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Travellers, Citizenship and the early Welfare State

The focus of my work has been analysing the development of Traveller-state relations in the twentieth century and particularly in understanding the experiences of Travellers in the era of the Welfare State. In my work I argue that Travellers have a distinct history, and that their experiences as a people are intrinsically tied to the history of the mainstream, and profoundly influenced by the stereotypes forced upon them by settled society.

The two prevailing, and enduring, stereotypes of Travellers have been as current in the corridors of government as they have been in popular imagination. Travellers are either seen as social failures who are unable to cope with the pressures of modern life, or as a brightly coloured people with flashing eyes who live on remote heaths untouched by civilisation. In the first formulation, they are nothing more than an unfortunate part of the detritus of society, best dealt with under the category of vagrant or social deviant, and in the second, they are seen as timeless and unchanging, and therefore as having no history.

At the same time as acknowledging the importance of these stereotypes, I am anxious to move away from the depiction of Traveller-state relations that tends to go something like '… hanging of Gypsies in the eighteenth century… brutal evictions in the 1960s… social exclusion today'. While the existence of these stereotypes has been crucial in misinforming Traveller-state relations and in the development of prejudicial attitudes, it is too crude a portrait to stand up to rigorous historical analysis. My aim has been to demonstrate how prejudicial action (as opposed to attitude) within Britain has not been unrelenting, nor has it been enacted in a static context, nor had it always the same justification. I have tried to move away from obstructive categories of the unified state as 'oppressor' and the equally uniform depiction of Traveller as 'victim'. I believe that this more nuanced and informed position, rather than letting the British state 'off the hook', in fact allows a serious and grounded analysis of the shortcomings of official treatment of British Travellers.

A key part in developing my perspective has been to disaggregate the monolithic category of the state, and to consider the varying reactions of central and local government to the challenges posed by the presence of Travellers. My work also reveals the extent to which Travellers were active agents in their own history, who while they existed within a climate of prejudice, saw themselves not as victims, but as a separate, and often superior, people.

To show how Traveller history has been intrinsically entwined with that of majority society, while at the same time providing them with their own distinct experiences, in this paper I aim to provide a brief insight into how the creation of the British Welfare State[1] in the late 1940s affected Travellers. Did the extension of 'cradle to

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[1] There has been much debate over the precise definition of the 'Welfare State' and whether Britain ever enjoyed one. While acknowledging it is not an unproblematic

grave' provision, and the inclusive idea of a minimum standard of living for all have a beneficial impact on Travellers, and profoundly change their relationship with government agencies? In this paper I show that the traditional stereotypes of Travellers continued to have influence, but that they were also supplemented by a new range of concerns that specifically related to the era of post-war reconstruction. Before I go any further I should say that in this paper I concentrate on how the negative view of Travellers as social deviants continued to hold sway with policy makers. While romantic ideas about Travellers were also present throughout this period, they tended to imply government inaction, stressing as they did Travellers separateness from society and the racially unalterable nature of their nomadism.

I begin by quickly outlining social policy approaches to Travellers before 1939, and go on to indicate how general social policy changed with the development of the Welfare State. I then discuss the implications that this new theory of social welfare and citizenship had for Travellers, before going to illustrate, with examples, how things worked in practice.

In the inter-war period the question of welfare provision for Travellers received the attention of two Commissions in Scotland, one in 1918 and the other in 1936.[2] Those giving evidence to both Committees drew on a mixture of environmentalist and racialised theories to explain how a travelling lifestyle was largely the result of poverty and social failure.[3] The main complaint in both reports was that Travellers had remained separate from the rest of the community, had not advanced with them, and instead preyed on the benefits created by the rest of the population. The NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Child) representative interviewed in 1918 stated that while Travellers treated their children better than did many of the poor from the slums, nevertheless it was a 'great moral wrong' to bring up children on the road:

> [Traveller children] are allowed to grow up in ignorance and idleness. Tinkers and vagrants contribute little or nothing to the common wealth of the country. Theirs is a parasitic life which subsists on the industry and thrift of others. They are social outcasts. It is a most serious form of cruelty to children to permit them to grow up under such conditions.[4]

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term – for an introduction to this discussion see R. Lowe 'The Second World War, Consensus and the Foundation of the Welfare State' C20th British History 1 (2) (1990) 152-182 – for the purposes of this work it is taken to mean the provision of the five 'core' services (social security, health care, housing education and the personal social services) and the fact that these were widely seen as a universal right, subject to the exceptions discussed below.

