

History Intermediate 2 Revision Notes – From the Cradle to the Grave

The Meaning of Poverty –

- Poverty is when a person finds it very difficult to meet their basic needs
- **Primary Poverty** – this is living below the poverty line because you don't earn enough money to afford the basics
- The main causes of primary poverty are low wages, old age, family size, unemployment and death of the wage earner
- **Secondary Poverty** – this is when a person earns enough money to afford the basics but squanders it (uses unwisely) and so cannot afford the basics
- The three main causes of secondary poverty are: laziness, drunkenness and gambling
- Poverty is very hard to compare between different countries and periods of history due to advancements i.e. being poor in 1800's is nothing like being poor in 2003

Attitudes to Poverty in late 19th Century -

- In the 1800's the British Government believed in the policy of "laissez-faire", this simply means that they didn't interfere with the people and believed that they were responsible for their own lives
- This created a stigma between the rich and the poor, as the rich believed that people were poor because they didn't try and get a better life for themselves
- The fact was that the poor lived in slums because that was all they could afford and that they couldn't complain because they would lose their shelter
- **Self Help** – This was Samuel Smiles idea which involved poor people having to work very hard to get out poverty. It revolved around the idea that by helping yourself and getting out of poverty you make yourself a better and stronger person, but relying on help from others made you weak and a charity case (you are dependant and become lazy)
- **Friendly Societies** – These were the early form of insurance companies and were a way that many workers used to save money. If a member of the family became ill or died then money could be claimed from the friendly society that you had paid money into. This only really helped skilled workers and didn't help the majority of the poor

Voluntary Groups that helped the poor –

- **Family and Neighbours** – usually these were the first people who tried to help the poor. They would all rally around a sick and needy person due to the close-knit communities of slums
- Women looked after the children when they were sick, and would sit with them. Also they might give some clothing that their children had grown out of to help clothe the children
- **Charities** – These were run by the church and by middle class people who felt compelled to help the poor and others helped and donated money to make them feel good about themselves
- There was a distinction made between the two types of poor:
- **Deserving poor** – These were the poor who had no job, no source of income and who were in desperate need of help. The main purpose of their charity to this category was to try and help those poor people help themselves and become independent again
- **Undeserving poor** – These were people who had access to help from family and friends and who were able to go out and work, and so were not in desperate need of help from charities

- **Barnardos** – This was a charity set up by Dr. Barnardos to help the poor children by providing them with shelter and food, this charity was very successful and still exists to this day
- **The Salvation Army** – This charity was set up by a Church minister who wanted to help everyone in need of help, no matter of their classification of being deserving poor or not. But also they provided more than just food and money to feed their bodies but also preached the gospel to them to help their souls
- **Outdoor relief** – This was help given to poor people who didn't meet the very desperate criteria to go into the workhouse, so they received help in their own homes by receiving medicine and food
- **Indoor relief** – This was help given to only the very desperate poor people, this involved the poor being moved into the Workhouse where they would get food and would have to work very hard
- **The Workhouse** – This was the last resort for many poor people who were really desperate for help.
- Conditions were deliberately made harsh and involved very hard work to try and discourage people from being lazy and coming to the workhouse for an easy time
- The food was very meagre and was just enough to keep you healthy
- It was more like a prison as families were broken up into different areas of the workhouse and everyone had to wear a uniform
- Most poor people would not want to live out their last days in the dark and terrible conditions of the workhouse

Charles Booth & Seebohm Rowntree -

- These two men were responsible for a large change in the attitudes of the government towards the poor
- They had spent a great deal of time among the poor and had compiled a massive survey of many thousands of poor people in London (Booth) and York (Rowntree)
- Their surveys discovered that poverty was not just a problem in London but was a problem which was very widespread and affected large numbers of the population
- But most importantly their studies revealed that the working classes could no longer be blamed for their poverty stricken situation
- The findings of their studies were highlighted during the Boer War when most of the applicants for the army had to be turned down because of their poor health which was due to poverty

Reasons for Liberal Reforms of 1910 –

- The emergence of the Labour Party threatened the Liberals and Conservatives as there was rising support for socialism and they felt that their parties might disappear because of this new political threat
- The expansion of the electorate (people who could vote) meant that they had to do more to win the votes of the poor working classes
- The problem experienced during the Boer War was of great concern, as the problem of getting people into the army was not going to stop without action to improve health
- Many people were becoming educated and so were able to form their own political views and were able to interpret political policies of the parties and so they had to try and influence their opinions to gain their support

