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*Was it a Success?*

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Candidate:

Soumia BOUGUERRA

Supervisor:

Prof. Brahim HAROUN

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## **Abstract**

The present dissertation aims at analyzing the rise and fall of the British Social Reforms under the name of “the welfare state”, during the Labour Party Government in the period of 1945-51. This study is divided into three chapters. The first chapter focuses on the background or the atmosphere in which these proposed reforms were introduced, and directly the influence of these reforms on the results of the election to cause the shift to the Left. The second chapter explains the link between the Beveridge Report and Labour’s Social Reforms. It includes three main assumptions proposed by Beveridge in his Report and adopted to be implemented by the Labour government to achieve Social Welfare. These proposals are: Social insurance, a Comprehensive Health Service and the maintenance of Employment. And finally, the third chapter discusses Housing and Education programmes.

## Résumé

Cette thèse vise à analyser l'introduction et la régression des réformes sociales britannique, sous le nom de «l'Etat providence», pendant la période 1945-51 quand le parti travailliste était au pouvoir. Cette recherche est divisée en trois chapitres.

Le premier chapitre met l'accent sur le contexte ou l'atmosphère dans laquelle ces réformes proposées ont été introduites, et examine directement l'influence des réformes sur les résultats des élections qui ont provoqué un déplacement vers la gauche. Le deuxième chapitre explique le lien entre le Rapport Beveridge et du Travail de réformes sociales. Il comprend trois principales réformes proposées par Beveridge dans son rapport et adoptées pour être mises en œuvre. Ces réformes sont dans le domaine de l'assurance sociale, le Service de Santé et le maintien de l'emploi. Le troisième chapitre quant à lui discute des programmes de logement et d'éducation.

## ملخص

تسعى هذه الأطروحة لتحليل مناطق القوة والضعف في مجموعة الإصلاحات الاجتماعية البريطانية التي ترمي الى تحقيق "دولة الرفاهة" ، خلال فترة حكم حزب العمال 1945-1951 في الدولة البريطانية. ومن اجل بلوغ الغاية قسمت الى ثلاثة فصول رئيسية. الفصل الأول يركز على الخلفية التي تم من خلالها بناء الاصلاحات المقترحة ، و تأثير هذه الإصلاحات مباشرة على نتائج الانتخابات. أما الفصل الثاني فيشرح العلاقة بين تقرير بيفريدج والإصلاحات الاجتماعية المقترحة من طرف حزب العمال. فهي تتضمن ثلاثة افتراضات رئيسية اقترحها بيفريدج واعتمد لتنفيذها حزب العمال لتحقيق الرفاهة الاجتماعية والتي تشمل كل من التأمين الاجتماعي، الخدمات الصحية الشاملة والحفاظ على العمالة. اما فيما يخص الفصل الثالث فلقد ناقش برامج الإسكان والتعليم.

## Introduction:

The 1945-50 period marked a particular point in the history of welfare in Britain. It promotes the idea of welfare development in Britain as the most needed issue after the Second World War. It can mean the total responsibility of the State for an ideal model of provision for its citizens including all aspects of life that had already become a right under the principle of '*Welfare*'. Also, it can be defined to be "the creation of a "social safety net" of minimum standards of varying forms of welfare."<sup>1</sup> The use of any definition to describe the idea of the welfare state should be strictly linked to the principle of *Social Protection* which can not be only provided by the state itself. Welfare administration dealing with Social Services in 1945, as a major branch of welfare, dealt with five main measures to realize at some extent the British welfare system of 1945.

If there was anything that pushed me forward to search enthusiastically to learn more about the British welfare state, it was to be one of my third year lectures of

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<sup>1</sup>"Welfare state".Wikipedia.1 Oct.2009<[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_welfare\\_state](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_welfare_state)>

British Civilisation. During that lecture it had been referred that one of the main turning points in British history is the year of 1945. I have always asked about the real reasons behind the importance of that year away from the universal fact of the end of the Second World War. Through my reading of the first chapters of C.J. Bartlett's *A History of Post-war Britain 1945-74*, I have noticed that one of the main elements of that importance was Labour's victory of the 1945 election. The chapter explains how its programmes in particular had moved nearly half the population to vote Labour in 1945 these had been the social questions including the shortages of housing, the insecurity of so many of the population, the desire for some protection from sickness and unemployment

By the end of the Second World War Britain astonished itself by electing a Labour government in 1945. This time was described in history books as "a time of unique opportunity and one of the great historical turning-points at which history failed to turn"<sup>2</sup>. A Labour government was elected to power in Britain for the first time with an overall majority. There had been nothing like that after the First World War when Labour was young and its leaders were still lacking confidence and ability to change. "Indeed, from about 1940 one can detect an acceleration, an intensification and consolidation of certain trends, as well as some real changes of emphasis"<sup>3</sup>. Without the war it is hard to imagine such a determination to prevent and to avoid a return to the heavy interwar levels of unemployment and other social hardships. There was so

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<sup>2</sup> Jim Fyfe, *Labour's High Noon: The Government and the Economy, 1945-51* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1993). *Questia*. 11 Apr. 2009 <http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=112041852> 5.

