

## **Social Policy across Borders: Commonalities, Convergence, and Paradoxes in Connectivity, 1850-1975**

### **Synopses**

#### **Madeleine Herren, Heidelberg**

Transcultural bargaining with Trojan horses: alternatives to the institutional history of international labour organisations?

In 1930, the International Labour Conference at Geneva had to face an ambivalent report of the director of the International Labour Organisation (ILO). The French socialist Albert Thomas meandered between the acknowledgement of Asian initiatives in international labour legislation and the evocation of cultural differences between East and West. His fear of the “age-long conflict between Eastern and Western culture” made its way through the Western press. But in fact, even the long-cherished differences between East and West seemed endangered in a somehow perplexing way. In 1930, New Zealand, the showcase of Western progressive labour legislation before World War I, rejected her paradigmatic status. To her government delegate, the ILO was just “an old-world organisation”. At the same time, the Indian workers’ delegate demanded in his resolution free representation of colonial labour and the enforcement of ILO activities in Asia, not without mentioning that most of the ILO conventions spoke a specific Western language. Due to the lack of a quorum, the Indian resolution gained majority, but had no effects.

However, the debate questioned fundamental Western assumptions: Until World War I, international social policy was first of all related to the coordination of Western national labour legislations, although international social politics and multilateral conventions came along with universal claims. In the 1930s, the growing importance of Pan-Asian-movements boosted differences between regional interests and Western universalism. In addition, the integration of non- or semi-sovereign countries within international organisations questioned well-established Western ideas on centre and periphery. Furthermore, international organisations brought new actors outside the foreign offices in international politics: experts, stakeholders, and lobbyists. These dynamics of change also influenced hierarchies within Western states. To give an example, Indian representatives at Geneva asked for diplomatic privilege. The ILO’s female factory inspectors even supported the call for women diplomats, an idea refused by most Western foreign offices. From this point of view, the ILO oscillates between two different roles: its impact as a solid international framework, and its function as a platform of controversial debates with consequences even beyond the frame of international social politics.

Combining these aspects with the approach of “braided histories”, this paper proposes to understand international organisations as highly asymmetrical and competitive platforms of transcultural bargaining and their institutional frameworks as multifunctional Trojan horses. Why focussing on international labour organisations and not on intellectual cooperation or international law? The paper will show that in the system of the League of Nations the ILO had a considerable political significance. Its impact was based on a powerful method of translating political aims into neutralised and highly complex pieces of expert knowledge. On the one hand, these translation tools worked well, as for example the often-quoted *cordon sanitaire*

against communism. But on the other hand, to the dismay of the Foreign Office, things went on in another direction. Before independence, India saw international organisations as a backdoor to power, cleverly used by Indian representatives. The challenge is to analyse the consequences of shifting methodologies and the entanglement of various functions, the confrontation between pretended universalism and the organisation of regional political power with and even against a terminology of international social policy.

**Sanjoy Bhattacharya**

**Troubled Transmissions, Unexpected Outcomes: World Health Organization networks, disease control and eradication policies, and their impact on South Asia**

The World Health Organization has played an important role in the development of global public health, medical and social policy since its inception. The organisation is a complex one, incorporating a Geneva-based headquarters, as well as several regional offices; this complex network has been responsible for the development and application of policy. It is also noteworthy that the most effective implementation of projects was carried out with the co-operation and assistance of national and local governmental structures and community partnerships. All these themes are examined in detail in my paper, which uses the case study of the global smallpox eradication programme to assess the difficulties that have affected the complex WHO networks and their international and national alliances, especially in relation to the transfer of operational directives and general ideas for the betterment of health.

Global smallpox eradication was, by any measure, an enormous achievement. To recognise that this goal was reached in the face of tremendous difficulties, often emanating from within the organisations involved in planning and implementation of policies, does not, in any way, detract from that accomplishment. However, these difficulties do serve as a reminder that scholars should avoid being swept away by the heroic narratives that tend to predominate in official histories prepared after the certification of eradication. Historians and other chroniclers need to be equally careful about being over-reliant on reports published during the programme's earlier stages, as these tend only to offer the views of a few people, who hoped, usually in vain, that their recommendations would be implemented as policy in the field. Ground realities, as my paper will attempt to show, were always significantly more intricate. And this complexity can only really be revealed by a careful analysis of unpublished papers dealing with the day to day discussions about policy, which are useful precisely because they reveal the views and actions of the thousands of field managers and personnel who contributed to smallpox eradication; their ability to study and adapt to a plethora of local conditions was crucial to the ultimate result and, therefore, merits recognition.

