Abercrombie, Hill and Turner (1980). Their criticism, and my response to their arguments, is traversed at the end of the section on ideology.

Chapter two contains a review of other key concepts used in the thesis, particularly poverty, inequality and the state. That chapter also includes a discussion of the relationship between these concepts and ideology. The plan of the remaining chapters is outlined at the end of this chapter.

IDEOLOGY

The concept of ideology has been widely used in the social science literature in recent years. (See Gould and Tait, 1973; Drucker, 1974; Seliger, 1976; Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, 1977; Larrain, 1979; McCarney, 1980; Parekh, 1982; Larrain, 1983; Eccleshall, et al.,1984; Manning and Robinson, 1985; Bocock and Thompson, 1986; Donald and Hall, 1986; McLennan, 1986; Thompson, 1986). This widespread usage has not, however, produced any agreement about the concept itself, its roots, its effects, its relationship to the economic and material elements in society, how it changes (if it does), how it is manifest (or

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[2] Economics and politics are, of course, also important in shaping social security. The focus here, however, is on ideology, an aspect that has received much less attention than economics and politics. There is a fuller discussion of the relationship between the ideological, political and economic realms later in this chapter.

[3] I will call it 'the 1972 Commission' because that was the year in which the Commission reported. It was established in 1969.

articulated), the discourse that is used, how it ought to be analysed and understood - the list could go on. These debates traverse a range of theorists and theoretical traditions; the literature is replete with sophisticated and at times quite dense argumentation.

The literature on ideology makes a number of distinctions in the discussions on the concept of ideology.[4] Four principal components of my conception of ideology are argued for:

1.   ideology as domination;
2.   a non-deterministic, non-reductionist approach;
3.   the use of ideology in a positive and a negative sense;
4.   ideology as an arena of contest and struggle.

TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF IDEOLOGY

(A) IDEOLOGY AS DOMINATION

The notion of domination and struggles surrounding domination are central to the concept of ideology as used here. The study of ideology is especially focused on relations within a society and in particular relations of domination and subordination, how these relations are created, maintained, reinforced and challenged. To quote Lee and Raban:

> *It makes no sense to discuss ideology ... unless one has some analytical understanding of its conditions of existence and appearance (the determination of ideologies) and a theoretical grasp of what it is that you are seeking to explain when invoking the concept (the effects of ideologies) (Lee and Raban, 1983:29). (Emphasis in original).*

The theme of domination as central to both this study and to the operation of ideology is well argued by Thompson (1984).[5] He argues, logically and persuasively, that ideology has to

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[4] Distinctions are made between the use of ideology in a special and a general sense, between a subjective and an objective approach, and between an inclusive and an exclusive definition. There is also an extensive debate about the relationship between ideology and science. For a comprehensive discussion of these and other related issues, see Larrain (1979); Larrain (1983); McLennan (1986); McCarney (1980).

[5] A similar approach is developed in Donald (1986).

retain a critical notion if it is to have any real value at all, and this 'critical' focus is about the relations of domination and subordination within society:

To study ideology is to study the ways in which meaning (signification)
serves to sustain relations of domination (Thompson, 1984:130-131).[6]

The study of ideology and its operation in a particular and specific context needs to incorporate a consideration of how those relations of domination operate. Furthermore, such study must explore how power is reflected through the ideas expressed *and* operationalised. Finally the study must also examine who is expressing what ideas and the effect/s of these ideas on relations of domination and subordination. The relationship of these ideas to relations of domination and subordination are obviously of immense importance here. It is in this framework, then, that the issue of inequality and the power associated with that inequality become critical.

Thompson links this issue of domination and subordination with the question of language, a link that is obviously of tremendous importance because language is one of the principal mediums for the expression of these relations of domination. Language serves as a medium for power to be exercised and ideologies expressed. While the study of language itself has been the subject of considerable interest among many writers on ideology, the focus here is on the arguments advanced by different interests and the relationship between those arguments and the structures of domination and subordination.[7] The focus is on ideology and the ideologies themselves, rather than on a detailed textual analysis of the expression of ideology and ideologies. Nevertheless, in its myriad forms, language will be of substantial interest, constituting much of the raw material to be examined. The study of ideology in relation to social security and incomes requires an examination of the language used, *as well as* of the programmes developed.[8]

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[6] His postulation of the 'ideology as domination' approach is even more neatly expressed in his introduction where he links the study of ideology with the study of power and especially asymmetrical relations of power. (See Thompson, 1984:1-5).

[7] Thompson (1984) reviews some of the literature which concentrates on language and ideology. See especially chapters 2, 3.

[8] 'Language' is used here to refer to the words and phrases employed from time to time by the various interests in the social security area. 'Programmes' refers to the range of social security provisions, and the rules and regulations associated with these provisions.