[2] These were the Report of the Departmental Committee on Tinkers in Scotland, 1918 and the more general Report of the Departmental Committee on Vagrancy in Scotland, 1936 (Cmd. 5194).

[3] For examples of this in the 1918 Report, see pp. 8-9 where it discusses the 'causes tending to perpetuate vagrancy'. It sees there being five main factors: racial, economic, legislative, topographical, and social.

[4] Report on Tinkers, 1918 12-13

Here no actual physical cruelty is alleged, instead, something far worse, social cruelty, depriving a child of the chance to have a normal, that is settled, upbringing, and to contribute to the common good. The authors of the 1918 Report wanted to build on the back of the Children's Act and the Great War, which had 'placed duties of citizenship' on Travellers,[5] and encourage Travellers to settle and find regular employment. They proposed dispersing the settlement of Traveller families in order to dilute their culture and break their social networks. This was to be reinforced by placing the women under the supervision of a local woman to learn the proper skills of a housewife. Their husbands were to be similarly supervised by a man in the community, and given training for regular employment, and the children were to go to school. Nationally, there was to be an Inspector of Tinkers who was:

> [To] act in a very real sense *in loco parentis* to his wards. He should shepherd them continually until such time as they are able to take their place among responsible and self-respecting citizens.[6]

These plans make it clear that the bureaucrats and reformers who steered the 1918 Report saw Travellers as being irresponsible and child-like and needing supervision and guidance to ensure they followed the correct social path.

Both the 1918 and the 1936 Reports made the assumption that vagrants and Travellers were social failures, people who have not been able to keep pace with the demands of civilisation. The solution for Travellers was to 'gradually… absorb [them] into ordinary society by housing them and securing for their children a full education'.[7] These attitudes were largely theoretical in the inter-war period as government did not look upon Travellers as a priority, and instead left matters to the piecemeal efforts of private individuals and missions.[8] They were also not particularly out of step with more general attitudes towards welfare of the period that still worked within a framework of the deserving and undeserving poor and tried to tie receipt of benefits to some form or moral, as well as material, improvement.

The Second World War and the construction of the Welfare State changed mainstream social policy in two key ways. The universal provision of services and benefits theoretically removed both the stigma and the overt social control elements to welfare provision.[9] Perhaps more significantly, the new and extended services instead became linked, rather than opposed, to the idea of citizenship. While for the general public this was much-welcomed shift as it confirmed services and benefits as a *right*,

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[5] ibid., 22-23

[6] ibid., 27

[7] Report on Vagrancy in Scotland, 1936 94

[8] These too tended to be conducted along similar lines. See for example the efforts of the Home Mission Society in Scotland in the 1930s, in a scheme where they established a network of camps open to 'local' and licensed Travellers, who were expected to send their children to school and engage in income generating craftwork schemes in return for the privilege [D. Maitland An Account of Gypsy Camps in Surrey Supervised by Hurtwood Control Committee, with a Bearing on Tinker Camps in Scotland (North Berwick, East Lothian 1.6.1932)].

[9] See for example T. H. Marshall Social Policy in the C20th (London, 1985) (5th edition, ed. A. M. Rees) chapter 6 for a fuller discussion of this shift.

the implications for Travellers were quite different. Much of the basis for the new thinking was derived from the idea that the Welfare State was founded on the notion of reciprocity, for as T. H. Marshall stated:

> Citizenship is a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community. All who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights *and duties* with which the status is endowed… Citizenship requires a bond… a direct sense of community membership… If citizenship is invoked in defence of rights, the corresponding duties of citizenship cannot be ignored… Rights have been multiplied, and they are precise… [Duties include] the duty to pay taxes and insurance contributions… Education and military service are also compulsory. The other duties are vague, and are included in the general obligation to live the life of a good citizen… of paramount importance is the duty to work [which is linked to the process of reconstruction]… [All these] are attached to the status of citizenship.[10]

This idea of citizenship implied a contract in which, in return for the guarantee of equal status and access to now considerable benefits and services, the citizen was expected to participate fully in the economic and civic life of the community.