This paper will also seek to argue that the assessment of the intellectual, political and social agendas of a handful of senior WHO officials is fine, as long as we do not end up assuming that everyone else associated to the development and implementation of global health policy was devoid of intellect, and the ability to make a difference in the design and implementation of policy. The views of WHO Directors General, their advisors and overall heads of disease control programmes are undoubtedly important. Yet, it is important to remember that their views were

neither static nor able to dictate the day to day running of a highly complex organisation; at the same time, it would be foolhardy for the historian seeking to study the complex interplay between global, regional, national and local forces to ignore the complicated political networks that different constituents of the WHO had to contend with on a daily basis, often with the assistance of staff employed locally on a variety of short-term contracts.

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**Martin Daunton** (University of Cambridge)

*Distributive Justice, Trade and Employment: Recreating the Global Economy after the Second World War*

During the Second World War, attention turned to recreating the world economy by turning away from the insular capitalism of the 1930s. The proposals for reconstruction came from a number of sources: from economists attached to the League of Nations (such as Ragnar Nurske); from economists advising national governments (Keynes and Meade in Britain, White in the USA); and from politicians with particular visions of the post-war world, such as Cordell Hull. In this paper, I will focus on issues of distributive justice in the debates over the structure of the financial system of Bretton Woods and the trade system negotiated at Geneva and Havana. At the heart of these debates were issues relating to welfare. After the First World War, the attempt to restore the world economy at the expense of domestic welfare led to a nationalistic backlash. How could this be prevented from occurring again? Should creditor nations be obliged to bear some of the burdens of adjustment? Should under-developed nations have a voice in the creation of the new system of trade relations, and on what conditions should trade be encouraged? Should there be an obligation to maintain full employment as a precondition for the new international trading system? I will consider the exchange of ideas between economists and politicians in revising the operation of the Bretton Woods financial settlement, and in the abortive negotiations to establish an International Trade Organisation.

**Lawrence Goldman, St. Peter's College, Oxford**

'The International Statistical Congress and the politics of nineteenth century statistics'

This paper will examine the International Statistical Congresses held periodically in different European capitals from 1853 for the next half-century. The ISC is said to have been the first international organization for a single scientific discipline. The paper will explore the transfer of ideas between nations which had already developed different traditions in statistics and their applications, and thus consider the relationship between national and international influences on the development of

social policies and social knowledge. By the 1850s the British, French, Prussian, and Belgian traditions were all distinctive in terms of the organization of statistical collection, the purposes to which they were put, and the relationship to other disciplines and to government.

Much of the literature on this period takes British contributions to the development of social statistics in isolation, assuming scientific preeminence and leadership of the field on the part of the Royal Statistical Society and its satellites. The British model is also associated with a distinctively liberal political outlook. The aim of the paper is to question whether each of these assumptions is tenable in the light of different international traditions of statistical collection and analysis, and the different political ends to which statistics were applied. The history of the International Statistical Congress, in particular its second meeting in London in 1860, may provide a useful context for this analysis.

**Erik Grimmer-Solem, Wesleyan University**

Reform Redux: The Second Life of the German Social Question in the Colonies, 1900-1918.

During the last two decades of their existence as German territories, novel economic and social policies were tried in the German colonies in Africa and the Pacific following the failures and disappointments of both settler colonialism and plantation agriculture. This new approach drew on the expertise of German economists and other scholars and saw the mobilization of institutions first created to address the German “social question”--such as the *Verein für Sozialpolitik*--to conduct systematic investigations and the creation of new specialized scholarly institutions--such as the Hamburg Colonial Institute--to train colonial officials. This “scientific colonialism” was ultimately given official sanction by the Imperial Colonial Office under Bernhard Dernburg (1906-1910) and his successor Wilhelm Solf (1911-1918). In these years quite extensive comparative analysis was undertaken of colonial policy in the British, Dutch and French empires, as well as agricultural policy in the American South. Likewise, the existing curriculum of political economy was modified to accommodate the specific challenges of the colonies, which in turn gave birth to a new “colonial science” termed *Kolonialwissenschaft*. This paralleled what had occurred in German political economy with the advent of the “social question” in the 1860s and 1870s. It is striking, if not entirely surprising, how the ideas tabled for colonial reform after 1900 were still haunted by the specter of the German “social question” and the models for social policy first developed to address the challenges posed by agricultural depression, industrialization and rapid urbanization. As it turns out, the ideas and policies developed out of this mélange of old and new anticipated developmental theories and models first implemented on a large scale in the postcolonial developing world in 1950s and 1960s, raising some interesting questions about the German origins of the economics of development.