Thompson (1984) employs three vital terms to refine and develop the notion of ideology as the expression of domination. These terms are dissimulation legitimation, and reification. All three terms act as sub-components - not necessarily the only ones - through which ideology operates. Briefly, legitimation refers to appeals made to strengthen the authority or legitimacy of a set of beliefs and ideas. Dissimulation refers to the way/s that ideology serves to hide or conceal the particular interests that are served or strengthened at any one time. Thus, what is presented as being in the common interest of all may be (and usually is) in the interests of a particular group, normally the powerful. Larrain expresses the same argument:

> *Ideology ... is also a condition for the functioning and reproduction of the system of class domination. It plays this role precisely by hiding the true relations between classes, by explaining away the relations of domination and subordination (Larrain, 1979:47).*

Finally, reification refers to the process whereby events and interests of any given time are divorced from their historical context and presented as eternal, as natural. Thus, capitalism is presented as the only and permanent form of economic and social organisation. These three process of dissimulation, legitimation and reification are key elements in the approach to ideology used in this thesis.

The notions of domination and power - touched on above - allow more than adequately for both class and non-class based ideologies to operate. Thus, I can move beyond exclusive concentration on issues of class to consider such questions as racism and sexism, to name but two. Class remains important - very important. Nevertheless, it is not possible to explain the dominated position of women purely on the basis of their class location. Such domination occurs (and is legitimated and reified often) across all class locations. While middle class women are less dominated than their working class sisters, such domination still takes place, and is given sanction. An approach to ideology that is built around domination as a central theme allows for a more adequate explanation of gender relations than does a theoretical response from which domination is omitted.[9]

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[9] The thesis gives only limited consideration to issues of gender relations. The point is made here to illustrate the strength and value of an approach to ideology based on domination and subordination.

(B) A NON-DETERMINISTIC, NON-REDUCTIONIST APPROACH TO IDEOLOGY

The relationship between the ideological and the material realms in any given society has been central to much of the theoretical debate about the nature of ideology since Marx and Engels developed and refined their arguments on the effects of the material realm on the other realms. The attempts to reconcile this base/superstructure polarity has, however, not resulted in any general agreement, despite its fundamental importance. Without specifying the exact nature of the relationship, Larrain does manage to capture many of the essential features of the debates:

> *One can try to see in the base/superstructure a twofold meaning. It attempts to show that consciousness cannot be analysed on its own, that it has a foundation in material reality. It also attempts to show the primacy of economic relations in the social being without meaning to reduce the latter to the former (Larrain, 1979:65).*

McLennan (1986) and Donald and Hall (1986) both pursue the question of reductionism in interesting and lucid arguments. McLennan makes the point well that criticism that particular approaches to ideology are reductionist is easy to make, and often results from overly simplistic reading of texts (McLennan, 1986:23-27).[10] Similarly, developing an argument that is more extensive than those referred to immediately above, Jessop (1982) also demonstrates the falsity of a reductionist approach to Marx's articulation of the relationship between material and ideological forces in any given society.

The base/superstructure relationship continues to be the subject of vigorous debate. That debate has been particularly vigorous between Hall and Jessop, the latter accusing the former of ideologism (Jessop et al., 1984; 1985; Hall, 1985).[11] The core of that debate is how to theorise the relationship between the economic, political and ideological realms in society. In their criticism of Hall, Jessop and his colleagues argue that he (Hall) elevates ideology to a position which is too dominant:

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[10]This is particularly evident at times in the social policy literature where writers sometimes assume, wrongly, that the base/superstructure distinction represents the totality of Marx's argument. See, for example, Room (1979); Ham and Hill (1984).

[11] Although the focus in this thesis is on ideology, it is important to discuss the relationships between ideology, politics and economics briefly.

We do wish to reject the ideologism of the AP approach. Thus we also consider the political and institutional context in which Thatcherism developed, as well as the crisis of hegemony to which it represents a response. In particular we focus on the 'dual crisis of the state' as a neglected aspect of the crisis of the British state and on the 'two nations' character and effects of Thatcherism as a neglected aspect of its political power (Jessop et al.,1984:33-34).[12]

The position adopted here is not that ideology operates completely separately from and determines the economic and the political realms (the criticism Jessop makes of Hall) Rather, I am arguing that the three realms of the political, the economic and the ideological have overlapping boundaries, but boundaries that are distinct rather than being submerged.[13] That distinction is not easy to differentiate neatly in any given societal configuration, but it exists nevertheless. Each realm has both a separate sphere and a degree of overlap, so that each operates on the other two as well as being affected by the other two. The web of relationships is complex, with the economic realm playing a pivotal but not totally definitive part. It (the economic realm) will influence the ideological; in its turn, it will also be influenced by the ideological. The same applies in relation to the political realm. This relationship is set out diagrammatically below.

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[12] 'AP' refers to the phrase 'authoritarian populism' used by Hall to refer to the ideological features of Thatcherism.

[13] Although the focus in this thesis is on ideology, it is important to discuss the relationship between ideology, politics and economics briefly.

