

Welfare State Concept and Functions

WELFARE STATE

Concept and Functions

Meaning:

Welfare state is a concept of government in which the state plays a key role in the protection of the economic & social well-being of its citizens. It is based on the principles of equality of opportunity, equitable distribution of wealth, and public responsibility for those unable to avail themselves of the minimal provisions for a good life.

Definitions:

Acc. to Dr. Abraham, “A welfare state is a community where state power is deliberately used to modify the normal play of economic forces so as to obtain a more equal distribution of income for every citizen.”

Acc to Kent, “A welfare state is a state which provides for its citizens a wide range of social services.”

Philosophical Contribution to the Development of the Concept:

- ✓ J. S. Mill (1806-73) sought to modify utilitarianism and the principle of *laissez-faire* on philosophical grounds which paved the way for the theory of welfare state.
- ✓ T. H. Green (1836-82) sought to add a moral dimension to liberalism and thus advanced a full-fledged theory of welfare state.
- ✓ This tradition was further developed by L. T. Hobhouse (1864-1929), Harold J. Laski (1893-1950) and R. H. Tawney (1880-1962).

There are two main interpretations of the idea of a welfare state:

- ✓ A model in which the state assumes primary responsibility for the welfare of its citizens. This requires a tight bureaucratic control over the people concerned, with a maximum of interference in their lives to establish who are “in need” and minimize cheating. This model is dominant in U.S.
- ✓ Acc. to second model the state distributes welfare with little bureaucratic interference as possible, to all people who fulfill easily established criteria (e.g. having children, receiving medical treatment, etc.). This requires high taxing of which almost everything is channeled back to the taxpayers with minimum expenses for bureaucratic personnel. This model was constructed by the Scandinavian ministers K. K. Steincke and G. Moller in the 30s and is dominant in Scandinavia.

Emergence of the concept of Welfare State:

Modern welfare states developed through a gradual process beginning in the late 19th Century and continuing through the 20th. Major landmarks in the way of its development are as follow:

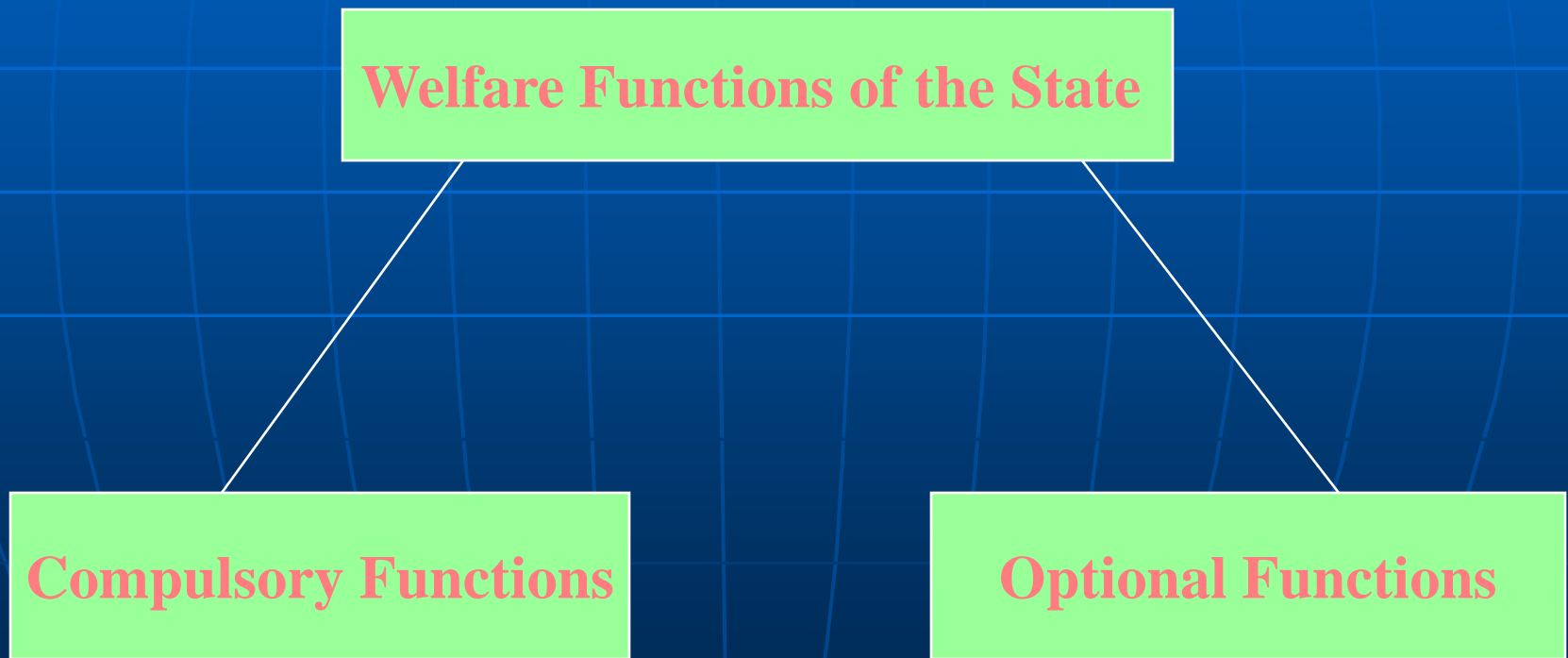
- ✓ **The development of social insurance in Germany under Bismarck.**
- ✓ **Changed attitudes in reaction to the Great Depression were instrumental in the move to the welfare state in many countries. As during the Great Depression, welfare state was seen as an alternative “middle way” between communism and capitalism.**
- ✓ **In the period following the Second World War, many countries in Europe moved from partial or selective provision of social services to relatively comprehensive coverage of the population.**
- ✓ **At the end of century non-governmental organizations became important providers of social services.**