<sup>3</sup> C.J. Bartlett, *A History of Postwar Britain 1945-74* (New York: Longman, 1977) 1.

much interest in the creation of universal social services, and a large acceptance of so much government interference in the life of the nation.

At home, the plans for change were established with reform rather than with any challenge to the nation's ideas and institutions. Indeed, the outlines for the most important of those changes seemed that they had already been drawn during the war itself. Although in practice the post-war years were to demonstrate that some problems had been underestimated.

This dissertation attempts at analyzing the fall and rise of the British Social Reforms under the name of "the welfare state", under the Labour Party 1945-51. The study will focus on the relation between the 1945 election and the social reforms that include: providing a comprehensive social security, housing the people, better education, free medical care under the National Health Service and the maintenance of full employment. Additionally, it deals with the social welfare strict link to the proposed assumptions of the Beveridge Report 1942.

The present dissertation is divided into three main chapters. The first chapter focuses on the background or the atmosphere in which these proposed reforms were built, and the influence of the reforms which had already been planned before the Second World War; on the results of the election. So, the general election caused a Labour win with an unprecedented overall majority over other parties. I have to refer that it was not the only reason for which the Labour gained, for that I went in deep details for the reasons of Labour's victory.

The second chapter explains the link between the Beveridge Report and Labour's Social Reforms. Many proposals were introduced before the end of the war but the most interesting to the public and the one which was used as a reference to create

Labour's programmes was the 1942 Beveridge Report. It includes three main assumptions for a welfare state to be, Social Insurance, a Comprehensive Health Service and the Maintenance of Full Employment. The need for social security provision helped the Labour government to introduce the National Insurance Act of 1946 that provided for the first time a comprehensive insurance against sickness, unemployment and old age. But the best in Labour's welfare crown was the National Health Service (NHS), which introduced free treatment for a large number of the British population in a wide range of hospitals and general practitioner services. In addition to these policies, the maintenance of employment was one of controversial issues during the war and that continued to exist in post-war years in large numbers.

The third chapter discusses Housing and Education programmes. These are some of the basic reforms introduced at a time of austerity but hope for better conditions of life. In housing, Labour faced the task of fitting a large population with houses object to bombing damages during the war. After a slow start, one million new homes were built with eighty per cent council houses. The Government's purpose in putting reforms in education, despite the huge opposition from the Conservatives, was to insure equality of educational opportunity.

Finally, it is very important to refer that *British welfare State* emphasised the inter-related nature of these services, and the importance of each for the others.

# CHAPTER ONE

## The Shift to Labour

### I. The 1945 Election:

As victory in Europe seemed nearer, so it became clear that Churchill's wartime coalition could not last much longer. Many leaders like Morrison and Bevan favoured an early break-up of the coalition. It was Churchill who decided to take the choice on 18 May by forcing the Labour leaders to decide either for an immediate general election, or for a continuation of the coalition until the end of the Japanese war. Simply, it was to prevent Labour from giving them a chance to introduce their new reforms over social services. The National Executive Committee (NEC) meeting on 20 May had no difficulty to decide. It called for an autumn election and agreed the continuation of the coalition until then.

Churchill wished to postpone the election until after the defeat of Japan. For him the delay would also enable him to make a start with his own 1943 Four Year Plan for the recovery of Britain, but he was under strong pressure from influential colleagues for a quick election to maximize his electoral appeal as the nation's great war leader. He wanted the continuation of the coalition, but the task of post-war reconstruction was now becoming the first priority. As early as 5 October 1944 and since 1935 the Labour Party had announced its intention to fight the next general election as an

independent party. Unlike Churchill, Attlee was aware of the decisive start to post war reconstruction which was initially needed.

Voting day was 5 July but not for everyone. There had been objections to 5 July to be the polling day because it was holiday weeks in some northern towns. In order to deal with this, the Postponement of Polling Day Act 1945 was introduced in Parliament. Voting was delayed for a week in eighteen constituencies and for a fortnight in one. After voting, there was to wait until 26 July to declare what were the results. This was because of the delayed poll in the nineteen constituencies, and to allow the armed services to have their right of voting when they were back from overseas.

Few did not guess that Labour was about to win one of the Great electoral victories in British history. Churchill was much interested in the size of his majority, while the Conservative Central Office hoped for a majority of at least fifty. But Churchill forgot that leading Britain in peace was not so obvious as governing it in war. The Labour Party expected a 1929 style situation in which they would be the largest party without an overall majority. The Liberals were hopeful of having between 80 and 100 seats, and Communists thought they had gained 4 to 5. The parties had started their predictions when they got the reports from the constituency organizations. *The Times* on 10 July reported that the Conservatives felt that there was no evidence to give a chance to swing against them.