FIGURE ONE
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ECONOMIC, IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL REALMS

ideological

economic

political
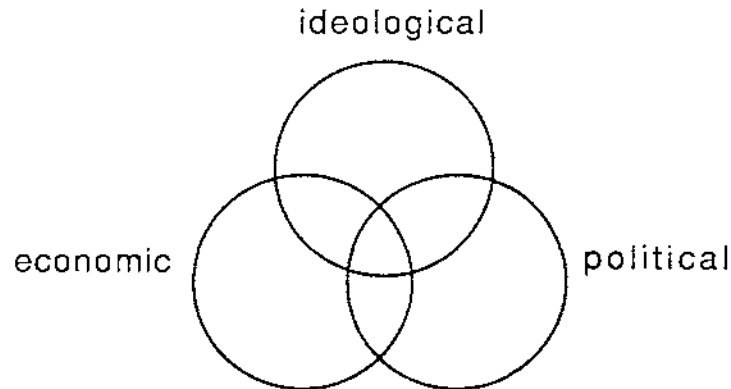
NOTE: This diagrammatic representation is not meant to imply a hierarchical relationship between the three realms. Names have been allocated to circles on an alphabetical basis, not in some hierarchical order.

Thus, the approach to ideology used here is non-reductionist in the sense that ideology is not simply derived from and determined by economic relations. A deterministic, reductionist approach is rejected because it contains a static, uni-directional approach to the study of society and social relations, failing to adequately explain those relations in a comprehensive fashion. Furthermore, reductionism makes an adequate analysis of social change extremely difficult. This applies particularly to the efforts of subordinate and oppressed groups to effect change. After all, if a deterministic approach is adopted, how and where do classes and other social forces develop resistances. A tight, all encompassing hegemony would not allow them to reflect and act on their situation, or to develop oppositional or counter-ideologies.

Ideology, then, is seen to have a material base, using the word 'material' to refer to the totality of peoples' lives and of the impact of the social structure on those lives. However, 'material' is not synonymous with 'economic'; it is the conflation of these two words which sometimes produces the reductionist approach rejected here. Similarly, the wider use of 'material' allows for the development and articulation of oppositional ideologies such as feminism; the contribution of feminism to social policy analysis is discussed more fully in chapter two.

(C) THE DUAL USAGE OF IDEOLOGY

Ideology will be used in two senses, the positive and the negative. In the former use, ideology refers to the positive exposition of sets of political beliefs, to competing belief systems, such as liberalism, socialism and feminism, to name but three. The negative use of ideology refers to ways in which the ideas in a society relate to and intersect with the social structure and the organisation of interests in society. In this negative sense, ideology is used critically to refer to the relationship between the set of ideas that operate in a society, the forms of domination and subordination within that society, and the struggles over the reproduction of those forms. In the former instance, I am referring to ideologies; in the latter instance, I am talking of ideology.

The negative use of ideology implies a critical perspective and is closely related to the dominant social order. It serves the function of masking that social order through the processes described in Thompson's (1984) tripartite distinction. While there is clearly an overlap between the negative and positive uses of ideology, it is important to keep them distinct conceptually. It will generally be self evident how the term is being used; where this is not so, the meaning will be made clear.

The dual usage of ideology is of considerable significance to the work at hand. The significance of its use lies in the the relationship between the state and ideology. In terms of the positive usage, the nature, role and purpose of the state and of social security is an area over which there are likely to be struggles and disputes, struggles and disputes that would show at some at least of the features set out in the typologies created by George and Wilding (1976), by Room (1979), and by Mishra (1977).[14]

In the negative or critical sense, the relationship is explored on both a wider and deeper basis. Here language and programmes are important (as they are in the previous usage), but social security/poverty/inequality are critically explored in terms of their relationship to the ideas and practices associated with domination and subordination. There are a number of areas in which the negative use of ideology is reflected in social security provision. These areas include: the 'neutrality' of the state; the role of the state; social security and the marketplace; the state, equality and social security; individualisation of poverty; definitions of and

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[14] Those typologies are akin to the political ideologies set out by Donald and Hall (1986).

responses to poverty.[15] These, and others,are all areas where ideology and ideologies will be struggled over, and where the ideological relationship between social security and the state is expressed. They are areas which are examined in the detailed discussion of the Commission in chapters five to nine.

(D) IDEOLOGY AS AN ARENA OF CONTEST AND STRUGGLE

Ideology is an arena of contest and struggle, an arena of conflict and tension. (This component of ideology is neatly captured by Bocock and Thompson's (1986) phrase 'ideological contestation'). It is a component which is consistent with the argument set out earlier which rejected a deterministic and reductionist approach, and follows logically from the previous argument about the use of the term in a positive sense. The notions of domination and power - which are seen as central to ideology - are the notions which help to make a bridge that allows for the organisation and expression of oppositional ideas. If ideology is especially concerned with the issues of domination and power, challenges to that domination and power are expressed in the form of oppositional ideologies. While this does not account for all the specific oppositional belief systems, it does permit many of them to be covered. 'Contest and struggle' as key aspects of ideology are central to the approach to ideology used by Antonio Gramsci (Hoare and Smith, 1982). Because I am using some of his arguments as part of the theoretical framework for this thesis, it is necessary to make some brief comment here about the approach to ideology adopted by Gramsci (Hoare and Smith, 1982).