### **Stein Kuhnle**

“The early formative years of Scandinavian welfare states and the impact of ideas from outside”

Ideas come from somewhere, ideas cross political borders, and ideas matter. The first social insurance laws in Scandinavia were introduced in the 1890s, not long after Bismarck’s programme for social insurance in Germany, 1883-1889. Some scholars have seen this as a clear example of diffusion of ideas and policies, while others have contested this perspective. The paper discusses the kind and degree of early German impact upon the origins of Scandinavian welfare state development. To what extent, and eventually in what way, was early German social insurance important for the subsequent Scandinavian legislation? To what extent did Germany historically serve as a model? While the timing of the first Scandinavian social insurance legislation ran almost in parallel with the German legislation and was similar across the Scandinavian countries, the first social security legislation in the Scandinavian countries varied across countries as to needs and purposes covered. While the German example is found to have been important for the timing of the first Scandinavian legislation, it was far less influential as to the actual social priorities and normative principles of legislation. The different priorities and sequences of early Scandinavian social security legislation can only be explained by different domestic pre-conditions for state action in this emerging field of state activity.

### **Tamotsu Nishizawa, Hitotsubashi University, Tokyo**

Economics of Social Reform across the Borders: Germany, Britain, and Japan around 1900

‘It was around 1870 that a new interest in social reform, a new spirit of ‘historicism,’ and a new activity in the field of economic ‘theory’ began to assert themselves’ (Schumpeter 1954). ‘Society for Social Policy’ in Germany was founded in 1872, and its basic ideas of the German Historical School were diffused and disseminated across the borders. My paper focuses on the exchanges and cross-fertilization about economics of social reform among Germany, Britain, and Japan; or, rather on how the modernizing Japan learnt from Germany and Britain about the economic and social welfare ideas and assimilated those ideas domestically.

First, I shall discuss about the introduction and development of the historico-ethical thinking in Meiji Japan in its international context, or in the internationalization of the historico-ethical thinking. Then I shall focus on the foundation of Japanese Society for Social Policy in 1896 by the people such as Kenzo Wadagaki, Noboru Kanai who studied in Germany and transferred the German ideas and institutions in Japan.

My major arguments concern with the economic ideas and activities of Tokuzo Fukuda (1874-1930), who studied under Lujo Brentano in 1898-1901 and co-authored a book *Labour Economics* (1899). Fukuda introduced to Japan Brentano’s approach to labour questions, particularly regarding the relationship between working conditions

and their productive capability, and he developed the ideas of ‘democratic control of industry’ in theory and practice. I shall also discuss how Fukuda learnt from the Cambridge welfare economics of Marshall and Pigou, then shifted to the Oxford approach of social reform by Hobson and others (in parallel with the American institutionalists); and further learning from Lorenz von Stein and Anton Menger, Fukuda developed the theory of social rights and ‘the social policy for the right to live’, in effect, the ideas of civil minimum of the welfare state. Finally, I shall explore how Fukuda’s ideas were domestically assimilated and embedded by his followers such as Ichiro Nakayama in the post-war period.

### **Inderjeet Parmar (University of Manchester)**

“American philanthropic foundations and the Politics of International Knowledge Network-Construction in the Cold War”

This paper provides an analytical overview, with concrete empirical examples, of the construction of power-knowledge networks by US foundations - Ford, Rockefeller, and Carnegie - during the Cold War. Using the conceptual work of Bourdieu, Castells, Brym and Gramsci, I argue that the construction of national and global power-knowledge networks - of academics, universities and research institutes within the US and between American and foreign academics and institutions - constitutes the foundations’ principal achievement. Rather than being the basis of poverty alleviation, economic development per se, or of crop yield improvements, etc, this paper (by examining the cases of the Green Revolution and of Indonesia’s transformation) suggests that power-knowledge networks’ main achievement is their own self-perpetuation for the continued production of particular kinds of knowledge by specific modernizing knowledge elites that are integrated into national and global networks favouring western/American ‘modernisation’ strategies. Those knowledge elites were fostered, developed and consolidated by foundation investments, integrated into national, regional and global institutional and foundation networks, and thereby provided intellectual employment, career progression and assimilation into western/American modernising culture. This represents a foundation-sponsored programme for elite-led, top-down economic and political development that broadly constrains nationalist aspirations by engineering national elites, societies and economic-political strategies. The net result of such engineered power-knowledge networks is the continuation of global economic, financial and political inequalities and ‘third world’ dependence. This squares with the foundations’ own conclusions that though they generally failed to alleviate poverty and increase living standards in the third world, they were spectacularly successful in creating enduring self-perpetuating power-knowledge networks.