While not all of the population subscribed to this definition of citizenship, there emerged a popular sense that along with the war, the Welfare State had been won through the active participation of the people. The reverse side of this was that those who were not perceived as having pulled their weight were vilified and marginalized.[11] The role taken by Travellers during the war, in the public mind, was at best viewed as ambiguous, and at worst as positively hindering the efforts of the majority. The implications that this had for the post-war era was profound: added to traditional stereotypes of Travellers as anti-social, was the new feeling that they had been undermining the interests of Britain in its time of need.

Travellers engaging in this debate disputed the idea that they had not participated in the war effort. Similarly, those writing in support of Travellers often also used the war as a reference point, both in terms of Travellers' participation in it, and the ethos for which Britain as a nation supposedly fought:

> Dear Fellow Briton – You don't like inhumanity, persecution or harsh treatment. You fought a War against the Principle of Unjust Power. So I am sure I can appeal to you for sympathy and help for some of your fellow countrymen who are slowly but surely being broken… Despite prejudicial beliefs, Gypsies are hardworking people… They also gave their sons willingly in defence of this country. Now the Public Health and

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[10] T. H. Marshall Citizenship and Social Class and Other Essays (London, 1950) 28-9, 40 & 78-80.

[11] S. Nicholas 'From John Bull to John Citizen: Images of National Identity and Citizenship in the Wartime BBC' in R. Weight and A. Beach (eds.) The Right to Belong: Citizenship and National Identity in Britain, 1930-60 (London, 1998) 45

> Town and Country Planning Acts are being used as weapons to destroy them completely…[12]

However, for those engaged in the task of reconstruction, participation in the war effort was only one small part of the new wider definition of ‘citizen’. As Marshall stated, duties to which the citizen should subscribe included generalised exhortations to good conduct and promoting the wider welfare of the community. One way in which Traveller lifestyles could conflict with this can be seen in the area of planning and environmental control.

Planners promoted the idea that the nation had the right to a clean and regulated urban environment and access to unspoilt countryside, achieved through ‘mixing a romantic care for the land with a modern expertise’.[13] Central to these aims were the creation of the green belts, the national parks and stricter planning regulations, as embodied in the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act:

> While particular types of conduct in the country were held to promote good citizenship via mental, moral, physical and spiritual health, other signified a lack of citizenship. Citizenship became defined in relation to ‘anti-citizenship’ represented by those members of the public, whose behaviour did not live up to environmental standards.[14]

The environmental residuum did not merely include the ‘urban minded’ tourists, who dropped litter, left gates open and played loud music, but also those who threatened the landscape with their ‘hideous settlements’ in the form of plotland shacks, bungalows, and inappropriately placed caravans.[15] Beyond a dislike of badly sited caravans, planners and bureaucrats believed that the very existence of moveable dwellings perpetuated sub-standard housing and therefore undermined their efforts to create an orderly environment, and decent accommodation for the working classes.[16]

Given the failure of Travellers to match up to the new and exacting standards required of citizens of a reconstructed Britain, their relationship with the Welfare State in all its forms was clearly problematic. While the ideals espoused by Marshall and others concerning the notions of reciprocity and duty were largely just that – ideals – and ones which many settled members of society also did not meet,[17] they did form important guiding principles for those conceiving and implementing the new services.

