

**Bea Campbell**

Well, there is only one conclusion you can draw from the prosecution's division between the deserving and the undeserving poor: that the poor produce their own poverty; that they are feckless and reckless and that they should be restrained from reproducing themselves by the withdrawal of the welfare state. This motion means a new kind of eugenics. A kind of economic, ethnic cleansing to cull the so-called subpopulation. But a quarter of this country is deemed poor. They are living on less than half the average income. We all know poor people. Some of us are poor people. They are not "them"; they are "us". The welfare state has produced not poverty but some stability, security, and growing equality. But the government's retreat from investment in an economy rocked by seismic shift in the global economy has produced not prosperity but permanently pauperised communities, living in a state of economic emergency.

**Woman**

*And if you go down the Whitehouse Road, there's the Whitehouse Road into Price Centre now, which fourteen year ago, used to be the abattoir but now it's....*

**Bea Campbell**

Tyneside is typical. An industrial icon, laid to waste, abandoned by the government and by business. One of its pauperised communities is Scotswood. It was built to house engineers and shipbuilders; thousands of men would walk down the banks of the Tyne to Vickers, the world famous engineers. The government called a halt. Amazing! Britain doesn't build ships any more. And in Scotswood – no ships. No work. No wages. Mary Ray is a community activist who watched her neighbourhood's nemesis.

**Mary Ray**

It was down to politicians and Vickers themselves that wanted to take Vickers out of this community and put it somewhere else. But they didn't want to take the workforce with them. So what do you do with them men and women? You put them on unemployed. And apart from them being tradesmen, they have got no other trade to go into unless they want to do re-training but there is not much re-training around. It devastated the community because when you have been a community that are used to people working, getting up to go out to work, and they haven't got that there now, what does the community do?

**Bea Campbell**

This is typical of neighbourhoods in every city in Britain, regarded by its critics as a ghetto, a nest of scroungers and single parents. But Scotswood tells another typical tale, what mothers do to improvise self-help systems and survival strategies. Mary Ray's networks toil, both for public peace and for economic renewal and she refutes the notion of welfare breeding dependency.

**Mary Rae**

I don't think people are standing out there, standing waiting for handouts. People have got off their backsides and done a hell of a lot in Scotswood. And that wouldn't have happened if it hadn't have been for the likes of the people that had been on benefits and that had been forgotten and I think the women of Scotswood are very, very strong women. And they believe in Scotswood as otherwise this community wouldn't have been changed around if it hadn't have been for the women. I think women gave quite a lot and I think the biggest thing the women gave is themselves.

**Bea Campbell**

This is one of the poorest places in the country. Yet it's alive with active citizens who do their gardens, put the tea on the table, wipe noses, bottoms and tears. Mostly mothers – often lone mothers – the most maligned people in Britain. There's been a cultural revolution in the last two decades. Women increasingly prefer poverty, rather than putting up with the pain of

a useless or a dangerous partner. Women of all classes. The reputation of St. Mellons, a new town in South Wales became notorious after a visit by the then Welsh Secretary, John Redwood, in 1993. *“Feckless women”; “fatherless families”; “starve them of social security”*, he said. Sue Shepherd is one of those St. Mellons single mothers, singled out for criticism.

### **Sue Shepherd**

It's a stance really that they people just stand up and turn around and say 'well...well people are just getting pregnant to go on Benefit'. Well I am awfully sorry. Being a single parent myself I wouldn't put myself in that position to go on Benefit because I tell you what, it's damned hard work.

### **Bea Campbell**

If it's not single mothers, it's the homeless for whom the streets seem safer than their families. Or the long-term unemployed, apparently hibernating at home when they should be out looking for work. But despite the best efforts of the government's researchers to discover a dependency culture, it seems it's a phantom. John Hills is an economist at the LSE.

### **John Hills**

The effects of social security benefits on labour supply, on people's willingness to work, one of the biggest areas of economic and social research over the last few decades, what's extraordinary about a lot of that research is how little effect most studies have found. And most of the studies that actually talk to people in depth who are currently out of work, a recent study of this kind was just published by the Department of Social Security, show very strong attachment to the idea of work by the overwhelming majority of claimants.

### **Bea Campbell**

People want to work but they haven't the skills. They haven't the childcare. Sometimes they haven't the clothes to pass at an interview. And there aren't the jobs. *“On yer bike!”* they say. *“Any job is better than no job.”* Well, is it?

### **John Hills**

If people are simply scratching around to make a living – I've seen in Third World countries, people hawking bicycle pedals – that is a way of survival at a minimum level if there is no alternative. It doesn't seem to me to do anything very constructive in terms of building up that person's long-term career. But nor, from a macroeconomic point of view, does that seem to me to be a very profitable route for the UK economy that if we want to compete in the World, low-skilled, low-paid work, if you like the dive for the bottom, is something where there is very little limit to how low you can dive.

### **Bea Campbell**

Economists like John Hills remind us that safety nets work not only for individuals but the economy as a whole. The alternative is a society dangerously polarised. Joe Cafrey is a Community Work Manager at Newcastle City Council who tells us that if you look around what you see is communities that aren't the problem, they are part of the solution.

### **Joe Cafrey**

What you see are real people. Real people with real aspirations. People with hopes and those people need opportunities. They need opportunities to come together to organise in their communities. They need opportunities to allow their families to develop, to have a sense of hope for the future, and that costs money. Those resources are absolutely necessary in those communities. And I think just to suggest that we can stop that and forget those people and leave what could be ghettos behind, I think it's utterly shameful.

### **Bea Campbell**

What he tells us is that if you look around, what you see is communities that aren't the problem- they are part of the solution.

**John Clarke**

Bea Campbell's argument is that there is no evidence for Anderson's position. There is no evidence for the existence of a dependency culture. Rather, people on welfare are victims of circumstances beyond their control. But despite this, those on welfare are struggling to overcome these major obstacles.

We have now heard the *case* for the Prosecution and the argument against, put by the Defence. What evidence is there for the Prosecution? What follows is an edited version of the radio debate between Anderson and Campbell, in which you will hear Anderson's evidence. In listening to the rest of the tape, consider the evidence and the reasoning given to support the Prosecution's argument. How convincing, how cogent is it? What other explanations might be possible? What further questions might *you* want to ask?