

# Theory and Practice of the Welfare State in Europe

Session 07

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**Course web page**

[www.ips.uw.edu.pl/rszarf/welfare-state/](http://www.ips.uw.edu.pl/rszarf/welfare-state/)

**For and Against the Welfare State  
Based on Paul Wilding's Essay and  
Other Sources**

# Wilding's Eight Sets of Arguments

1. the achievement of the welfare state has been considerable
2. the welfare state enjoys widespread popularity
3. welfare state policies are an efficient way of meeting social needs
4. such policies are the most effective way of supplementing, complementing and correcting the shortcomings of the economic market

# Wilding's Eight Sets of Arguments

5. welfare state policies are the only satisfactory way of meeting needs which other traditional sources of welfare can no longer supply
6. the welfare state is an important mechanism for securing political stability
7. it provides a basis on which to build a genuine welfare society
8. the welfare state is based on values which are the necessary basis for fair and civilised social life

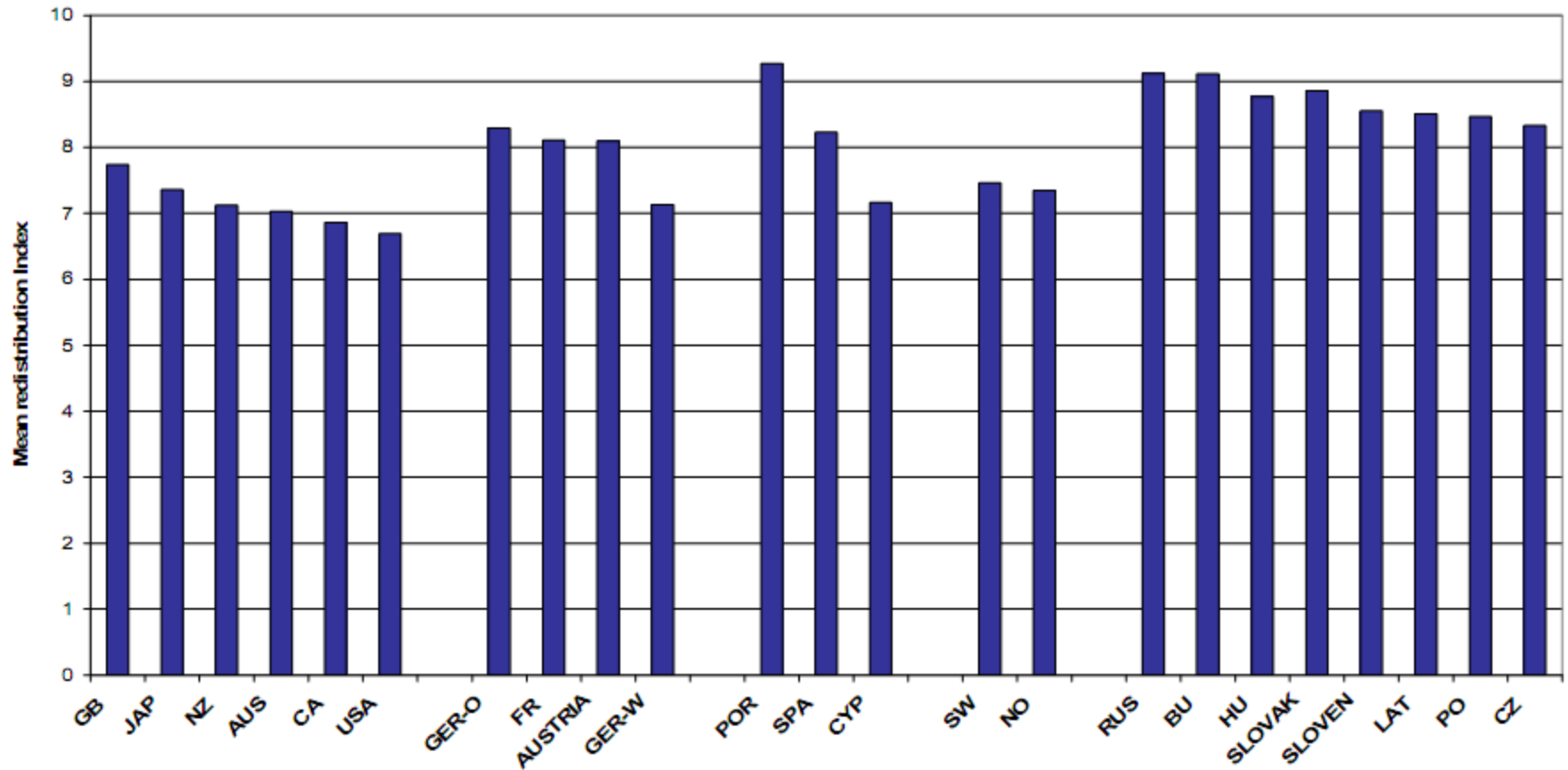
# Achievements

- To stress the achievement of the welfare state is not to ignore gaps, shortcomings and failures.... The aim is not to induce complacency, but rather to paint a more balanced picture of the situation than is provided by most assessments, which focus on what has not been achieved rather than on actual achievement. What is plain from any kind of objective assessment of the welfare state is that it has achieved a great deal

# Popularity

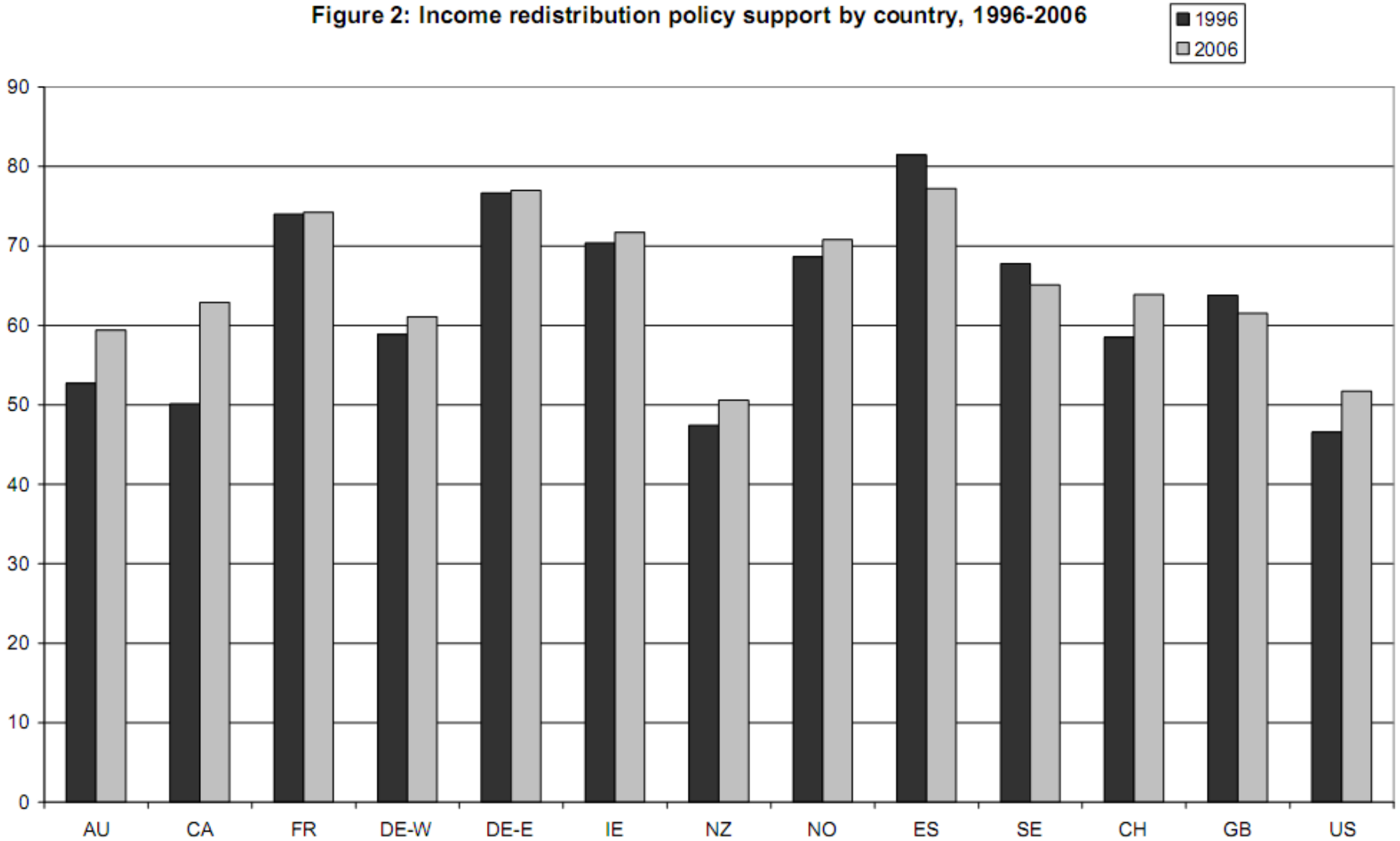
- People support the welfare state both because they believe in the values on which it rests and which it expresses.... The market system may be logical, coherent and compelling to ideologues. But the idea... that the market will at times offend our ideas of distributive justice but that we must nevertheless bear with it for the sake of a greater good - is simply not acceptable to most people

