

PRODUCTION (VERY SHORT INTRODUCTIONS)

To sum up, Blair's social policy reform agenda focused on three essential areas: (1) unemployment benefits, (2) subsidies for the working poor, and (3) the National Health Service (NHS). Largely inspired by Thatcher's bold NPM-based reforms of the welfare state, Blair's new initiatives were focused on streamlining administrative functions and procedures in order to make them more efficient. New measures of accountability and transparency were enacted in these sectors to ensure successful compliance. Following Thatcher's line of reasoning, Blair argued that simply providing 'more money' was not sufficient to address the deeper structural problems embedded in Britain's ailing welfare system. Accordingly, the neoliberal prime minister sought to replace Britain's 'paternalistic' welfare system with a more 'flexibilist' welfare training scheme that was consistent with NPM 'partnership' models with

In order to restrict the propensity for 'excessive' public borrowing, the Blair government also implemented what became known as the 'Golden Rule'—which placed strict limits on public debt to no more than 40 per cent of the GDP. Accordingly, Blair assured the business community that his government would not engage in further deficit spending for health, education, or social security. Blair's welfare reform package included a new welfare-to-work programme that was directly modelled on Clinton's version of 'workfare'. Initially financed through a one-time 'windfall tax' on privatized utilities, Blair's training-based welfare reform experiment was consistent with his public commitment to 'social justice' as well as his election promise that welfare benefits be distributed in accordance with new standards ensuring individual 'accountability' and 'responsibility'.

private organizations.

Originating as a political backlash against Keynesian 'big government', the first wave of the NPM found great sympathy within the Reagan and Thatcher governments. In a few short years, there seemed to be a pandemic: NPM ideas had taken hold of governments around the world. However, as we saw, various aspects of the NPM approach were emphasized by different leaders in different countries. The common thread connecting them was their joint emphasis on greater 'efficiency' and the imposition of performance-based accountability standards and practices. Ironically, stronger (not weaker) government intervention, in some instances, was required to institutionalize this market-based paradigm in the administrative structures and processes at various governing levels throughout these countries. It is remarkable that

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some of the most spectacular expressions of the NPM were vigorously undertaken by democratic Left governments in Australia during the 1970s and in the US and Britain during the 1990s. Today the NPM's emphasis on customer service, management by objectives, and quantitative-based performance and accountability standards is evident in nearly every organizational mission statement and political conversation involving the public sector. Indeed, the unquestionable adoption of NPM-based principles now evident at all levels of governance suggests that there is no alternative to this style of management. But is there no alternative? New movements in public administration, which have surfaced during recent years, have been challenging this view.