

incomes from tax.

These allowances are not only more valuable to higher rate taxpayers (offset, as they are, against marginal rates of tax) but richer taxpayers claim many more tax allowances than do taxpayers on low income. I have set out how to begin phasing out the tax allowance welfare state in *Inequality in Britain: freedom, welfare and the state* (Fontana).

Alcock gives only a passing reference to how welfare reform should act as a vanguard for raising the status, position and power of women and children in our society.

How do we begin to make a major redistribution of money to these two target groups? Because most women and children are generally poorer than most men, they may benefit from traditional redistributionary programmes. But additional measures need to be taken.

Of crucial importance here is child benefit. A target might be to double the value of this benefit in the lifetime of a Parliament. Such a move would increase significantly the amount of money going to women in their own right, decrease the numbers of poor families and dramatically increase incentives to work.

In addition, the position women play as carers, apart from looking after their own children, needs to be recognised in our social security system. The cost of these reforms can only be met by phasing out the whole range of tax allowances which are now an integral part of the welfare state.

Many women will benefit too from a statutory minimum wage, but here the Left is reluctant to face up to the difficulties of successfully implementing this crucial strategy. There is all the difference in the world in campaigning around a minimum wage target of two-thirds average earnings to be achieved in a three-year period, and ensuring that such a strategy doesn't result in a big increase in female unemployment. The doubling of wages of some workers within such a short period of time will lead to unemployment.

A statutory minimum wage needs to be phased in over a longer time scale and be seen as part of a wider programme of economic reform aimed at raising employment, output and efficiency.

We welcome your contributions to the Viewpoint section subject to available space. Please write not more than 600 words and send it to the editorial office by August 9. Please enclose a description of yourself for our Notes on Contributors.

FRANK FIELD

Women and children first

In a number of important respects, the policies Peter Alcock advocates (*MT* July) are not sufficiently radical. In no way does he face up to the extent to which redistribution must take place.

Alcock is right to remind us of the extent to which the government has redistributed to the very rich. The 1979 Budget alone cut the tax levy on higher rate taxpayers by £1.6 billion a year, and these concessions will continue until that Budget's proposals are reversed. He is also right not to believe - as some social democrats do - that redistributing from the rich will make very little difference to the amount a left government will have to pay for its social programme.

What Alcock doesn't confront is the need for a redistribution of income over an individual's lifetime, as well as the more traditional approach he rightly advocates. Those of us who are lucky enough to have a job may earn an income over 40 years of a working life but will have income needs spreading possibly over 80 or more years. How can we get individuals to face up to the fact that they need to see their income in terms of a whole lifetime rather than on a weekly or monthly basis? That is one of the major challenges the Left now faces.

Similarly, how can traditional redistribution from the rich to poorer people happen on a sufficient scale if a future Labour government is not prepared to begin dismantling the tax benefit welfare state? At the present time tax allowances legally exempt over half of all personal

Theatres of the Left

1880 - 1935

*Workers' Theatre Movements
in Britain and America*

RAPHAEL SAMUEL, EWAN
MACCOLL and STUART
COSGROVE

*Documents, plays, stage-notes,
debates, critiques, narratives and
histories.*

'Vital reading for any political
artist.' - Julia Pascal, *City Limits*
'...this exhilarating book.' -
Albert Hunt, *New Society*
'Illuminating' - Irving Wardle,
The Times

'Demonstrates brilliantly what a
history workshop should be - the
beating out by human beings of
the constructs of the society in
which they live, by theory, trial and
practice.' - Tom Vaughan,
Morning Star

History Workshop Series
07100 0901 1 Illustrated,
paperback £8.95

Routledge & Kegan Paul
14 Leicester Square, London WC2

RKP



REMEMBER
HIROSHIMA
6TH AUGUST
1945 -
LISTEN TO
**THE HIBAKUSHA 1985 -
NO MORE
NUCLEAR WEAPONS**

August 5th - International
Festival, Wythenshawe Forum,
Manchester.

August 6th - Lantern Floating and
Plaque Unveiling Ceremony with
Hibakusha (Hiroshima Survivors)
Present.

5th/6th Visit of Oregon NFZ reps

Details of these and other Hiroshima week
events from:
**NFZ UNIT - PO BOX 532,
TOWN HALL, M60 2LA. 061-234 3244**

MANCHESTER

City Council

Defending Jobs - Improving Services