The Liberal Reforms 1906 – 1911

Reforms on the Young –

- **School Meals Act 1906** – The Liberals wanted to improve health in youth so as to avoid the crisis faced in the Boer War. They also wanted to improve children's concentration in classes and they knew that by feeding their bodies they would also be feeding their minds. This act provided free school meals to poor children and in some cases breakfast also. The only drawback was that it was not compulsory for schools to provide these meals
- **Medical Inspections 1907** – The medical inspections were designed to reveal illnesses and physical infirmities and to have them dealt with at an early age to improve health among children. When problems were found a letter was sent home to the parents who were expected to have the problem dealt with through medicine. The drawback to this scheme was that most families couldn't afford to pay for the treatment and so the problems were not solved
- **The Children's Charter 1908** – This was a reform designed to safeguard children from abuse and doing dangerous work. It banned adults abusing children and also it banned children under 16 from begging or buying alcohol. This reform also stopped children who committed crimes from being put into a prison with adults, instead they were put into a special remand home

Reforms on the Elderly –

- **The Old Age Pensions Act 1908** – This gave people, over the age of 70, money each week (amount depending on their marital status) to help them buy food, etc. The pension was collected from a local post office and the best thing was that the elderly did not have to pay towards their own pension. The drawbacks were that not all elderly people could receive a pension, if you had been in prison in the last 10 years or had claimed poor relief then they would not receive a pension. And also many people were worried that this would make people stop saving for their future and would rely on the government for support

Reforms on the Sick –

- **The National Insurance Act 1911** – This reform helped the poor people to afford medicine and doctor's treatment when they were sick and unable to work. The worker would pay a little money each week (4d) and the employer (3d) and the government (2d) would then pay more money and they would receive a stamp on their card saying that they had paid their contributions. When sick and off work for 4 days they were able to claim some money for medicine. The drawback to this reform was that the medical assistance was only available to the main wage earner and not to the rest of his family and if the worker died his widow couldn't get a pension

Reforms on the Unemployed –

- **Labour Exchanges** – These were agencies set up to help get people back into employment more quickly and more efficiently. Unemployed people would register their skills and type of work they were looking for and job places would also be registered, and so it was the job of the exchanges to match up the workers with the jobs. The only problem with this scheme was that not all job vacancies were registered and it was not compulsory for the unemployed to register themselves as being available for work
- **National Insurance Act 1911** – This reform was set up so that workers would pay contributions into this fund while in work so that if they became unemployed then they would be able to still receive some money while looking for a job. The two main drawbacks were that you could only receive this money if you had paid enough contributions and also that you could only get money for 15 weeks and

then after that you had to go into the workhouse. Also this act was restricted to trades with seasonal employment: construction, engineering, shipbuilding

- **The Liberal reforms were not the beginning of the Welfare State, but were the building blocks on which the later Labour Reforms would build the Welfare State.** The most important factor in the reforms is that they happened at all, as it was the first time that the government took responsibility for the welfare of the people

The Means Test –

- A new benefit was introduced which would extend the unemployment insurance that most unemployed workers received, this new benefit was called the Dole and it would come into action after a worker had been unemployed for 15 weeks
- The Wall Street Crash of 1929 led to a large loss in British jobs, this meant that there was a lot of pressure put on the Dole (unemployment benefits)
- The unemployment levels rose to its highest level of 1.9 million
- This led to the government introducing a means test which tested whether your assets and savings could support you without having to receive the dole
- If you had the assets then you would be refused the dole and you would have to sell your possessions to get by

The Impact and Effects of World War II –

- The war broke down many of the social classes and boundaries between the rich and the poor, this was because the bombs fell upon both the rich and the poor and also because everyone went into the same air-raid shelters and got to socialise with people from other classes
- Many people learnt to live with people of different social classes during the war as their homes had been bombed and so they had to live in temporary accommodation together
- Also soldiers on the French and African frontlines all got to know each other and developed good friendships and camaraderie, as people of every social class all had to get a gun and fight on the frontlines
- Rationing also had an impact on everyone during the war and right up until 1954, people could not just go out with money and buy what food they wanted, as everyone, no matter how much or little money they had got an equal proportion of food based on token in a ration book
- Evacuation was one of the great eye openers for the middle classes about how poverty stricken the children of the working classes were. Many children came to middle class homes after being evacuated from industrial cities and were covered by bugs and dirt. Many didn't know how to use toilet paper and many weren't used to having a bath regularly. This led to the rapid change in public opinion towards the poor after the war

