The Social Origins of Illness: A Neglected History (A Review)

Abstrak:

While the field of public health is historically rooted in the social reform movements of the 19th century, it is only in recent years that systematic working relationships between social science and public health have become formally established. Not only it is important to recognize the interdisciplinary scope of social science in public health; it is also necessary to keep in mind the multi-faceted nature of most social problems in the field of health. Social problems, in general, are interrelated; poverty, housing, fertility, alcoholism, mental disorders, juvenile delinquency, and venereal disease are not separate problems; they need to be looked at in combination. By presenting the works of Engels, Virchow, and Allende the article is intended to stimulate critical thinking of public health problems. While Engels and Virchow documented the impact of early capitalism, Allende focused on capitalist imperialism and underdevelopment. Public health is thus as an integral part of the social system, and can be fully understood only in terms of existing social forces. The character and distribution of public health programs including health care, in many respects, reflect the ideological preferences of society. Although the nature of medical knowledge and technology limit the operation of ideological forces, the system of power and social stratification in society explains who receives care and under what conditions. In this sense, health-care delivery depends on the political forces, since politics essentially determines how the resources of the community to be distributed and to whom.

Keyword:
Social origins of illness, social system, socio-political forces