# Support for redistribution by countries, grouped into welfare regimes



# Social Policy Support

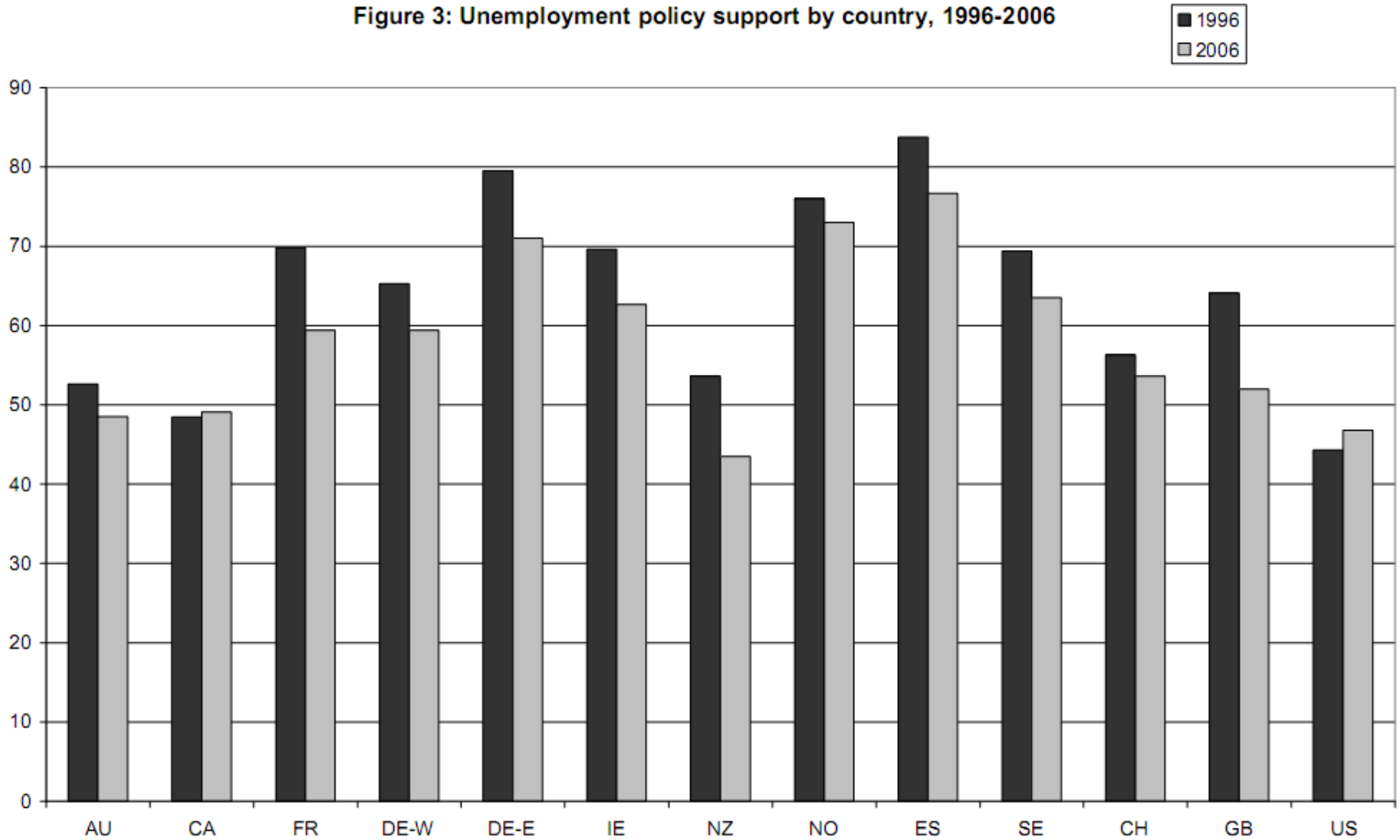
Figure 2: Income redistribution policy support by country, 1996-2006