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[12] PRO HLG 71/1650 letter and enclosure from W. Smith to Hugh Dalton 17.4.1951. This was written by Will ‘Dromengro’ Smith, whose mother had been a Traveller, and who campaigned on behalf of Travellers in the 1950s.
[13] D. Matless ‘Taking Pleasure in England: Landscape and Citizenship in the 1940s’ in R. Weight & A. Beach (eds.) The Right to Belong 183
[14] ibid., 182 & 185
[15] ibid., 192
[16] For government statements on this see for example Hampshire Record Office 59M76/DDC207, Ministry of Health to Hartley-Wintney Rural District Council, 14.6.1950 and PRO HLG 52/1527, memo on Caravan Club, 26.5.1943.
[17] Lowe asserts that in general people’s support of the Welfare State was ‘both selective and selfish’, typified by a ‘lack of altruism’ that accepted the taxes for services they benefited from as individuals, while questioning the funding of benefits

Yet the emerging relationship between citizenship and welfare rights contained an inherent contradiction: it was both difficult and counter-productive to withhold services and benefits from these less-than-perfect citizens, as they were the best weapons at the disposal of the state for civilising anti-social elements. The compromise position produced for Travellers a practice that was very little changed from the inter-war conception of welfare provision: services were bestowed with discretion, based on a concept of social improvement and with a view to the eventual assimilation of the Traveller community. For Travellers, the result of this ethos of welfare was not a new era of universal benefits wedded to a notion of citizenship and rights. Instead, Travellers were seen to have less right to services than the settled population, and that where those services were provided they were with a view to promoting 'civilisation' and eventual assimilation.

Added to this was the simple fact that modern life and its attendant bureaucracy was not designed to manage a nomadic population. The result was that despite public claims by government over the neutral impact of new policies on Travellers' lifestyles, [18] bureaucrats recognised there were biases inherent within the system:

> The provision made for the welfare of the Gypsy is simply that which is made for citizens generally, but to the extent that the Gypsy's approach to life deters him from always taking advantage of these, he may obtain less than his full share of the benefits available. It will be evident that, although the British Government makes no distinction between Gypsies and other citizens, and makes no attempt to force them to give up their traditional ways of life, nevertheless an itinerant existence becomes more and more difficult to maintain in our highly organised society and as a result, a certain amount of assimilation of Gypsies into the ordinary community is constantly taking place.[19]

These claims of equality were at best disingenuous, as behind the structural problems that prevented Travellers from receiving their dues lay simple, old-fashioned prejudice. In the words of one local government official: 'I have the normal English countryman's dislike of Gypsies, whom I regard as liars, thieves and rogues'.[20] This

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servicing the unemployed, minorities and single parent families. This was 'matched by a popular reluctance to accept the duties... implied by welfare policy', with the unions, for example, spurning calls for wage restraint and resisting technological change [R. Lowe The Welfare State 98].

[18] See for example PRO HLG 71/903, Bevan to the Bishop of Gloucester, 27.10.1950

[19] PRO FO371/116901, statement Gypsies in the UK, prepared for the Swedish government, 1955

[20] PRO ED147/13, minute by HMI Mr Ritchie, 29.3.1949. He was a school inspector in Hampshire. Even the doctor who served the compounds of the Forest and was in general very supportive regarding the needs of the inhabitants took a less than professional, and almost flippant line about his patients: on passing on a letter from one of them to a colleague, he described 'Mr Dixon' thus: 'he mates with a Britannia 'Sherret', alias Sherred, alias Hughes, alias Coker, who had relatives in Thorney Hill… P. P. S. I haven't disinfected this document!' [Hampshire Record Office H/WLF1/3, Dr Howard to Dr Long, 7.3.1962].

commonly resulted in institutionalised prejudice that undermined the formal equality espoused by the state. This combined with an increase in the amount of services provided – so while there were more benefits, Travellers were seen as less entitled to them then the rest if the population.

To see how these new perspectives on welfare interacted with older prejudicial attitudes, I will now consider how national assistance and housing policies were deployed in relation to Travellers. For Travellers, whose commitment to and relationship with settled society was ambiguous, the Welfare State, with its assumptions of social citizenship, contained as many threats as it did promises.[21]

Inherent in the creation of universal benefits based primarily on work-based insurance contributions, was the marginalisation of both the wageless and those who operated within the informal economy. While people were encouraged to view benefits based on National Insurance contributions as their right, means tested benefits funded through general taxation had a certain, and increasing, sigma attached to them. Through the passing of the 1948 National Assistance Act, Travellers were structurally disadvantaged along with the majority of women, the 'civilian' disabled and anyone else who was unable to engage in full-time, long-term employment. They 'were effectively being denied full and equal citizenship... social citizenship (the automatic right to social security) had to be earned through insurance contributions'.[22]

