

## EIR Books

# Why Newt can't see the welfare problem

by Edward Spannaus

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### **The Tragedy of American Compassion**

by Marvin Olasky

Regnery Gateway, Washington, D.C., 1995  
299 pages, paperbound, \$14.95

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"I cannot too strongly urge you to read Marvin Olasky's *The Tragedy of American Compassion*," Newt Gingrich told the Republican National Committee on Jan. 20. "I am just overwhelmed by how powerful it is," the new Speaker of the House said he had exclaimed after he first read it. "Olasky's point is that we can save individuals. You can help Sam or Sally. You can't save a class," Gingrich declared.

Indeed, almost every time Newt Gingrich speaks about welfare, he urges his listeners to read this book. Gingrich's endorsement has made Olasky the "darling of the conservative elite," the *Wall Street Journal* noted on March 20.

Marvin Olasky, a journalism professor at the University of Texas, wrote most of this book while on a fellowship at the Heritage Foundation in 1990; some 3,000 copies were published in 1992 by a small religious publishing house. Now, with all the publicity Gingrich has given to the book, it has been republished, and Olasky has joined the board of Gingrich's Progress and Freedom Foundation—which recently published a compilation of writings by the futurists Alvin and Heidi Toffler, with a lavish introduction by Gingrich.

That Gingrich can praise the Tofflers and Olasky in the same speech—and often almost in the same breath—points up the fraud of Gingrich's endorsement of the Olasky thesis.

For all Olasky's pretenses at providing a historical survey of charity and poor relief for the past 300 years, he really warms to his subject when he gets to the 20th century, and then he really gets fired up when writing about the 1960s and the creation of the "welfare rights" movement, which demanded public assistance as a matter of right, without any connection to work or employment.

The hoax here, is that what Olasky is so vigorously attacking came from the same "post-industrial" outlook which Gingrich and Gingrich's guru Alvin Toffler so vigorously promote. If Gingrich wants to know what's wrong with today's welfare state, he need simply look in a mirror.

### **Olasky's 'history'**

In the 18th and 19th centuries, Olasky tells us, the emphasis of poor relief was always on religiously motivated endeavors, tied to an expectation of the help being temporary, to a work requirement, and to personal, one-on-one contact. He describes this view as "social Calvinist," as opposed to "social Darwinist."

Things began to go wrong, Olasky argues, in the "progressive era," when muckrakers began to blame society rather than the individual, and to call for government action. He particularly attacks what he calls the "optimism" of the turn-of-the-century "social universalists" who believed that all problems could be solved. One source of their optimism was

the belief that man is naturally good and productive; Olasky the pessimist prefers what he calls the Biblical view of man's sinful nature.

The secular settlement-house movement, based on this "optimistic" philosophy, replaced church-oriented missions in the slums; and professionals soon drove out the volunteers. Olasky—always the pessimist—attacks the 1920s president of the National Conference of Social Workers as believing in the divinity of man; and the modern liberalism of the 1920s as tied to a theology which no longer believed in sin.

Then came the 1930s, which, in Olasky's view, enshrined the liberal doctrine of income-as-entitlement, a universalistic welfare system with little interest in stressing work or worthiness. He chastises the Russell Sage Foundation for pushing for a larger federal role and centralization; the National Conference on Social Welfare for pushing a "socialist agenda"; and, of course, the National Council of Churches, for ignoring the Biblical injunction that "the poor ye always have with you." (Olasky and his malevolent ilk always fraudulently misconstrue Christ's words—Matt. 26:11, Mark 14:7, John 12:8—as if they were a mandate against the eradication of poverty.)

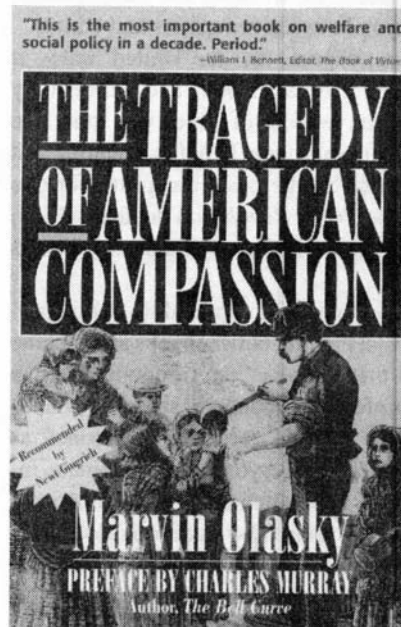
Amazingly, all of this bogus history is discussed by Olasky without any serious reference to economic conditions, or to the fact that throughout the 19th century, and up to the Great Depression, the U.S. economy was more or less continually expanding, and that people were able to move out of poverty into useful industrial and agricultural jobs. Nor does he reference the enormous job creation of the Second World War—which undoubtedly did more to move people out of poverty, especially Southern blacks who moved North—than did all the lady-do-rightly's in history.