# Social Policy Support

Figure 3: Unemployment policy support by country, 1996-2006



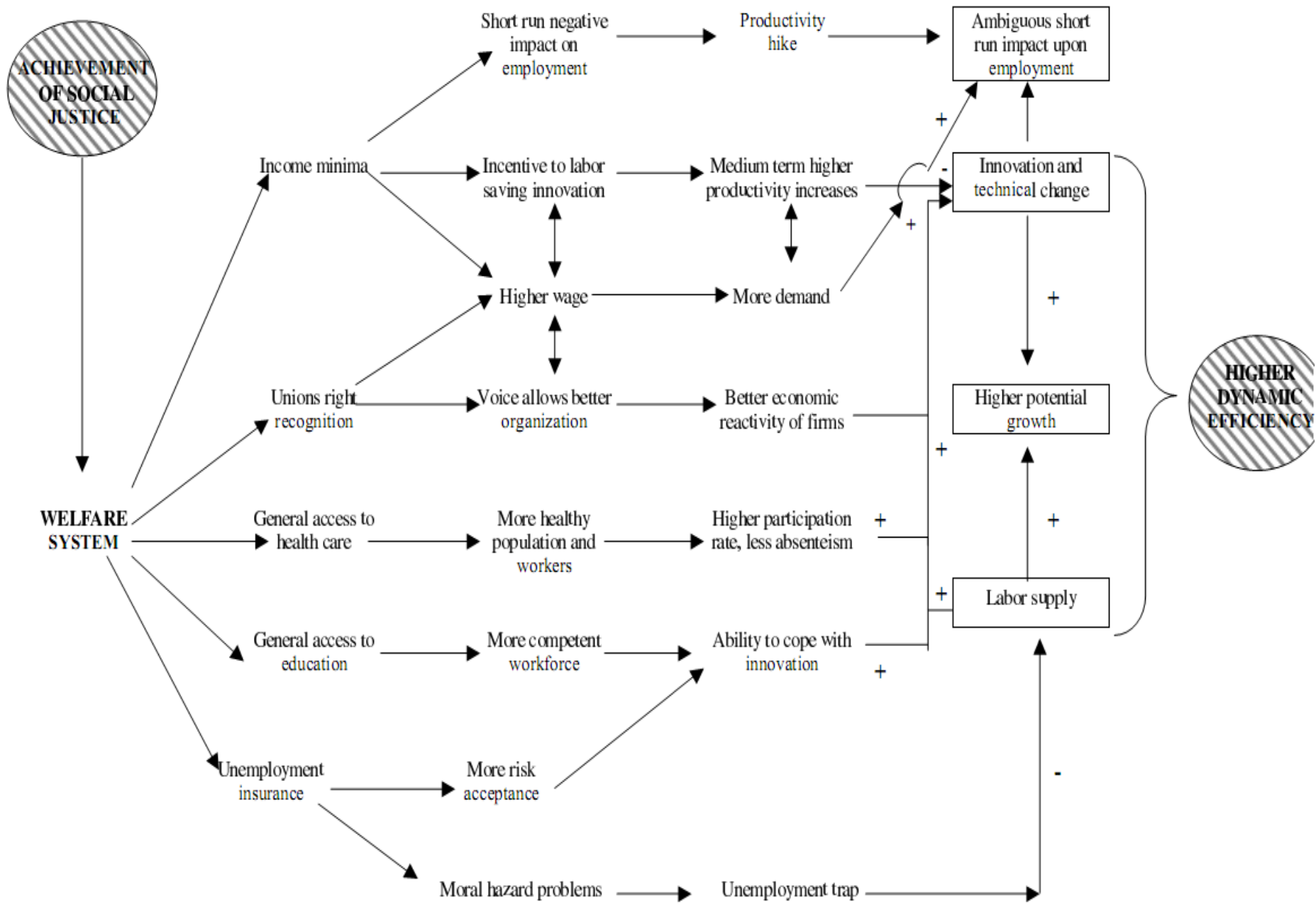
# Efficiency

- What is being argued here is not that the welfare state is always efficient..... The argument being outlined is that public provision is not inherently inefficient, that loose assumptions, for example, about automatic 'efficiency savings' releasing money for growth are an absolute nonsense until inefficiencies are clearly defined. What is evident is that public services can be, and often are, highly efficient enterprises.