ANTONIO GRAMSCI:
For Gramsci, ideology is a superstructural expression of a contradictory reality. The superstructures are, he argues, an objective reality where humans gain consciousness of their positions and goals. He distinguishes two kinds of ideologies - historically organic ideologies (necessary to a given structure) and arbitrary or willed ideologies, favouring the former. Ideology is a conception of the world, serving as a cement, but not necessarily successfully. Furthermore, the working class does not have a consciousness imposed on it by the dominant class - rather it has a dual consciousness. This dual consciousness comes from its own conception of the world and from the ruling class ideology. The 'common sense' conception is fragmented and divided, and does not produce a self-consciousness.

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[15] This is by no means an exhaustive list - rather it should be seen as illustrative.

Gramsci rejects economism and economic reductionism, emphasising the superstructure, the link between politics and ideology, and:

> *the creative possibilities of the individual as against a determining social structure (Urry, 1981:11).*

This emphasis on the ideological as a relatively autonomous realm does <u>not</u> mean that Gramsci is adopting an idealist position. Ideology is still rooted in a material base, 'material' being used in a wider sense than relations of production to refer to the totality of social relations. It is this totality that forms the substance of the material conditions of existence. The materiality of Gramsci's approach is neatly summarised by Simon:

> *Ideologies have a material existence in the sense that they are embodied in the social practices of individuals and in the institutions and organisations within which these social practices take place... Ideologies are not to be reduced to social practices; they not only have a material existence, but they also exist in and through ideas, through the relations of concepts and propositions (Simon, 1982:59-60).*

For Gramsci, ideology has a cementing function in holding together diverse blocs and class fractions thus enabling them to build up a national popular collective will. The challenge to this has to come from transforming the existing ideological complex by subjecting it to a gradual critique that builds up an alternative ideology, through material practice, that reshapes and transforms ideas. Central to this is replacement of the existing 'common sense' (the taken for granted assumptions about the world and the social relations that exist) by the establishment of what Gramsci calls 'good sense'. (For a more extensive examination of the ideas and approach summarised above, see Hoare and Smith, 1982; Simon, 1982; Femia 1981; Larrain, 1983).

Implicit in the comments above is one further crucial aspect of Gramsci's approach, namely that ideology is a terrain of struggle and contest in its own right, a place of ideological contestation (Bocock and Thompson(1986)). Struggle is not limited to the economic sphere. These struggles extend beyond class concerns to the total range of popular democratic interests.

This process must build towards a new hegemony, a concept that is central to Gramsci's approach, although used variably. Hegemony expresses the notion of leadership which is as

much ideological as political. Ideological domination is critical, but the balance between coercion and consent in the exercise of hegemony varies historically. Consent cannot be taken for granted, but has to be produced and constantly reproduced. Hegemony is the organisation of consent. It is a relation between classes and other social forces; a hegemonic class gains and retains its position through a combination of alliances by political and ideological struggle. (There is a full and lucid discussion of hegemony in Hoare and Smith, 1982. For a concise summary, see Simon, 1982).

In recent years there has been a strong attack on the importance given to ideology in the literature, an attack which needs to be discussed before concluding this section. Abercrombie, Hill and Turner (1980) have argued that ideology is given too much importance; the next section of this chapter will summarise and discuss their argument.

2. THE ATTACK ON IDEOLOGY

Abercrombie, Hill and Turner (1980) have trenchantly criticised what they call 'the dominant ideology thesis'. They summarise the dominant ideology thesis as containing the following arguments:

1.   In all societies based on class divisions there is a dominant class which enjoys control of both the means of material production and the means of mental production.
2.   Through its control of ideological production, the dominant class is able to supervise the construction of a coherent set of beliefs.
3.   These dominant beliefs of the dominant class are more powerful, dense and coherent than those of the subordinate classes.
4.   The dominant ideology penetrates and infects the consciousness of the working class, because the working class comes to see and to experience reality through the conceptual categories of the dominant class.
5.   The dominant ideology functions to incorporate the working class into a system which is, in fact, against the material interests of labour.
6.   This incorporation in turn explains the coherence and integration of capitalist society.

(For a fuller discussion of the above summary, see Abercrombie et al., 1980:1-2).[16]

Their criticism of the `dominant ideology thesis' in late capitalist societies can be summarised as follows:

1. Governments are tolerated rather than supported and there is no evidence of a dominant ideology binding a society together.