However, the right of Travellers to receive the increased benefits created by the Welfare State was not simply questioned on the basis of their lack of National Insurance contributions. Had it been so, then they simply would have joined the ranks of those who found themselves on National Assistance. Instead, the older stereotype of Travellers as social failures and deviants combined with these new ideas of social citizenship to label Travellers as less worthy of relief and more in need of the civilising benefits of such aid.

In 1946 the Appointed Assistance Officer of the Highlands and Islands stated that Travellers were less trustworthy than non-Traveller members of the community, saying: 'If a member of a Tinker community asks for relief, it is desirable not to give

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[21] This is not to deny that social control was absent from the Welfare State's relationship with the wider population. Squires, for example has argued how socialisation, not socialism was its main goal [P. Squires, Anti-Social Policy - Welfare, Ideology and the Disciplinary State (Hemel Hempstead, 1990) 36].

[22] R. Lowe The Welfare State in Britain Since 1945 (London, 1999 ed.) 138-9. He notes that there was a 'permanent emphasis on the danger of scrounging', and that once on 'supplementary benefit the unemployed were treated with suspicion. Disqualification could start after four week if... claimants could not prove they were 'genuinely seeking work' [p. 159]. The conclusion of this stigmatisation and the fear that receipt of means tested benefits resulted in profligacy and dependency came in the 1980s with the dismantling of the commitment to universal, automatic benefits and a move towards discretionary benefits. For a feminist perspective on citizenship and the Welfare State see C. Pateman 'The Patriarchal Welfare State' in A. Gutmann (ed.) Democracy and the Welfare State (Princeton, 1988) 231-60.

it without full enquiry. If it became known that it was easy to obtain relief, the number of applications might become more numerous'.[23]

Officials assumed, with little or no supporting evidence, that Travellers were inherently deceitful and less entitled to relief. This attitude can be found running through the practices of the National Assistance Board in the 1950s. It had the habit of making deductions to National Assistance either on the basis that work was available in the area, or on the grounds that Travellers were entitled to less relief because they had a lower standard of living, or were earning money and not declaring it. In one case they decided that:

> Although McPhee is disabled (and dirty) there is apparently a job he could do if he got cleaned up – hut orderly at Dounreay. By requiring to make himself presentable in order to be submitted to this sort of vacancy we might, just possibly, collect one piece of evidence towards a Section 51 prosecution; I presume, of course, that he would not comply… An alternative line would be to use Section 10 (or merely to cut off assistance) but there are a young wife and child and after all the man is disabled. As things stand we are paying only 32/- a week… On the other hand, we are dealing with one of a notorious Tinker family…[24]

It would appear that this practice of making so-called 'automatic Regulation III deductions' was widespread throughout Scotland in the mid- and late-1950s. As the Area Officer for Arbroath reasoned:

> There can be no doubt that there are undisclosed resources in most cases. A number of them have ancient cars in which they move around while our allowances are largely disposed of in the nearest bar that sells 'wine'… no injustice would be done if allowances were withheld from all but the oldest and exceptionally, those with large families of young children.[25]

These statements make it clear that local agencies attempted to use the new welfare system to push Travellers into a more regularised and settled lifestyle. It also shows that they were willing to do this in a punitive way – by removing relief and benefits – rather than in a positive or proactive manner. It was not until the mid-1960s that this practice was challenged from the centre, and the policy of automatic deductions for having an 'unsatisfactory mode of living' changed.[26] Whitehall eventually decreed that:

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[23] PRO AST 7/1480, Mr Ottley Survey on the Highlands and Islands, Nov –Dec 1946: The Tinker

[24] ibid., Beltram to Collins, Unemployment Assistance Board Central Office, Edinburgh, 30.11.1955

[25] ibid., Arbroath Area Officer Tinkers n. d.