Just after 10 o'clock in the morning of 26 July the first result was announced. It was Labour who gained in South Salford. This was not too disturbing for the Conservatives. Within minutes the Conservatives heard they had held Kingston-upon-Thames. Then three more Labour gains were followed in Lancashire and two

Labour seats held. The tension was heightened with the news that the first Cabinet minister, Harold Macmillan, was out. By 11 a.m. it was clear that the Conservatives were in deep trouble. Over lunch, the results declared that Labour had made more than 100 more gains. During the early afternoon it became clear that Labour had won a decisive victory, and clearly Churchill had failed to repeat the success of the previous elections.

Labour had won 393 seats. The Conservatives and their allies held 213 and the Liberals 12. In terms of the British electoral system Labour won a great victory in 1945, with an overall majority of 146 seats over all other parties. Labour's advance since 1935 was with 3.5 million more votes, whereas the vote of the Conservatives and their allies had fallen by 1.5 million to just under 10 million. However, the swing to Labour was impressive but did not last for long.

## II. The Reasons for Labour's Victory:

"In London the celebrations began as soon as the rumours of the German surrender on 7 May 1945 were bruited. Crowds gathered in Parliament Square and called for Churchill. He declared when he appeared before them, 'My dear friends this is your hour. This is not a victory of a party or of any class. It's a victory of the great British nation'. Surely, [any of his auditors recalled at that moment his comparable victory speech in November 1918]. 'The victory which has been won amidst these hazards does not belong to any party or any class. It belongs to all'"<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Robert Holland, The Pursuit of Greatness 1900-1970 (London: Fontana Press, 1991)194.

The similarity of both speeches does not include any element of banality.

Nevertheless, it can explain Conservative plans and aims to win the next election. It becomes quite clear that their intentions and elements have not changed. But it leads to an interesting point to understand the shift to the left in the election of 1945.

From 1943 every opinion poll and survey showed that the voters had swung to Labour. Such results astonished supporters of both parties and pushed historians to look after the deep reasons behind the dramatic failure of the Conservative party. The roots of such a swing could only be explained either politically or culturally.

Labour politicians in fact played a major role in the wartime coalition from which they obtained a great feeling of confidence. Ernest Bevin, who had been general secretary of the Transport and General Workers 'Union from 1919 to 1940, became minister of labour. Herbert Morrison was made minister of supply in 1940 and then became home secretary. Hugh Dalton was minister of economic from 1940 to 1942 and president of the board of trade from 1942 to 1945. Their roles as ministers helped the Party to feel confident and gradually to change the notion that Labour was unfit to govern, which their opponents had borne at their predecessors, and which the performance of the previous Labour government had justified.

The widespread acceptance of the Beveridge Report after its publication in 1942 showed that a return to pre-war hardships would be unacceptable when peace returned. Labour and Liberal MPs were noticeably more enthusiastic about implementing its recommendations than were the Conservatives. Nevertheless Labour benefited from Conservative proposed plans for post-war reconstruction.

On the other hand, the Conservatives relied heavily on the personal stature of Churchill and tried to rely on his reputation, as the party manifesto was titled '*Mr Churchill's Declaration of Policy to the Electors.*' Churchill was popular as a war leader, and many people were interviewed to announce that they had doubts about his ability to deal with post-war problems, especially working-class problems. They had neglected a reform programme to face the future and people had already chosen Labour whose manifesto was '*Let Us Face the Future.*' They became aware that the leader who led the country to two great World Wars does not lead to peace. After the Second World War, support for Churchill did not necessarily mean support for the Conservative Party, at whom many people laid responsibility for most of the disappointments. Some Conservative supporters swung against them, especially when voters' thoughts tended to be more interested on bread and butter issues rather than recent victories. Labour benefited from the general acceptance of state control of industry during the war and the commitment to social reform after it which all three major parties introduced, but which the electorate thought that the Labour party was most enthusiastic about.

Disappointed Conservatives after their 1945 defeat looked around for special causes, such as the supposed superiority of Labour party organization in many constituencies and the powerful writers who supported the party. Against the latter the Conservatives had little apart from Quintin Hogg's spirited *The Left was Never Right*(1945). Of the Conservatives the best that could be said was that they showed more realism and concentrated more on present problems than on future promises and criticism of the past. Full employment and the Beveridge Report were accepted but they were to be balanced and practiced by the Labour Party.

Culturally, Britain was dominated by a Conservative moral and culture between the wars. During the wars, things changed and by 1945 *the new mood* threatened to overwhelm this Conservative hegemony. The core of this change was a mixture of socialist Labour, Keynesian and democratic ideas including to a strong emotional desire for a new and better Britain.

These ideas were strongly anti-establishment and anti-capitalist, and were hostile to those who were responsible for poverty and unemployment during the previous period. In 1945 and 1946, however, it looked like Conservative supremacy in left was established i.e. Labour after the end of the war had got a state of great importance similar or even better than that of the Conservatives before their defeat.