2. The dominant ideology is generally fractured and contradictory, particularly in late capitalism.

3. The dominant ideology does not incorporate the subordinate classes.

4. Dominant classes are incorporated by the dominant ideology, especially in feudalism and early capitalism.

5. The means of transmitting the dominant ideology are variable in their effectiveness; this in part accounts for the difference in the degree of incorporation.

6. Marxist theories and their sociological counterparts make unexamined assumptions. The relationship between dominant classes and the dominant ideology is not considered; the apparatus to transmit the dominant ideology is not considered in detail; incorporation through ideology or integration by shared values is taken for granted once the existence of a dominant ideology or value system is demonstrated (Abercrombie, Hill and Turner, 1980:156-158).

It is assumed that the dominant ideology is a set of consistent, obvious and widely held beliefs, and these beliefs are often expressed as a dominant class doing something to a subordinate class. The focus has been too heavily on the effect that ideology has on the subordinate classes and not enough on what it means for the dominant class. For Abercrombie et al., ideology helps to explain the coherence of the dominant class, but not of society has as whole:

> *We stress the conflictual, unstable quality of modern capitalism and argue that the subordinate classes are controlled by what Marx referred to as 'the dull compulsion' of economic relationships, by the integrative effects of the division of labour, by the coercive nature of law and politics (Abercrombie et.al.,1980:6).*

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[16] The numbers are not included in the original; they are used here to facilitate clearer presentation.

It is the network of 'objective social relations' (Abercrombie, Hill and Turner, 1980:168) which creates society's coherence, not acceptance of shared norms. The rewards that come through capitalism - such as economic improvement - are, they argue, part of the experience of capitalism at work. It is the only thing workers can get.

In their discussion of the dominant ideology thesis, Abercrombie et al. argue that some, if not most, of the writing on the dominant ideology adopts an instrumentalist position, seeing ideology as an instrument in the hands of the ruling class, the state acting in the interests of the dominant class and maintaining that superiority by ideological control. There is, they claim, a weaker version of this argument which does not argue for indoctrination in as strong a way, but still sees classes as the origins of knowledge, belief or ideology, a version which they call the 'class-theoretical' model:

> *The ideology of individualism is not necessary to capitalism, since late capitalism can function perfectly well without it (Abercrombie et al., 1980:184-5).*

Their criticism of the dominant ideology thesis is directed especially at Marxist writers:

> *There exists a widespread agreement among Marxist writers such as Habermas, Miliband, and Poulantzas that there is a powerful, effective, dominant ideology in contemporary capitalist societies and that this dominant ideology creates acceptance of capitalism among the working class (Abercrombie et al.,1980:1).*

In particular, they argue that:

> *in neo-Marxian and contemporary sociology the social role of dominant ideologies has been greatly exaggerated... Too much has been said about ideology in recent decades (Abercrombie et al.,1980:191).*

3. WHY IDEOLOGY MATTERS

There are a number of weaknesses and inadequacies in Abercrombie et al.'s argument. First, their argument that the theoretical approaches to ideology are functionalist cannot be sustained. A careful reading of Althusser, Gramsci and Habermas, the three authors whom they criticise most trenchantly, does not support an argument that their approach is

functionalist. (It is important in this context to distinguish clearly between a functionalist position and a description and analysis of functions).[17] The implication of such an argument is that ideology has a static rather than dynamic nature, and this does not fit well with a close reading of the theorists referred to above. While there is a link between ideology and the remainder of the social structure, it is too simplistic and grossly incomplete to argue that approaches to ideology describe and analyse it completely in functionalist terms.

Second, and associated with this view, their critique that theories of ideology are instrumentalist has more than a trace of irony to it, in that Abercrombie et al.'s approach to the study and analysis of society and social cohesion seems to be almost entirely instrumentalist in that economic forces determine all others. It is those economic forces which are instrumental in securing and maintaining social cohesion, an argument that is at its core instrumentalist. Furthermore, the critique itself is invalid in relation to the work of both Gramsci and Habermas particularly and to a lesser extent Althusser. Whatever the strengths and weaknesses of their arguments, those theorists cannot simply be described as instrumentalist, with all that that implies. Furthermore, one of the principal works of Poulantzas (Poulantzas, 1973) was specifically written as a criticism of instrumentalism.

Third, Gramsci in particular, and to a slightly lesser extent the other theorists discussed by Abercrombie, Hill and Turner, allow for the development of counter ideologies, counter-hegemonic forces to produce a challenge to the hegemony of the bourgeoisie. This suggests that Abercrombie et al.'s argument of a totally unitary ideology does not hold up very satisfactorily. Such an argument has considerable difficulty in explaining how and why the subordinate classes ever develop alternative ideologies, and why they act on those views. The nature of advanced capitalist society cannot be adequately explained by the existence of strong laws and powerful military forces. Their (Abercrombie et al.'s) heavy emphasis on coercion and oppression flies in the face of the way that such societies have developed in the last century. Even if the suggestion of workers' pragmatic acceptance is adopted, this fails to explain adequately why economically subordinate groups respond in this way even when their position is deteriorating. Why should they believe that this is the best deal that they can achieve, that there is no alternative ? Abercrombie et al.'s argument is very unconvincing in this area. Furthermore, the argument does not deal very easily or adequately with other forms of domination and exploitation, particularly around the areas of gender and ethnicity.