[26] This was on the grounds that 'there is little or nothing having to be spent on fuel, lighting, and household replacements'. The debate was resurrected when it came to the attention of the London office that a Traveller pensioner, Mr G Foxton had had deductions of 44s 6d made to his allowance, leaving him with 14s 6d per week. As was usual, this had been done on the grounds of 'assumed earnings' [PRO AST7/1480, D. C. Ward, London Office to Pringle, Edinburgh, 3.9.1964]. This is not

> [It] is no concern of ours how a couple spend their allowance unless they come back to us and ask for extra money for the fuel bills and household equipment… if an applicant with a roof over his head chooses to spend part of his income on drink, the dogs or collecting stamps instead of heating his house or buying new pots and pans, we do not thereupon dock his allowance.[27]

Here we have an example of central government, albeit belatedly, insisting on the impartial and equal treatment of Travellers and non-Travellers. The willingness and ability of central government to restrain the excesses of prejudicial treatment by local authorities towards Travellers was one key feature of Traveller-state relations in the first half of the twentieth century.[28]

As well as Travellers interacting with the new Welfare State through National Assistance, they were increasingly drawn in through a number of council settlement and housing schemes. In many cases they were not seen as capable of living in a standard council house, and so were allotted purpose built 'simplified housing'. The scheme sited at Bobbin Mill, Perthshire by Pitlochry Council was a case in point. Started in 1946, ten years later it was reviewed to assess the success of the project. The houses in question were described as being 'of a [not] completely modern standard', and the inhabitants were 'subject to fairly close supervision'.[29] In fact, the admission that the houses were not 'modern' was an understatement– an internal memo commented, that these 'houses are really an old hut… constructed of weather boarding only with internal walls formed of a very soft boarding', noting that they had not been painted or otherwise treated, and a decade on, were in imminent danger of collapsing.[30] The provision of 'fairly close supervision' harked back to the recommendations of the 1918 Report on Travellers.

By the mid 1950s it was acknowledged that the initiative had only been partly successful as, 'tenancy of these houses has meant a more settled way of life for the small number of families concerned, but… there have been constant difficulties with additional members of the clan overcrowding the houses for longer or shorter periods, with an increase in the number of encampments in the vicinity'. It was further noted that 'it has been very difficult to persuade expectant mothers to leave their unsuitable bivouacs and go into hospital for confinement'.[31] Officials had clearly hoped that

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to imply that Travellers were never caught earning money when they were also claiming relief. In 1952 eight Irish Travellers in Sheffield were prosecuted for claiming public relief at the same time as they 'collected rags, metal, and sold artificial flowers, living in caravans and tents under filthy conditions' ['£20 Gypsies Got Relief' Sheffield Star 20 February 1952]. The point, of course, is that in most instances the allegations were not proved, and deductions made on the basis of an assumption.

[27] ibid., D. C. Ward, London to Pringle, Edinburgh Office, 3.9.1964

[28] For a full discussion of this see R Taylor 'A minority and the state: Travellers in Britain, 1900-1960' Unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, 2002

[29] Perthshire Record Office, BM, County Clerk to Mr Rushworth Fogg, 13.6.1956

[30] ibid, County Factor to the County Clerk, 24.8.1956

[31] ibid., County Medical Officer to County Clerk, 11.6.1956

housing provision, however shabby, would act as a step towards assimilation. However, Travellers seem to have simply used the scheme as a base for maintaining their distinct lifestyle. So, although some Travellers may have been settled in houses, they retained very close links with relations who visited them and camped in the area.

These string of experiences from Scotland demonstrate quite clearly how officials simultaneously believed that Travellers were an important target for the services provided by the Welfare State and less willing to extend to them the full benefits it afforded. They also show that Travellers were able and determined to retain their own culture and lifestyle choices despite contact with welfare services.