Many reasons have been suggested for the new radical mood. The war had taken people out of their homes, had put them together in unfamiliar jobs in unusual places. They had learned that they should not deal with things as they were before, and that those who gave orders in government were often incompetent.

This was not "People's War" with a united people standing behind Churchill and receiving every sacrifice with a smile. There was unrest among people and huge strikes in many areas. But it was a "People's War" in the sense that, for the first time, many people were able to make decisions in workplaces and wartime organizations. Ten of thousands of working people were involved in discussing matters which had been considered to preserve the management.

Jim Fyrth explained in his book *Labour's Promised Land* how did culture influence the British to build the confidence. Between 1940 and 1945 thousands of ordinary man and women discovered confidence. One element which helped to build the confidence was the wartime popularisation of culture. The culture of wartime had its

roots in the 1930's, when films, books, pamphlets, plays and pageants were produced to shift opinion against Fascism, war, poverty and unemployment, and to win support for Labour. The wartime culture helped to popularise ideas which fuelled the leftward swing. Some of the most important wartime publications preparing the way for the Labour victory were the small books in blue covers with bright yellow wrappers. Obviously, the press had a big role to play and it is worth to refer that Labour was not as badly represented as is often supposed. They were backed by *the Daily Herald (News Chronicle)*, and *Daily Mirror* having a total circulation of about a million. The total net sales of the Conservative *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail*, and *Daily Sketch* were about the same. In addition the Conservatives enjoyed the support of *the Daily Telegraph* and most of the provincial press.

A general election was called for July. However in June July 1945, the spirit was more serious and focused more precisely on housing, health, full employment, and industrial regeneration, on post-war social needs rather than on external or imperial themes. In this sense, the power and prestige of Winston Churchill, the wartime leader, were a handicap to the Conservative Party.

### III. Reactions to Labour's win:

There had been much debate to the degree to which British society was transformed by the Second World War. It has been questioned whether a 'people's war' led to 'a people's peace'. Professor Marwick explained "The change, then, is not

in basic structures, but in ideas and in social attitudes and relationships, in how they saw themselves.”<sup>5</sup>

Reaction to Labour’s win differed from one person to another as well as from one class to another. The absolute reaction of Labour activist and supporters was great jubilation with no doubt. A high number of the working class were in favour of the Labour victory. This party was seen to be a sign of hope for each individual to find what he had lost during the war. This was not the case for some members of the middle class. It was for that section of society a painful period. The incomes of the professional classes had not risen in proportion to those of the wage-earners. Their patriotism did not extend to a willing acceptance of the new world of high wages and full employment.

As stated by David Childs:” Many of the still Conservative middle classes were likewise taken aback and apprehensive as well. Marie Belloc Lowndes, the writer, recorded in her diary:

I have never known the people with whom I am in touch, more amazed at the result of the election. Those who are well off are trembling with fear, some even are afraid of a capital levy.[...] Three people came on here afterwards and told me about it. They said that no one there seemed to realise what was going to happen.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Arthur Marwick, British Society since 1945 (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1996) 37.

<sup>6</sup> David Childs, Britain Since 1945 A Political History (London: Routledge, 1992) 7.

A minority of the middle classes did not feel like Marie Belloc Lowndes's friends. A. A. Best, 53-year-old insurance agent in 1945, recalled being on holiday at Hove on that dramatic day:

"We were joined at table[...]She indulged in an outburst of astonished incredulity as Labour gains mounted and wondered whatever would become of us all. I said that this was something I had been working for during most of my life and was feeling very excited at the prospects. This led to a good deal of political discussion during the rest of the holiday and I learned that other guests shared my feelings in varying degree."<sup>7</sup>

As we have seen above, people of the same social class expressed different reactions towards Labour's win. If we ask the question why such alleviation occurred, we need to go back to wartime to see how people lived. The war had brought people all together into the same pot, not any pot but that of the same circumstances under the rule of hardships and austerity, especially the very limited capacity of social services including unemployment, housing, health and education.

Some of those were not able to cope with the truth to be governed by a Party which was traditionally linked to the working class and wage-earners layer. They could not imagine a government with much interference in the life of people and social services which are allowed to all individuals of the society that means equality of classes.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.7

In addition, some members of the Establishment felt as much disappointment at the results. Montagu Norman, Governor of the Bank of England during 1920-1944, commented in a letter, in 1946, that if Churchill had been Prime Minister, “I daresay we should have had more disturbances and ill-feeling within this country and possibly elsewhere in Europe”. Churchill had remarked when he heard the results, ‘I do not feel down at all. I’m not certain the Conservative Party could have dealt with the Labour troubles that are coming’.