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[17] Functionalism as a sociological theory is not synonymous with an argument that ideology performs a function in a given set of social relations. For a fuller elaboration of this distinction, see McLennan (1986).

There is in this sense, as in their discussion of instrumentalism, a fundamentally reductionist quality to their argument.

Moreover, the notion of domination through coercion that they argue for does not do justice to the sophistication and complexity of the literature on ideology. In particular this applies to Gramsci's argument that consent has to be constantly engineered - it cannot be taken for granted. He in particular talks of 'coercion armoured with consent', a notion that is rather different from the heavy emphasis that Abercrombie et al. place on the power of the former. Associated with this is a further crucial point, namely why is it that the routines of society are seen as normal. There is no adequate explanation in Abercrombie, Hill and Turner's argument that satisfactorily explains why it is that the current social structure is seen as normal, neutral, and permanent. Pragmatic acceptance seems a rather inadequate and incomplete explanation.

Fourth, their argument that capitalism can function adequately without individualism does not seem to have either logic or history on its side. If this is so, why has individualism remained so crucial and central, and why does it remain so? Capitalism is built so heavily around the individual as the dominant unit of society that it is difficult to envisage this as merely an optional extra, which capitalism could manage satisfactorily without. In economic, political and ideological terms the individual is such a central unit that it is impossible to conceptualise this as being coincidental.

Finally, it is noted above that they seem to adopt an approach to the state in which they see the state as neutral, and to a large extent as benign. This argument is difficult to reconcile with their emphasis on coercion. It is even more difficult to reconcile with both their critique of the theoretical material and with an adequate analysis of the history of capitalist societies in the last century or so. On empirical grounds, it is clear that the state has taken an increasing role in the operation of the economy. The evidence from a range of literature in the social policy field makes it clear that this intervention has not been only for the benefit of the oppressed. (See for example, George and Wilding, 1984; Le Grand, 1982).

Contrary to the argument of Abercrombie, Hill and Turner, ideology is of substantial and significant importance. It is instrumentalist and reductionist to attempt to explain social organisation and social structure, and the actions of individuals and groups solely on the basis of either material rewards or coercion, as Abercrombie, Hill and Turner do. The strength of ideology is that it allows for a much more complete and comprehensive

explanation of the form and shape of the social structure, and of the beliefs that are an integral part of that structure. It is woefully inadequate to reduce those beliefs and ideas to mere derivatives of the economic forces. They are linked to those forces, but also have a degree of autonomy.

Futhermore, the operation and effect of ideology is not just a derivative of economic relations. The state is also an active participant in the workings of ideology and in the struggles surrounding ideology. Social security is a crucial area of state welfare provision in which ideology is expressed and manifest. Ideology is crucial in shaping the nature and form of social security provision. It is time now to move on from the general theoretical approach utilised so far to the particular focus of this study, namely the 1972 Royal Commission on Social Security.

4. IDEOLOGY AND THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON SOCIAL SECURITY

The 1972 Royal Commission on Social Security provides the specific conjuncture for exploration of the ideological forces and processes surrounding state provision of social security in New Zealand. That Royal Commission reported thirty four years after the Social Security Act of the first Labour government, and as will be demonstrated in chapter four, followed a period of deterioration in levels of support through social security benefits. It was, therefore, a potentially significant point at which the direction and shape of income distribution could have been affected for those who are amongst the poorest in society.

The Commission was charged with reviewing social security benefit provision and the health benefit structure used to pay for medical services. However, I am concentrating on the social security aspects of the terms of reference, omitting the material related to health benefits - item seven of the terms of reference.[18,19] The focus then is on the aspects of the work of the

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[18] See chapter four for the complete Terms of Reference.

[19] This is not because health benefits are not important, but rather because the subject of study is social security.

Commission related to benefit provision and coverage.[20] Material related to war pensions has been omitted - the focus of the thesis is on other aspects of social security, such as benefits for people who are unemployed, sick, single parents, elderly. I have reviewed all submissions related to these areas; many of those submissions, however, focused on specific changes affecting individual situations, particularly in relation to residency requirements and the impact of overseas pension entitlements. These submissions have been included in the data base and have been drawn on as applicable. Generally, they have been of limited relevance and use for the thesis. This does not mean that the specific concerns of individuals and families are unimportant; for those individuals and families, those concerns were very important. However, the approach to ideology used in the thesis necessitates the focus on the more general submissions. Using ideology in the negative sense set out above, there were certainly ideological features at work in many of those individually focused submissions, particularly surrounding rights to benefit entitlement. I have, however, made only limited use of those more specifically oriented submissions, because of their focus on individual situations.

