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## **G. Rosen. Economic and Social Policy in Public Health, in Journal of the History of Medicine, 1953 [photocopie]**

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Références bibliographiques

- [\[anonyme ou collectif\] Journal of the history of medicine](#)
- [Rosen, Economic and Social Policy in Public Health, in Journal of the History of Medicine, 1953](#)

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### **Références éditoriales**

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to the political economists, the motive for economic activity was the powerful and pervasive force of self-interest. This motive, it was held, was guided by the force of competition and the mechanism of the market. Given free play the interests of different individuals would thus be harmonized and would lead to a system of spontaneous co-operation. This would mean more productivity, and more productivity meant more well-being. In short, as a basic principle, it was accepted that unfettered private enterprise was the mainspring of social progress. It was in this context that the Poor Laws were regarded as hampering, anti-social impediments to be removed so as to liberate the immense potential of individual initiative. Maximum self-help by individuals would do more to improve the condition of the poor than any legal assistance.

Nevertheless, this was not an ideal of freedom in a vacuum.<sup>25</sup> It was recognized that desirable economic ends and harmonious relations between individuals were not likely to come into being without a firm framework of law and order. In other words, if things were just left to take their course, chaos and not ordered economic activity would result. Consequently, it was necessary consciously to create the environment within which such factors as competition and the market could properly function. This leads to a recognition that the hand of the law-giver and the administrator is the invisible hand that guides men in their economic and social action. This concept is at the heart of Jeremy Bentham's legal and administrative philosophy. The problem is to devise means whereby private interests can be brought to coincide with the public interest.

These ideas found their most potent and practical expression among the group known as the Philosophic Radicals, whose great teacher and prophet was Bentham. They were a small band of intellectuals who proposed to deal with public problems on a rational, scientific basis. Their approach to specific political, economic, or social questions was rather hard-boiled, but curiously admixed with a considerable degree of naïveté. They contributed greatly to the development of the social sciences in their day, and on the basis of these researches called for a whole series of reforms. The schemes for which this group of highbrows labored so mightily included parliamentary reform, free trade, law reforms, educational reforms,

<sup>25</sup> For a lucid exposition of these positions see Lionel Robbins, *The theory of social policy in English classical political economy*. London, Macmillan and Co., 1952; also *Jeremy Bentham's economic writings*. Critical edition . . . by W. Stark. New York, Burt Franklin, 1952, vol. I, pp. 223-273.



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