# Answer to Market Shortcomings

- There is just no evidence of a systematic relationship between the level of public expenditure in a particular country and economic performance. The argument of welfare state supporters is that state welfare services can supplement , complement and correct the shortcomings of the market , and do so without the economic and social costs to growth and social order, which are such an anxiety to welfare state critics.

HOW (SOME) WELFARE EXPENDITURES MAY ENHANCE DYNAMIC EFFICIENCY



# Meeting Needs for Care

- The state has moved more decisively into the field of social care as, and because, traditional institutions have shown themselves unable to provide an acceptable level of care. Supporters of the welfare state would not argue that this means the state must provide all the services required. But it is hard to see what other body apart from the state can provide, regulate, or finance the necessary services.

# Political Stability

- The balance of evidence and argument seems to suggest that capitalist democracy is a fundamentally unstable compromise..., that its instability becomes more obvious in recession, but that it is supported and stabilised rather than destabilised by welfare state policies. Threatening problems - for example unemployment - are eased, the authority and standing of government are legitimised, a middle way is opened up.

# Potential to Solve Social Problems

- What is very striking is how all the main social services have evolved since 1948 - in directions which were never anticipated at that time. This ability to evolve and develop in response to change in society, new understanding of problems and new insights into how problems can be resolved, is one of the great strengths of social policies - so long as they are given the freedom and the funding required for creative responses.

# Civilised and Stable Life

- it is based on those values most likely to provide a firm and satisfactory base for civilised and stable life in society - co-operation and the sharing of burdens, reduction of inequalities, justice and fairness, altruism, humanitarianism and a concern for social need, fellowship and rights of citizenship... The welfare state also expresses man's creativity, his refusal to take the outcomes of supposed economic laws for granted when they affront his ideas of distributive justice... It appeals to man's imaginative and social nature and to his belief in the possibility of progress.




# Four Special Arguments against the Welfare State

- welfare state policies are no more than a palliative, are primarily concerned with social control, and should be regarded as an instrument for legitimating and sustaining, rather than transforming, capitalism
- the welfare state sustained patriarchy
- the welfare state is damaging for freedom
- the welfare state has damaging social effects (its divisive and disruptive results on society)

# Welfare State and Freedom

- The basis of freedom in society is a low level of government intervention in economic and social life
- welfare state services usually offer no choice and provide further threats to freedom by, in effect, imposing a maximum standard on what is available to consumers
- the power of professionals and bureaucrats... the welfare state services 'put some people in a position to decide what is good for other people'
- the inevitable conflict between equality and freedom