Many members of the Conservative party had already expected much trouble under the rule of the Labour Party for the following years. Simply, it threatened their capitalism, or much precisely ‘individualism’. We have given examples of two shining figures in the previous paragraph that supported capitalism, longstanding enemy of nationalization. The latter which was the core principle of the other party that worked hard to reach such a position at least to put limits to the inequality of distribution of the national income.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Beveridge's Impact on Labour's Policies

#### I. The Beveridge Report and the Labour Party:

There are some to whom the pursuit of security appears to be a wrong aim. They think of security as something inconsistent with initiative, adventure, and personal responsibility. This is not a just view of Social Security as planned in this Report. The plan is not one for giving to everybody something for nothing and without trouble, or something that will free the recipients forever thereafter from personal responsibilities. The plan is one to secure income for subsistence on condition of service and contribution and in order to make and keep men fit for service.

Beveridge Report, Paragraph 455, 1942.

In order to understand more the reasons for which the new found consensus was developed during the war, I need to explain the Beveridge Report and its major impact on Labour 's social programmes which caused its decisive victory.

On 1 December 1942 the wartime coalition government published a report entitled '*Social Insurance and Allied Services*'. It had been written by Sir William Beveridge, a highly regarded economist and expert on unemployment problems. The Beveridge Report quickly became the blueprint for the modern British welfare state.

In the early post-war years, one of the clear divisions between Conservatives and Labour Parties centred around the conditions on which services were to be provided. In general, the Labour Party followed Beveridge in his principle of universality as the main and proper administrative basis of social service while the Conservative Party was largely convinced that universality wasted much of resources by providing benefits for those who did not need them.

Social security provision went back a century. Workmen's Compensation dated back to 1893, old-age pensions to 1908, with a more elaborate scheme introduced in 1928, unemployment insurance and health insurance to 1911. Broadly, Labour policies were related to the star of 'universality' while the Conservatives would probably have aimed lower at 'selectivity'. Every Labour politician knew of the bitterness of the unemployed man thrown off unemployment insurance once his claim on the system was exhausted. Then, the Labour idea in stressing the principle of universality was to make sure that only by making the state services open to all could it be insured that the highest standards could be available to all. It was only by having a universal service could the stigma be removed from those who had to make use of state services.

Surely the opposition within the government from the Conservatives was because they felt uncomfortable by the existence of the Beveridge report. Of course, it

threatened the maintenance of capitalism. The fact that Britain had suffered from the challenge that comes from the East.

In the Beveridge Report, the plan to achieve Social Security depended on three main principles. The first principle is that any proposals for the future should be gathered with the experience of the past without being too tied to it. The second one, social insurance should be treated as the main part of a comprehensive policy of social progress. If social insurance would develop it may provide income security or in other words, the minimum standard of life; this would be a decisive attack over Want. But Want is only one of the five giants against reconstruction. The others are Disease, Ignorance, Squalor, and Idleness. The third principle is that social security must be achieved by co-operation between the State and individuals, “ with the state securing the service and contributions. The state should not stifle incentive, opportunity, responsibility; in establishing a national minimum, it should leave room and encouragement for voluntary action by each individual to provide more than that minimum for himself and his family”.<sup>8</sup>

In order to maintain the welfare state after the end of the war, the Labour Party had used the Beveridge Report as a reference for its development. It adopted its main assumptions of social insurance, comprehensive Health Service and the maintenance of full employment.

According to a Gallup poll, 90 percent of the population wanted to obtain the Report only within two weeks of its publication. Its principle objective was “to abolish

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<sup>8</sup> Rex Pope, Social Welfare in Britain, 1885-1985 (Kent:Routledge Kegan & Paul,1986)116.

want by ensuring that every citizen willing to serve according to his powers has at all times an income sufficient to meet his responsibilities”<sup>9</sup>. This goal can be achieved via six main proposals: the maintenance of full employment, a unified health system, family allowances, a uniform system of National Insurance, abolition of poor relief and the payment of subsistence level benefits.

The Beveridge Report aimed to provide a comprehensive system of social insurance 'from cradle to grave'. It proposed that every employee or independent workers in general should pay a weekly contribution to the state. In return, benefits would be paid to the unemployed, the sick, the retired and the widowed. Beveridge wanted to ensure that there was an acceptable minimum standard of living in Britain below which nobody fell.

Although it was a complex document of more than 300 pages, the publication of the Beveridge Report was a huge success. Opinion polls reported that the majority of the British public welcomed the report's findings and wished to see them implemented as quickly as possible. This shows the extent to which the population had shifted to the Left during the course of the Second World War.

## II. Social Insurance:

The main feature of the plan for social security is a scheme of social insurance against destruction and interruption by earning special expenditure arising at birth,

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.117

marriage and death. Under the scheme of social insurance “every citizen of working age will contribute in his appropriate class according to the security he needs”<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, the scheme was described as a scheme for insurance because it preserves the contributory principle. And it is described as a social insurance to make an important distinction from voluntary insurance. Family allowances not only did they apply to the whole community, but they were financed by general taxation, and they were also subject to taxation. In other words, the responsibility of having two or more children was automatically recognized; the rich in general contributed more and got back less, and yet there was no distinction between poor and rich. The new concept of universality was grafted on the older tradition of National Insurance.