The Beveridge Report –

- Sir William Beveridge was the civil servant who created a report that contained a detailed plan for Social Security and the expansion of insurance cover system for sickness and unemployment
- The plan was designed to give all people the right of what was contained in the reforms he suggested and that it would all be paid for from just the one national insurance contribution
- The five main targets that had to be tackled by this new system were: **want**, **disease**, **ignorance**, **squalor** and **idleness**
- It was decided that once the war had ended that Beveridge's plan would be put into action

- After the war there was a General Election at which the Labour Party won control of the Government and they set into action these reforms outlined by Beveridge and this was called the Labour Reforms

The Welfare State –

- This is the term for the system that acts as a security blanket for us in the UK today
- The Welfare State was formed in the Labour Reforms of 1945 – 1951 and it provides every single person in the UK a guaranteed minimum standard of living and help to remain above the poverty line
- Under the Welfare State everyone receives free medical care and treatment under the National Health Service (NHS) and receives free primary and secondary education
- Also people who needed some extra help receive means tested benefits to help them get more money in their income and to help them meet their needs

The Labour Reforms 1945 - 1951

Want –

- **Family Allowance Act 1945** – This act gave some extra money to families with more than one child. But the eldest child did not receive any money. It was designed to help parents provide for their families as best as possible
- **Industrial Injuries Act 1946** – This act gave the worker and his family money if he was injured at work so badly that he had to take time off. This lasted for only 6 months but this did give some support and security to many workers
- **National Insurance Act 1946** – This act was made compulsory for all workers and covered sickness and unemployment. A worker would pay contributions into the insurance fund and then if needed money could be claimed back out of it to support his family. This fund would remain successful only if unemployment remained below 8.5%
- **National Assistance Act 1948** – This act helped out those people who couldn't afford to pay insurance because they were sick and out of work. They would receive a little help in the form of payments or clothing grants. But this act most importantly got rid of the workhouse

Disease –

- **National Health Service Act 1946** – This act led to the most important development in the Welfare State, the NHS. This provided all people with free medical care and treatment. This act provided doctors, dentists, chemists, eye services, midwives and health visitors among others for free. The NHS was rejected by many GP's, but this problem was resolved when the doctors lost their salaries and were paid by the number of NHS patients they had on their lists. It was only after the implementation of the NHS that the true need for it was revealed. The problem was that the NHS was so popular that its costs became too high and eventually costs had to be introduced to those who could afford to pay for their treatment.

Squalor –

- After the war new houses needed to be build due to German bombing and because of the state of housing that had existed before the war, the problem was that many building materials were in short supply

- **New Towns Act 1946** – This act was a promise to build 12 new towns with good housing and in good areas to reduce the numbers of people who lived in cramped conditions in the cities. It also promised to building around 80,000 new houses, but when these houses were eventually built even more were needed

Ignorance –

- **Education Act 1944** – This act raised the secondary school leaving age to 15 and also introduced a new exam testing system known as the transfer exam (11 plus) at the age of 12 for all primary school pupils. This exam would test pupils’ knowledge, ability and aptitude and would then decide what schools they would go to for secondary education. Those who passed went to a “Grammar School” where they studied academic subjects like English, Maths, languages, history, etc. And those who failed went to a Secondary “Modern School” where more practical lessons were taught like woodwork, cooking. The problem of this was that it led to segregation between schools and made children feel like failures at the age of 12

Idleness –

- After the problems of unemployment before World War II the Labour Government wanted to have full employment to build a strong economy so as to fund the new welfare state. They decided to nationalise certain industries so that the state could control them for the benefit of the people. These industries were nationalised: Bank of England, National Coal Board, Gas, Steel, Iron and British Transport Commission. The problem with this was that many of these industries were old and not modern so they were very costly and didn’t make much profit to benefit the people

Conclusion –

- The Labour Reforms were successful in creating the modern day Welfare State and all people benefited from it. But it is true that poverty still existed and that many people still had to rely on charities
- The NHS was very successful and it greatly contributed to the improvement of the long term health of the people. But it did have problems with its budget due to its large popularity
- The workhouse was destroyed and the number of slums came down very dramatically and a lot of modern and good quality houses were built to deal with squalor. But there were still a lot of problems in the facilities available in existing houses and in the shortage of housing
- Finally workers now had some security in work so that if they were sick or injured that they received money and medication so they could get back to work and support their families while they were absent from work