### **Edmund Rogers, Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge**

A ‘most imperial contribution’: New Zealand and old-age pensions in Britain, 1898-1908

New Zealand was one of several countries whose experience influenced the British debate over old-age pensions at the end of the nineteenth century and in the

Edwardian period. However, it needs to be singled out for the unique role it played in that debate. Imperial links facilitated an easy transfer of ideas through firsthand experience and official publications, and deeply-felt ethno-cultural commonalities meant that the colonial example was far more widely accessible and understood in Britain than any pensions policy in Continental Europe.

The colony's introduction in 1898 of non-contributory old-age pensions, awarded as a right of citizenship, was a turning point for British progressives advocating such a policy. It created the momentum for the establishment of the National Committee of Organised Labour, whose campaign for old-age pensions was the driving force behind the Liberal party's pledge to introduce them. New Zealand's example held especial appeal for British progressives, who saw the colonies as thoroughly 'British' societies, but which, as 'new countries', were free from the restraining influence of traditions, assumptions, and the poor law obstructing social reform in the Mother Country. In this view, the 'Britons' of the Antipodes could experiment with social reforms in ways impossible in an 'old country' like Britain, which now had the opportunity to learn from its colonies. To progressives, New Zealand thus became a yardstick for old-age pensions in Britain.

However, as in other social policy debates such as labour law and land reform, a policy enacted by the democratic communities of Australasia became negatively-associated with their character as 'new countries'. New Zealand's prominence in the debate enabled the Charity Organisation Society, which opposed non-contributory old-age pensions awarded by the state as a disincentive to thrift and responsibility, to argue that the experience of a 'new country', which had no poor law, was a dangerous example for an 'old country' like Britain to follow. New Zealand's pensions scheme, said its critics, was a lavish, socialist system of poor relief that would only bring ruin.

The Liberal government taking office after the 1906 election was committed to introducing old-age pensions. New Zealand's system matched all the criteria of the government's ideal pensions scheme: non-contributory, paid for by central government but restricted to the very poorest, morally 'respectable' citizens, and awarded as a right with no disqualifications, in contrast to outdoor relief under the poor law. Whilst most British progressives wanted a universal state pension scheme, the government was wary of such a large spending commitment. New Zealand thus provided the Cabinet with a conveniently financially-conservative model. The government's own scheme was in fact even more conservative, and it was able to justify the relative parsimony of the Old-Age Pensions Act 1908 as cautious mimicry in an old country of a social reform pioneered in a new country where conditions were different.

The paper thus illustrates the special interest that British progressives had in colonial social reforms; the ways in which ideas were transferred from the Empire to the Mother Country; and how the unique character of the English-speaking 'new countries' aided and obstructed that transfer.

### **James Thompson, University of Bristol**

Framing the labour question: political economy, idea transfer and social policy in Britain, 1870-1945

In the last few years, historians have increasingly sought to locate British history in its full global context. Whether it be 'the new imperial history', studies of Anglo-

American exchange, or examinations of liberalism's relationship with Europe, inter and trans-national perspectives abound in recent work. Too rarely, however, are these differing perspectives tested against each other.

This paper will seek to further this process by addressing the role of foreign models, and of idea transfer, in the development of the labour question in Britain, focusing in particular on debates about trade unionism. British discussion of trade unions incorporated a wide range of foreign parallels and influences, and thus provides a useful case study in evaluating idea transfer across national boundaries. The labour movement was, of course, very much part of these processes of exchange. The paper aims in particular to clarify the impact of foreign tours and international networks on the conceptions of and attitudes to trade unionism within the British labour movement.