The most significant point about family allowances, were payable in respect of second and later children in all income groups. Family allowances were given to the mother, as I think, was a significant sign of feminist influence on legislation which recognized women’s role as child bearers, and a prevention of husbands from spending the money.

Between 1945 and 1948 several acts were passed to provide a network of social security schemes. A comprehensive National Insurance Bill was introduced in 1946 to provide both for old age and unemployment. There was strong Conservative support had contributed to the scheme. It was given an unopposed second reading on 11 February.

Under the National Insurance Act of 1946, the whole population was brought, for the first time under a comprehensive system covering unemployment, sickness,

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.119

maternity, guardianship, retirement, and death. A Ministry of National Insurance was set up and a National Insurance Fund with an initial capital of £ 100 million. Annual grants from the Exchequer were foreseen, but both employers and employees were to make weekly contributions. The latter was something that many in the Labour Party were unhappy about.

Attlee in a classic speech on 7 February 1946, asked:

*Can we afford it? Supposing the answer is 'No', what does that mean? It really means that the sum total of the goods produced and the services rendered by the people of this country is not sufficient to provide for all our people at all times, in sickness, in health, in youth and in old age, the very modest standard of life that is represented by the sums of money set out in the Second Schedule to this Bill. I cannot believe that our national productivity is so slow, that our willingness to work is so feeble or that we can submit to the world that the masses of our people must be condemned to penury.*

Under the Act, after the first three days of unemployment, unemployed person became eligible to receive a weekly payment for 180 days. An insured person who then got a job and lost it again after less than thirteen weeks qualified for another period on benefit.

Sickness benefit was provided after three days of enforced absence from work, or for the whole period of the incapacity if it lasted longer than three days. It could be drawn indefinitely up to retirement age when it was replaced by a pension.

The maternity grant consisted of a single payment to the mother on the birth of her baby, and working mothers received an allowance for 13 weeks to compensate for absence from employment.

The death grant covers the cost of the funeral. Widows were taken care of under the Act. For the first 16 weeks, a widow under retirement age was paid an allowance. There were allowances for their children up to the age of sixteen (if they remained at school to that age). Widows between fifty and sixty (retirement age for women) could also be eligible for a continuing allowance. Finally, if a widow reached forty while her children were still at school, she could also receive an allowance. To be eligible for these benefits, the widow had to have been married for ten years. One other provision made for death was that an orphaned child's guardian could claim an allowance provided one of its parents had been insured under the Act.

Retirement pensions were granted under the Act to men at sixty-five and women at sixty. Those eligible could continue working for a further five years with a slight reduction of pension. As with all the benefit listed, pensions did not rise automatically with the rise in the cost of living, nor were they related to previous earnings.

Family allowances were given to mothers for the second child and subsequent ones up to the age of fifteen, or sixteen if they remained in schools.

Yet, since the scheme was an insurance plan, there would have to be a further means of providing for those who failed to meet the qualification condition, i.e. those who did not benefit from the Act.

In the Beveridge plan it had been intended that benefits should be sufficient for the maintenance of a basic minimum subsistence standard. James Griffiths, the Minister who introduced the Act, declared that it marked the introduction of the

principle of a 'National Minimum Standard'. Actually, at forty two shillings (£2.10), the benefits were already falling behind the cost of living, and continued to fall further behind. Later, a rising population of pensioners (it increased by 75 percent or 3 million between 1948 and 1969), inflation and steadily improving standard of living for the mass of the population increased the difficulty of providing benefits.

National assistance, indeed, was needed to supplement other benefits extensively. the work of the Assistance Board showed that assistance subjected to means test can be administered with justice by taking full account of individuals circumstances. Between 1948 and 1962, the number having recourse to National Assistance almost doubled to 2 million. But the scope of assistance would be narrowed and diminished during the transition period.

Nevertheless, the insurance scheme coupled with National Assistance, meant that the welfare in Britain provided protection which and despite its limitations, was one of the most comprehensive in Europe. The third social survey in York provides some evidence of the impact of the new legislation as early as 1950 when only 3 per cent of the working class in that city were reported to be in a state of poverty, but that on the basis of the 1936 provision of welfare this would have increased to over one fifth.

But I have to notice that Social Insurance did not object to any means test as well as a limited duration of provision. Both elements involved a huge source of provision. This was not the case in Britain. After the Two World Wars Britain entered a new era with huge debts i.e. very limited capacity to provide the whole society. Although, income security through National Insurance and National Assistance, was a simple

matter. All it needed was cash, and that could be raised through National Insurance contributions and through general taxation.