### Welfare 'rights'

It was in the 1960s, Olasky instructs us, that everything went to hell. Up until then, welfare was not viewed as a right, and a sense of shame was relied on to keep people from accepting the "dole" unless absolutely necessary. But in the 1960s, what Olasky calls the "theologically liberal tendencies" within social work took over; soon public policymakers and groups like the Ford Foundation were arguing that poverty could be eliminated by money. (A shocking idea!)

The "mainline theological message of the 1960s," attacked by Olasky, is that "poverty was socially caused and thus could be socially eliminated." Government planning and programs, not spiritual change, were seen as the solution to poverty. Thus came the War on Poverty, the Office of Economy Opportunity (OEO), talk about a guaranteed annual income, and so on.

The real villains of Olasky's story are Columbia University School of Social Work professors Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward, who used government funding through OEO, etc. to create the National Welfare Rights Organization



*The cover of Olasky's book shows a 19th-century soup kitchen, ironically emblazoned with "Recommended by Newt Gingrich." The book also boasts a preface by arch-racist Charles Murray, co-author of The Bell Curve, and praise from Bush-league neo-conservative William Bennett.*

(NWRO) in the late 1960s. NWRO was successful in its immediate objective, says Olasky, since in its first four years, 100,000 welfare recipients "were organized and trained to demand payments, not ask for them." Welfare recipients who had possessed a sense of shame about welfare, and who had believed that welfare was something to be avoided, were trained to believe that everyone had a "right" to welfare and that the "system" was the enemy. This is what Olasky calls "the Great Society's War against Shame."

Of course what Olasky and his publicist Gingrich willfully ignore, is that the Cloward-Piven NWRO strategy was based on the notion of the "post-industrial society." The explicit concept which formed the basis for promoting the "guaranteed annual income" idea, was that the link between work and income had been broken.

It so happens that I attended the Columbia School of Social Work from 1965-67, and I was thus quite familiar with the activities of Cloward and Piven and the various government-sponsored "War on Poverty" programs. In 1966, I had the good fortune to also meet Lyndon LaRouche, and I and a handful of associates at the Columbia Social Work School (including my wife-to-be) quickly realized the fallacy of the Cloward-Piven strategy and other varieties of the "guaranteed annual income" approach. Their basic assumption was that the United States was at that time entering a "post-industrial" society, in which all material needs could easily be met if the wealth were simply redistributed. We attacked this as 1) economically incompetent, arguing that the need was for reindustrialization of the economy and a vast expansion of productive employment; and 2) politically suicidal, since the Cloward-Piven approach was intended to

pit welfare recipients against the working and middle class, and to create a polarization between minorities and whites.

It is now clear, in retrospect, that the United States at that time was undergoing a fundamental, and deliberately fostered *paradigm shift*, the purpose of which was to induce Americans to abandon their traditional belief in scientific and technological progress. One of the basic blueprints for this was a 1964 manifesto, *The Triple Revolution* (against which, I recently discovered, I had written an attack as early as 1967).

*The Triple Revolution* document centered its policy proposals on the argument that the link between jobs and income was being broken, and that the new "era of abundance can sustain all citizens in comfort and economic security, whether or not they engage in what is commonly reckoned as work." Society could provide everyone with adequate income—a share of society's superabundance—as a matter of right, whether or not they worked at a traditional job, they argued. This became the rationalization for the loss of productive jobs and the erosion of our manufacturing base. The destruction of America's industrial might, hastened by environmentalism and deregulation, was then seen as an inevitable and desirable process.

This campaign to eradicate the spirit of industrial and technological optimism had its origins in the London Tavistock Institute for Human Relations, the psychological war-

fare center for British intelligence. In the United States, one of its key centers was the Stanford Research Institute (SRI), which ran conferences and seminars, leading to the 1974 publication of a study called *Changing Images of Man*, directed by Dr. Willis Harman. This was later published in a simplified, popularized version as Marilyn Ferguson's 1980 book *The Aquarian Conspiracy*.

One of the key participants in the SRI/Harman-sponsored conferences, etc., was Newt Gingrich's idol Alvin Toffler. Gingrich himself traces his own work with Toffler and the Information Age futurists back to the 1970s.

Of course, the irony of Gingrich endorsing a book which blames the current welfare mess on the 1960s post-industrial outlook, is that this is the *identical* view espoused by Gingrich's hero Alvin Toffler. The 1964 *Triple Revolution* presented as its basic thesis the "cybernetics revolution"—and the contention that the new revolution of automation and cybernetics is as different from the industrial revolution, as the industrial revolution was from the agricultural revolution. If this sounds virtually identical to the Toffler/Gingrich schema of First-Second-Third Wave societies, it should—because it is.

Perhaps Gingrich should heed another Biblical injunction: when Christ rebukes the hypocrite for complaining about the speck in his brother's eye, when he has a beam in his own.

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by Amelia Platts Boynton Robinson

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