**Timothy Smith, Queen's University (Ontario, Canada)**

'Best Practices and Worst Stereotypes: How Nations Learn from Other Nations and How they Choose Not To Do So'

One hundred years ago, David Lloyd George visited Germany in order to learn about its social policies. In April 2008, the Canadian cabinet members visited Portland, Oregon to study that city's pioneering public housing policies for the homeless. Ten years ago, Taiwan implemented a sweeping reform of its health system. It chose to learn from several European nations but it flatly rejected the US model of health care provision. For the past five years, the Danish model of 'flexicurity' (economic flexibility coupled with the security that comes from generous social programs) has been all the rage in policy circles. Rich nations, then, have a long history of adopting 'best practices' in the realm of social policy. They also have a history of using negative stereotypes of other 'social models' to thwart any change at home. Consider the US medical lobby's invocation of 'socialized medicine' at several junctures over the past ninety years. Or consider the debates over the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the US during the late 1980s, when Canadian critics charged that greater economic integration would necessarily mean the adoption of the US 'social model' (this has not happened). Perhaps France is the supreme example of a nation with a long history of invoking negative images of foreign 'social models' when it has debated changes to its own policies. This paper will focus on the debates in Canada during the 1980s and France during the 1990s to show how politicians and activists have manipulated images of other nations' social policies in order to achieve their own domestic ends.

**David Todd, Trinity Hall / Centre for History and Economics, Cambridge**

Exchanges of ideas about British free trade between France, Germany and the United States, 1830-1870

Conventional analyses of the spread of free trade in the mid-nineteenth century mainly deal with its dissemination from Britain, the world's dominant economic

power, to the European Continent and the rest of the world. By contrast with this 'vertical' approach, the paper considers 'horizontal' exchanges of ideas about British free trade between three countries situated within Britain's immediate economic periphery: France, Germany, and the United States.

A related theme of the paper is the growth of social concerns, at the expense of national state power concerns, in shaping trade policy debates. British free traders partly conceived of the removal of trade barriers as a response to the 'condition of England' question. Continental and American free traders also emphasized that a reduction in customs duties would bring about an increase in the living standard of workers. Yet outside Britain, it was the protectionists who successfully appropriated the new social dimension of trade policy, presenting trade barriers as effective hurdles against the spread of British-style pauperism or even as a tool for gradually extinguishing slavery in the United States.

To highlight the intensity and the significance of this transnational debate among non-Britons about Britain, the paper focuses on the writings and activities of three major propagators of social and economic ideas: the German nationalist Friedrich List (1789-1846), the American protectionist Henry Carey (1793-1879), and Michel Chevalier (1806-1879), the French instigator of the 1860 'free trade treaty' with Britain. Despite some differences in their analysis of the purpose and merits of British free trade, these three figures shared much common ground as each sought to define an adequate national response to the formidable economic and social challenge posed by Britain.

Alongside the ideas that circulated between France, Germany and the United States, the paper pays sustained attention to the practical conditions that facilitated or hindered such exchanges about British free trade. Neither List nor Carey nor Chevalier is remembered as a major economic or social thinker. Yet all three were self-conscious and effective middlemen between national debates: observing foreign socioeconomic models, travelling extensively, and borrowing concepts from each other, they played a crucial role in the circulation of economic and social ideas across borders and a significant role in the shaping of their respective country's politico-economic culture.

**Julia Moses, St John's College, Cambridge**

'Workplace Accidents, Transfers of Ideas and Convergence in European Welfare Policy, 1870-1930'

This paper considers the development of industrial accident insurance and workmen's compensation policies in Britain, Italy and Germany from the 1880s to the early 1920s. It considers how the experience of interpreting social and technological change was a common one throughout the industrialising world at this time. Specifically, it investigates governmental communication that transgressed national borders.

Transnational institutions and individual actors were crucial for these developments. Governments were the beneficiaries of information on accident policy that was published in international specialist periodicals and presented at international conferences run by specialist organisations such as the Paris-based Committee for the International Congresses on Industrial Accidents and Social Insurance, the International Labour Office, and, later, the International Labour Organisation. Information provided through international embassies and consulates, as well as, in

the case of Britain, through authorities based around the empire, was also crucial for these developments.

It engages with the two main stories about the development of social policy in Europe at this time. The first of these is a narrative of policy convergence in which different states move towards a common model of legislation. Social scientists have often attributed the development of policy convergence to theories of policy diffusion and policy learning. The second of these narratives highlights the development of national types of policy. In the latter case, social scientists have accounted for dissimilarities in welfare policy by pointing to path dependency.