### III. The National Health Service:

The National Health Service approach to medical care has meant many things to many people. For some civil servants it was a solution to administrative disorder in pre-war medical services, and an end to unsatisfactory promises. To some working in the voluntary of hospitals it was an end to their economic difficulties. To those working people who already had access to free general practitioner care, it meant free access to specialist medicine. For the first time, to the middle class and to working people not on 'the panel' it meant access to free general practitioner services. For the small group of specialists it was a strategy of modern medical practice without harming their income or power. To the medical profession as a whole it signalled a large number of Labour opponents to avoid local government control of medical care. And to the Left it meant, as the best way to a locally controlled national health service based on a network of health centres.

When Labour won the 1945 General Election, some of the most ardent advocates of a comprehensive National Health Service were the Professional civil servants which became convinced of the need for a health service that met all needs, without the stigma of the Poor Law. They saw medicine as an honourable profession that fulfilled its social responsibilities without recourse to commerce.

The failure of reform in the inter-war period was a motive to these civil servants. In 1911 the National Insurance Act had transformed medical care in the UK, extending free GP care (the Panel) from the five million to fifteen million workers, nearly one third of the nation. At the end of the First World War, a working class family could receive medical care from as many as nine different doctors working under five different organisations. The working man would see his panel doctor for all illnesses other than tuberculosis. His wife if she was separately insured would see the same panel doctor for her illnesses, except for tuberculosis and problems in pregnancy and child-birth. If she was not insured she could consult a private doctor if she could afford it a parish doctor (provided under Poor Law regulations) or a doctor from a medical charity if she could not. During the pregnancy she could use the municipal maternity service, which also provided child health services for infants and children up to school age. Once the children were at school, a school's medical officer would attend to 'school diseases', a private doctor only would be called if the children were too ill to go to school. Between leaving school and sixteen years of age the children would be seen by the private doctor but after their sixteenth birthdays they could join the same doctor's panel.

Whenever change was brought to health service, there were different groups in the population and different currents of thought within medicine itself formed changing alliances to promote or resist each new scheme. Nevertheless some changes occurred. Maternity care was greatly improved although very slowly, through the expansion of municipal services, but the overall experience of reformers in the inter-war years was one of frustration.

There was little disadvantage in the development of Britain's hospitals. The Ministry of Health which was founded in 1919 had developed three separate types of

hospitals. Municipal hospitals developed without central interference, teaching hospitals received some state funds through the University Grants Committee not the Ministry, and voluntary hospitals kept at arms length from government involvement. This separation of Ministry and hospitals came to an end only in 1938, when the financial problems of London's teaching hospitals prompted a request for State help. The problems were resolved by the creation of an Emergency Medical Service (EMS) in May 1939 within which, voluntary, teaching and municipal hospitals were coordinated and supported. The success of the wartime EMS strengthened the enthusiasm of reformers within the Ministry for a centralised health service.

While working people had increasingly been able to see the Panel, so that nearly half the population was covered by 1938 access to specialist medicine was much less satisfactory. Panel members could get some free or cheap treatment, at the price of long waits in the outpatient clinics of the voluntary hospitals, but easy access depended on payment.

For the middle classes who were excluded from the Panel system and depended on private medicine, the growth of medicine's effectiveness meant an increase in personal expenditure whenever illness affected them. The financial problems encountered by the London teaching hospitals were mirrored in the budgets of rich homes, making the middle classes increasingly interested in State subsidies for medical care. Whilst under the NHS the middle classes had paid through National insurance, they were to receive in services more than half as much again as they paid in premiums.

Both classes began to make political choices and accept new alliances and the post-war expansion and affluence of these classes was greatly improved by free education for their children and free medical care for all.

The object of so much interest was the specialists, a tiny group largely reliant on private practice and also they adopted experience and medical development through their tradition of work in the voluntary hospitals. The depression has affected their private incomes and helped to increase the importance in the voluntary hospitals and the incomes from that source, in this way contributing to the financial problems of the voluntary sector.

Medicine was objecting to great changes and the first signs of pharmacological revolution were visible. Medical skill was needed in greater quantities than before, but with the exciting system of both isolated centres staffed with fully skilled doctors and large numbers of small cottage hospitals staffed mainly by general practitioners with limited skills, was an insufficient basis for the next step of modernisation and the development of medical sector. Therefore, consultants had a lot of to gain, from increased funding of the hospital network, and at a larger scale and in the foundation of the NHS; they had the opportunity to practice their influence over the medical profession within the new health service.

The political changes within the British society brought a new significant challenge to the medical profession and its traditional conflict with the ghost of local government control. The Depression and the Second World War had caused a shift to the left the thing that aggravated the medical profession's anxiety about its ability to decide how medical care would be developed. The solution was presented by Steve Iliffe: "This concern with professional supremacy was not an idiosyncrasy of

Britain, but its solution was peculiarly British. In pre-war Germany the medical profession had come to an agreement with the Nazi government to exclude trade union influence from the German social insurance programme, and in the Soviet Union the State had constructed a centralised medical service on the ruins of pre-Bolshevik professional organizations. In Britain the profession had no choice but to seek a compromise with Labour that preserved as much of its autonomy as possible whilst extracting as many benefits from the new order as feasible”<sup>11</sup>

Frequently the National Health Service is seen as a socialist institution because it was founded by the Labour government 1945-50 and it was campaigned by the Left for a long history to create a national health service. However its main characteristics have adopted from the compromises needed to develop it and which allowed the Left to see it either an incomplete institution needed a democratic State to be established or as a weak structure open to have the final touch by the Right.