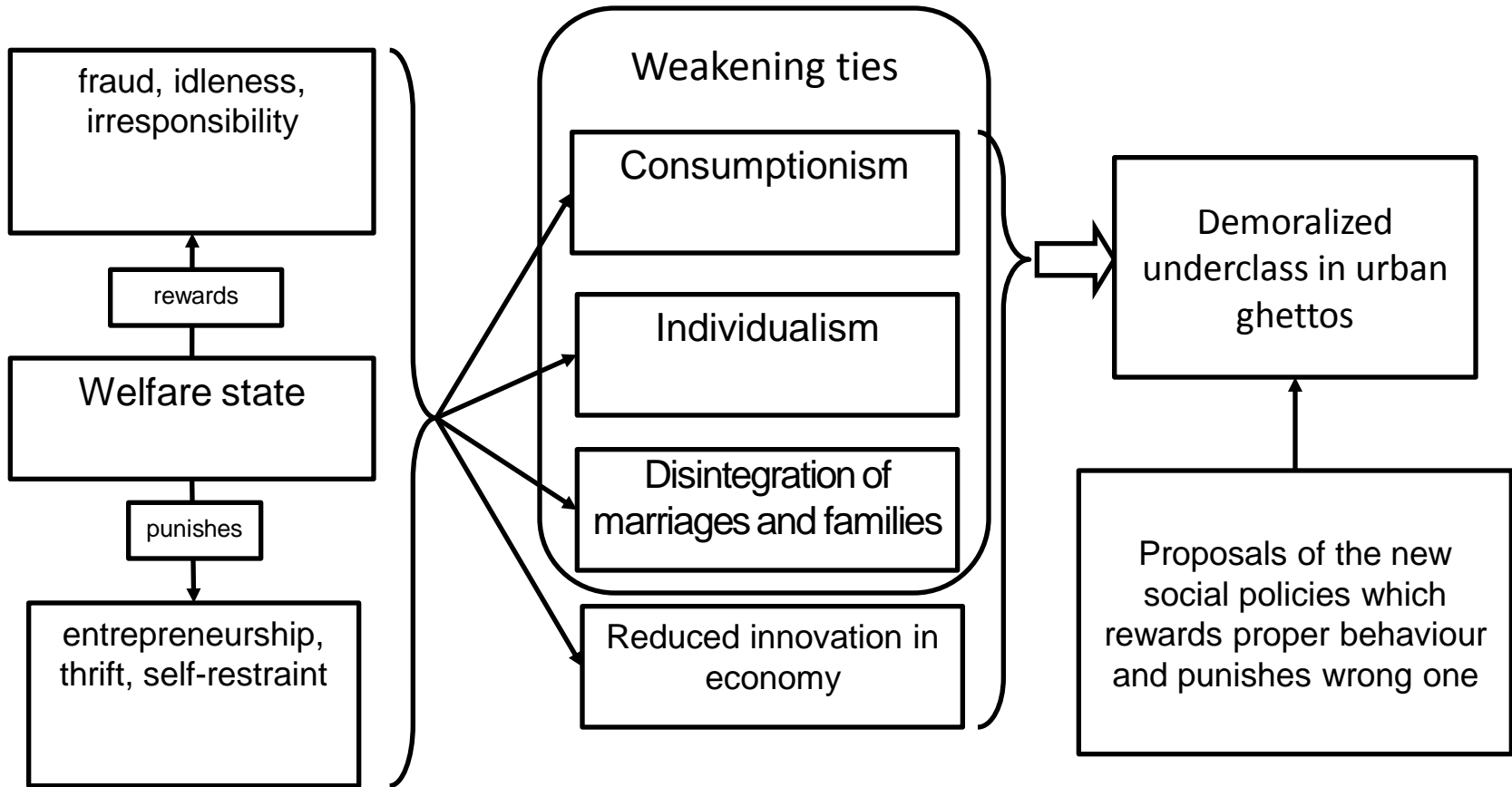
**TABLE 11.1** Summary of Alleged Effects of Welfare State on Freedom

<i>Argument</i>	<i>Effect on freedom</i>	<i>Of (agent)</i>	<i>From (obstacles)</i>	<i>To (actions/ conditions)</i>
a. property	reduces	citizens cum taxpayers	legal obstacles	dispose of property as they please
b. uniformity	reduces	citizens	legal obstacles	display diverse tastes for public services
c. impartiality	enhances	citizens	psychological obstacles	display moral impartiality
d. paternalism	reduces	welfare recipients	legal obstacles	pursue their own preferences 
e. red tape	reduces	welfare recipients	legal and bureaucratic obstacles	live their lives as they please
f. dependency	reduces	welfare recipients	psychological and economic obstacles	pursue alternative social and political arrangements
g. irreversibility	reduces	citizens	bureaucratic and political obstacles	pursue alternative social and political arrangements
h. poverty	enhances	welfare recipients	social and economic obstacles	live their lives as they please
i. moralizing	enhances	citizens	psychological obstacles	act upon seriously held moral principles

# Welfare State and Quality of Society

- damage done by the welfare state to individual and family responsibility
- the welfare... creates dependency... [its] benefits are breeding the 'begging bowl mentality' ... [it] leads on to abuse and fraud and the development of the irresponsible society
- the welfare state is accused of exacerbating social division and social conflict rather than increasing social integration and cohesion

# Theory of Demoralisation of Society



It is American conservatives way of critique of US social assistance style in 1980.