This paper aims to historicise how convergence has worked in the case of compensation for workplace accidents by focusing on the experiences of the British, German and Italian governments. With this approach, it seeks to complement some of the important work done by historians such as Peter Hennock, Daniel Rodgers and others who have demonstrated that policy ideas do not merely transfer from state to state as individual containers; instead, they are interpreted, appropriated or rejected.

The argument in this paper will unfold in three steps. First, it will outline the points of contact for the transfer of policy ideas. Then, it will consider the importance of figurations of knowledge about policies for the process of transfer. In particular, it will explore how understandings of industrial risk were consolidated in Europe over this period, and it will reflect on how this knowledge transformed during the process of convergence. Finally, it will consider the significance of national narratives for framing policy ideas. It argues that policies for the compensation of industrial accidents did converge across much of Europe during this period. Yet, this convergence was predicated upon the creation of a common language about industrial risk, and it was mediated by national stories about policy development.

### **Maria Sophia Quine**

‘Social Modernity Italian-Style: Welfare from Liberalism to Fascism in a Trans-national Perspective’

One of the guiding principles of my work has been the belief that the history of Italian Fascism and, indeed, of modern Italy, more broadly, must be placed in the larger context of the history of fascist Europe, modern Europe, and the modern world. For this reason, this contribution to the conference on ‘Social Policy Across Borders’ will consider the role of foreign precedents and models and international agencies and exchanges in the formation of the Italian Fascist Welfare State.

The Italian fascists repeatedly claimed that their movement and regime had a redemptive, rehabilitative, and therapeutic purpose. The language of fascist nationalism was infused with biological and medical metaphors that underscored the obsessive desire of the fascist dictatorship to secure the health and hygiene of the body politic. As Benito Mussolini himself declared, a prime objective of fascism was to ‘heal and cure’ the Italian ‘race’ of all of its maladies. The Duce was the doctor and fascism the medicine that Italy needed to avert national decline and achieve true greatness. However, disease did not only have discursive value in fascist Italy. In the

interwar period, socio-biological discourse about sickness and health was accompanied by social policies that actually affected people's lives.

In common with many other governments of the era, both democratic and non-democratic, the fascist regime launched various health campaigns as part of a comprehensive programme of race hygiene. These included, first and foremost, the 'battle against tuberculosis'. Fascism sought to effect dramatic changes in the incidence, prevention, and treatment of this and other diseases, which were diffuse in Italy. In partnership with voluntary and international agencies, the dictatorship aimed to introduce far-reaching health-care reforms in the 1930s. Other major public-health drives of the period included the high-profile 'struggles' against syphilis, pellagra, cancer, alcoholism and leprosy. This contribution to the conference will explore the nature and impact of some of these initiatives. It will also examine the common causes and shared aspirations of many social policy developments in different countries at the time. An aim is to highlight the inter-connections and linkages of social policy planning and implementation in Italy and the countries at which its technocrats looked for inspiration.

Fascist dirigisme in all matters, coupled with its totalitarian over-ambitions and its self-deluded conceits about its own prowess, compelled Mussolini and his followers to take credit for all social policy changes in the inter-war period. Nonetheless, the regime introduced many reforms which either followed or adapted foreign models. Mussolini's much-hyped 'anti-tuberculosis campaign' is a case in point since it took inspiration from the so-called 'Edinburgh directives' first devised by the inventor of the modern dispensary, Sir Robert Philip. One of its defining features, in fact, fascism freely borrowed ideas from a multitude of sources, despite its pretensions of being the 'Prometheus of the Twentieth Century'.

This contribution will also place the history of Italian social policy within a longer-term perspective by considering some pre-fascist examples with relevance to the main themes of this conference. The precedent for looking abroad for guidance on domestic affairs dates way back to the time of the foundation of the Italian political nation and parliamentary system in the nineteenth century. Unified Italy's first prime minister, Count Camillo Benso di Cavour, after all, had spent a lot of time in his youth studying and assessing the workings of the English Poor Law. What he learned, he tried to adapt to fit and shape the particularities and peculiarities of his own country. The result was the creation of a complex and contradictory welfare system 'Italian-style' which fascism inherited and modernized. Italian social policy, this contribution will stress, must be placed firmly within the historical mainstream. This can only be accomplished once Italian history is securely located within its proper European, trans-national, comparative and international context.