As is almost invariably the case with Royal Commissions or Commissions of Inquiry, this particular Commission attracted considerable public interest during its work, with a total of 321 submissions being made.[21] This thesis takes some of those submissions, the hearings of the Commission, its subsequent Report and the ensuing legislation, as the raw material to be explored.

5. IDEOLOGY AND SOCIAL SECURITY :
THE PLAN OF THE ARGUMENT

I have already indicated that chapter two sets out debates and issues surrounding key concepts. Chapter three sets out the methodological approach used in the thesis, and the more general questions surrounding the particular form of research methodology for a thesis of this kind. That chapter also provides an opportunity to touch on central epistemological

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[20] I will use the term 'Commission' throughout to refer to the whole process - submissions, Report and legislation. When discussing specific parts, such as the Report itself, I will specify the particular part being referred to.

[21] A full list of submissions is included in Appendix One.

questions surrounding the nature of policy research, particularly policy research based largely on qualitative material.

Chapter four locates the 1972 Royal Commission on Social Security within the context of the 1960s. An understanding of the political and economic climate of the time is necessary if the Commission is to be properly contextualised. As chapter four demonstrates, the Commission did not arise like a phoenix from the ashes. Alongside that context, and indeed forming a part of it, was the poverty of social security beneficiaries. The available data, summarised in that chapter, points to a situation of significant poverty amongst beneficiaries.

The remainder of the thesis explores the work of the Commission in detail. Chapter five examines a key area of the arguments advanced by the state, namely the submissions by the Department of Social Security on 'values'.[22]   None of the submissions from other organisations discussed 'values' directly and at length. Moreover, the Departmental approach to 'values' was referred to frequently in later submissions from the Department of Social Security. In addition, the Departmental arguments were also adopted in the Report; hence, these arguments had a major influence on the final Report and recommendations. It is for these three reasons that 'values' have been discussed as a chapter in their own right, apart from the remaining data. The concept of ideology, as developed in this thesis, is utilised to critique the approach to 'values', both in the submissions and in the social policy literature generally. The discussion of 'values' prior to the discussion of the remaining data facilitates adequate discussion in subsequent chapters and strengthens the theoretical basis for that discussion. My argument is that an ideological approach is a much more productive and more dynamic explanatory mechanism than is 'values'.

The next three chapters utilise the theoretical framework to investigate and analyse the Commission in detail. It is here that the four components of ideology as outlined earlier in this chapter prove to be particularly valuable as explanatory tools. Chapter six uses ideology in the negative sense in relation to inequality, poverty and social security. The operation of ideology is well shown in the almost total neglect of inequality and of the impact of the overall pattern of income distribution and redistribution in the work of the Commission. Ideology proves to be conceptually invaluable also in the examination of the causes of poverty and the solutions to the problem of poverty. It is the working of ideology that explains the individualised approach to the cause of poverty and to its solution. The

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[22] See chapter five for the reasons underlying the use of 'values' in this form in the thesis.

emphasis on selectivity as the appropriate mechanism for organising and providing social security benefits is a powerful illustration of the outcome of the ideological influences which led to neglect of the structural roots of poverty. Incorporated within this debate are the contests surrounding the use of means tests, contests that have a particular relevance in the late 1980s and early 1990s with the emphasis on effective targeting as the basis for social security specifically and income support generally (Treasury, 1984; 1987).

Earlier in this chapter I identified the role of the state as central in any comprehensive examination of ideology in social security. Chapter seven carries out this examination in relation to the 1972 Royal Commission. While considerations about that role underlie some of the arguments surrounding the purposes of social security, the focus of chapter eight, it is appropriate and necessary to concentrate on the role of the state more extensively. (Debates surrounding the role of the state cannot be subsumed completely under considerations of the purpose of social security). Ideology again proves to be an extremely useful tool with which to examine the contradictory nature of state social security provision. An understanding of the links between ideology and the general interests of society, is essential to effective analysis of the struggles surrounding fundamental features of social security such as the deserving and the undeserving poor, incentives, dependence, self help and less eligibility, to specify five central features. It is ideology, particularly the three components identified by Thompson (1984), namely dissimulation, legitimation and reification, that permits meaningful analysis of the nature of state intervention in market processes.