The official line of central government by the mid-1950s was that it was making efforts to engage with Travellers through various organs of the Welfare State, without singling them out for special treatment:

> [We] must recognise that the ancient Romany tradition of wandering the countryside in picturesque horse-drawn caravans is largely dying… the non-nomadic Gypsies of this generation seem to be in the position of being half-educated, half-civilised – perhaps it is merely a difficult transition stage and that in the course of time they will become fully-fledged citizens… They can't do this without a house or some permanent spot for their caravan… [It would be] impracticable and unjust in the present circumstances to provide residential sites specifically for caravan dwellers who happen to have Gypsy blood in their veins. They must be subject to the same laws as everyone else.[32]

The preconceptions and stereotypes of government in the post-war era were crystallised in this memo. An equation was made between a rural and romantic race and the nomadic tradition. This was placed in opposition to sedentary Gypsies, who were depicted not as a people apart, but rather as failures within the modern system: owing to their insufficient education, and by extension their 'civilisation', they were seen as less than full citizens. When the government stated that they 'should be subject to the same laws as everyone else', they were implying that Travellers did not deserve the same access to state resources as the settled population.

Travellers had to compete with the settled population for scarce resources, while at the same time facing additional structural and bureaucratic barriers:

> Of course there is nothing to stop a Gypsy family applying for a Council house. But (a) bona fide Gypsies aren't likely to do so, [and] (b) they would find it difficult to acquire any kind of residential qualifications which many local authorities require.[33]

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[32] PRO HLG 71/2267, internal MHLG memo, Ward to Wiltshire, 29.5.1957
[33] PRO HLG 142/25, MHLG to MoH, 21.12.1960. Sibley has suggested that Travellers were hit by the decline in the availability of privately rented housing, particularly at the lower end of the market, which combined with their failure to qualify for local authority accommodation [D. Sibley Outsiders in Urban Society (Oxford, 1981) 83, footnote]. This is supported by A Sutherland's Gypsies: The Hidden Americans (London, 1975), which demonstrates how Travellers' use of poor

In Hampshire this led to local officials stating that '[housing Travellers must be put in the context of] housing demand. All local authorities are under constant and severe pressure from substantial and growing waiting lists',[34] resulting in the sidelining of accommodation needs of Travellers.

This raises a question over the true nature of the promise of assimilation – the implicit bargain behind the promise was that if Travellers gave up their lifestyle and settled down, they would in turn be treated like other citizens. But this claim has a hollow ring to it. That Travellers were seen as second class citizens, combined with traditional prejudices against their community, meant that 'benefits' were commonly metered out grudgingly or as punitive sanctions. And, where Travellers failed to measure up to expectations they, and not the shortcomings of the state, were blamed for their failures. Thus, two Traveller women who were prosecuted for obtaining food by fraud, having not eaten for three days, were admonished by the court, 'you are living in a state where nobody should starve, there was no need to resort to what you did'.[35] Behaviour that might have been seen as understandable in a pre-war context was now less likely to have been tolerated.

In summary, then, the Welfare State did not redefine Travellers relationship with government agencies, it only made it more problematic. While there was a difference between the attitudes of central government and the localities, on a day to day basis it was local decision making that had the most impact on Travellers' lives. The creation and extension of the Welfare State added a new layer of significance to citizen status. The legal rights that came with citizenship were enhanced with entitlements to the new and extensive health, educational and housing benefits. While for the settled population this may have had redistributive and democratic overtones, for Travellers it only served to confirm their place as anti-social outcasts whose lifestyle undermined efforts at reconstruction and the image of a modern Britain. It seemed that there was no room in post-war Britain to be a good citizen and a Traveller

The goal of the Welfare State to create an inclusive society and a minimum standard of living finds echoes in today's search by the current British government to end social exclusion. If there is a lesson to be drawn from the history I have outlined then it is perhaps to recognise that without tackling deep held opinions within majority society about the Traveller community then social policy will simply enact old prejudices, only refracted through a different lens. When that occurs then inclusion becomes assimilation and the right to self-exclusion is denied.

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quality, private housing allowed the continuance of their lifestyle unfettered by local authority interference.

[34] Hampshire Record Office, H/WLF1/3, Observations Made on Behalf of RDCs Hampshire Parish Council Association, 1961

[35] 'No Money To By Food – Gypsies' Liverpool Daily Post 20 February 1952. They were ordered to pay £2 costs and told in the future to apply to the National Assistance Board