Present-Day Welfare State:

The activities of present-day welfare states extend to the provision of both cash welfare benefits (such as old-age pensions or unemployment benefits) and in-kind welfare services (such as health or childcare services).

Welfare Functions of the State

Though it is very difficult to prepare a fixed list of the functions of the Liberal Welfare State, yet Prof. Willoughby and Prof. Gettell have divided the functions of the state into two categories such as:



Compulsory Functions

- ❖ **Maintenance of Law and Order**
- ❖ **Protection from Foreign Invasions**
- ❖ **Establishment of Diplomatic Relations with other States**
- ❖ **Providing Justice to the People**

Optional Functions

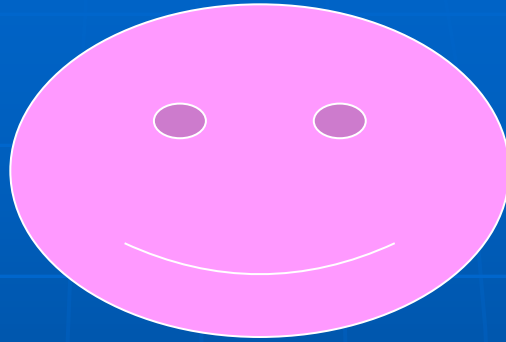
- ❖ **Protection of Life and Liberty**
- ❖ **Judicial Administration**
- ❖ **Spread of Education**
- ❖ **Social and Economic Security**
- ❖ **Eradication of Poverty**
- ❖ **Improvement of Health**
- ❖ **Moral and Social Reforms**
- ❖ **To Provide Recreational Facilities**
- ❖ **To Provide Public Utility Services**
- ❖ **Development of Agriculture**
- ❖ **To Make Regulations Regarding Trade and Industries**
- ❖ **Development of Natural Resources**
- ❖ **To Make Regulations regarding Export and Import**
- ❖ **Imposition and Collection of Taxes**
- ❖ **Protection of Environment**
- ❖ **Protection of the Interests of Labourers**

Objectives of Welfare State

- **To Provide Economic Security**
- **Political Security**
- **Social Equality**
- **To Achieve International Cooperation**
- **To Seek Public Welfare**
- **Cultural Development**

Criticism of the Welfare State

- ✓ **It Makes the State Inefficient**
- ✓ **Man will not be able to become Self-Dependent**
- ✓ **Costly Administration**
- ✓ **Encouragement to Bureaucracy**
- ✓ **Curtailment in the Liberties of the Citizens**



Thanks