Missing from George and Wilding's (1976) classification of welfare ideologies (and from most others) is any attention to feminism and feminist theory. The ideological struggles surrounding women and gender relations are also included in chapter seven, because the state is central to such struggles and their relationship with social security provisions and regulations. Ideology proves very useful in examining those struggles.[23]

Chapter eight examines the debates and arguments surrounding the purposes of social security. This chapter is designed to answer one basic question - according to the competing forces, what purpose/s should govern the form and operation of social security? The answer to that question is provided through the use of ideology in the positive sense. The competing purposes reflect different ideologies and interests. However, none of those ideologies reflect

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[23] Of course, there are also features of the negative aspect of ideology in that those gender relations are linked to relations of domination and to the structure of interests associated with those relations of domination.

radical and comprehensive change. To use George and Wilding's (1976) classification, the four purposes identified can be adequately located within the the reluctant collectivist and conservative elements of the Fabian socialist classification.[24]

The outcome of the ideological struggles and processes surrounding the purposes of social security, and surrounding both the relationship between inequality, poverty and social security, and the nature of the role of the state in providing social security culminate in specific legislation and regulations that establish benefit levels and adjustment to benefits. These two areas - benefit levels and benefit adjustments - are the subject of chapter nine. Benefit rates reflect the outcome of ideological and political struggles. They are and represent much more than just 'payment to the poor'. This is not to suggest that the level does not matter; the level does matter, and matters considerably. However, the level at which benefits are set, and the rules surrounding benefit payments reflect ideology at work, not just a material payment level, based on need. Benefit levels are the minimum the state can get away with; they are not a measure of minimum adequate incomes. The data in this chapter is both qualitative and quantitative. In the former instance, the emphasis is on benefit levels as experienced by beneficiaries (and those working with beneficiaries). The latter aspect concentrates on the available figures which could be used to assess the adequacy of benefit levels, and how these levels should be altered. The failure of the Commission to attend adequately to this data is a reflection of the strength and pervasiveness of ideology in the provision of social security.

The concluding chapter, chapter ten, begins with an outline of the Parliamentary debate and legislative action taken as a result of the recommendations in the Report.[25] These outcomes are included here in order that the totality of the work of the Commission may be seen. It is noted that institutional politics were important in determining the outcome of the recommendations, but these institutional politics are not apart from ideology and ideologies. The more substantive part of this chapter returns to the theoretical arguments set out at the beginning of the thesis. The utility and strength of ideology in explaining the shape, form and nature of state provision of social security is now firmly established. Ideology proves to be axiomatic if the totality of social security provision is to be adequately theorised. The

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[24] In their discussion of the Fabian socialist tradition, George and Wilding make the point that this particular tradition includes theorists who are close to reluctant collectivists on the one hand and those who are close to marxism on the other. See George and Wilding (1976) for a fuller discussion; see especially chapter 4. The ideologies described here can be appropriately located towards the reluctant collectivist end of that continuum.

[25] A full list of recommendations is included in Appendix Two.

chapter also reviews the methodological issues arising in a piece of research of this kind. The final part of the chapter notes the implications of the arguments and issues arising from this thesis for the study of social policy and for the development of social security. The emphasis on individually established need set out by the 1972 Commission is particularly evident in current (1991) social security policies. The same ideological forces that influenced the Commission have provided a basis for the steady decline in social security provision in recent years. (For a fuller discussion of that decline and of the ideological underpinnings of the decline, see O'Brien, 1991; Wilkes & O'Brien, forthcoming).

CONCLUSION

The creation and distribution of income in a society based on the market reflects political and ideological influences alongside the economic forces. The outcome of those forces and influences is a system marked by inequality, and by wealth and poverty. The state responds to poverty through social security. Thus, the provision of social security takes place within a context in which income distribution is marked by inequality and by poverty.

The form and shape of state provision of social security are the outcome of the competing pressures arising from the need for the state to respond to poverty, but to do so within the framework set by the overall pattern and structure of income distribution. The focus for this thesis, then, is the ideological forces and struggles that shape social security. The 1972 Royal Commission on Social Security provides a valuable location in which to examine the operation and outcome of those ideological forces. It is valuable because the Commission is a potentially crucial component of state activity and also because the full range of the Commission's work provides a comprehensive vehicle to demonstrate the value of ideology as a key contributor to understanding social security provision and policy.

The four features of ideology set out at the beginning of this chapter, namely:

1. ideology as domination;
2. a non-deterministic approach and rejection of reductionism;
3. the use of ideology in a positive and a negative sense;
4. ideology as an arena of contest and struggle.

provide a comprehensive vehicle for a thoroughgoing analysis of social security. The three components identified by Thompson (1984) are an integral part of that theoretical framework,

facilitating a thorough analysis of ideology at work. This theoretical framework makes possible a detailed answer to the questions: Why does the state provide social security ? Why does that provision of social security fail to meet material needs adequately ? What is the reason for the rules and regulations surrounding the provision of social security ? Ideology provides a key analytic tool with which to examine and explore the struggles surrounding the purposes of social security, the response of the state to poverty, and the ways in which poverty is located within the overall pattern of income distribution. A clear and comprehensive picture of how ideology works in these core areas permits a more thoroughgoing analysis of the basis on which benefit levels are set. These levels are the outcome of ideological contests and of the ways in which ideology is linked with the patterns of domination in the society. Whatever else influences social security, its provision is certainly ideological. Chapter two extends the theoretical framework begun in this chapter by using ideology as a key link between the state, inequality and poverty, and social security. It is that discussion to which I now turn.