On the Left the Socialist Medical Association wanted to create a municipal health service based on health centres, and on the Right the British Medical Association wanted to maintain the autonomy of its principle group membership for general practitioners and a total freedom for its consultants to practice privately. The Government faced two great wars and a great depression that shattered the hope for reconstruction. The population wanted social changes to be regarded as a reward for wartime effort as well as the social and personal consequences of the Depression. In

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<sup>11</sup> Jim Fyrth, “An Historic Compromise: Labour and the Foundation of the National Health Service” Labour's High Noon: The Government and the Economy 1945-51 (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1993)

its scientific content and effectiveness, medicine was almost to reach a turning point with the appearance of the first antibiotics as a sign for the beginning of the pharmacological revolution, and there had been a skilled manpower in the London teaching hospitals (the centres of excellence) which would be needed to lead the scientific revolution.

The inter-war years where strong and rapid change was needed, the politicians of the period were not appropriate to this new situation. This did not only mean political situation that determined leadership, but it also needed a new vision. Some of the leadership existed within the Civil Service, in the form of socially responsible figure with much knowledge of medical care and much experience of the world of medical politics. This was going to appear in the shape of a passionate Minister of Health, Aneurin Bevan, who was considered capable enough to make a suitably combative deal for the National Health Service.

A nationalized hospital was to be considered the new vision that brought high quality of medicine and surgery to the whole of the country, replacing the bad quality of services provided by GPs in the cottage hospitals. In that field Labour did imagine democratic reform to involve British citizens. The nationalisation of the hospitals was demanded before the Second World War which had been put in place by EMS in 1939. But from 1922 Labour developed the idea of health centres that subject to local popular control, as the basis of a national health system providing a comprehensive free service with an additional benefit of both dentistry and ophthalmic that was much valued by people at the time.

The Left's perspective was a service based on regional health centres that failed to occur for two inter-related reasons. The two major problems concerned the

shortage of resources and the conflict of interest within the medical profession and between the profession and the local authorities that was to play a crucial role in building the new health service and that Bevan and the Cabinet could not face. Hospital medicine was chosen as the leading force in the new service, and specialists were its champions.

The National Health Service Act passed into law in 1946, but the new National Health Service was not to come into practice until the appointed day, 5 July 1948. In broad outline the proposed National Health Service was a monumental expression of the principle of universality; although a proportion of the income from National Insurance stamps was to be devoted to the Health Service. Treatment in no way depended upon insurance contribution; it was entirely free and open to everyone. Apart from the deficiencies in the provision of hospitals already noted there was irregular distribution of doctors over the country, with the south of England being favoured. In 1939 health insurance did cover only about half of the population nor did it go beyond the services of doctors. This irregular system had necessitated state intervention during the war, including payment of a large proportion of doctors' fees by the state. It was claimed that private practice would be undermined, the personal relationship between the patient and the doctor destroyed, and the independence of the profession eroded. The long history of state involvement in public health was perhaps imperfectly understood and already the average doctors received about one third of his income from the state. The mounting costs of medical research and development needed more than state assistance. But it was not difficult to present Labour in general, and more particularly Bevan as the Minister of Health.

Bevan preferred a national hospital service to ensure a reasonable spread of facilities over the country. There was much debate over the end of the voluntary

hospitals. Morrison opposed the transfer of all hospitals to special regional boards, but Bevan correctly argued that to await the reform of the local government and build the hospital system on that foundation would cause unacceptable delay. Therefore, The United Kingdom was divided into twenty regional hospital groups, each of which saw to have a university school of medicine. With respect to general practitioners, Bevan was determined to achieve a fairer distribution of doctors over the country. He wished to leave the patient free to change his doctor and also free to choose to receive medical treatment as a private or national health patient, or the mixture of the two. Doctors should be free to work outside the service whether partly or entirely. He believed they should have a basic salary plus capitation fees according to the number of their national health patients, and there should be also the possibility of private practice.

A detailed explanation on the distribution of hospitals was made by Arthur Marwick: "To administer the new hospital organization, there were, in England and Wales, fourteen regional hospital boards, each centred on the medical faculty of a university, and appointed by the Minister of Health. Management committees for the 388 hospitals within the system were to be appointed by the regional boards, but the thirty-six teaching hospitals were given a special autonomy in that their boards of governors were to be appointed directly by the Minister. In Scotland, five regional hospital boards were established, four based on universities, and the fifth based on Inverness, and eighty-four hospital boards of management."<sup>12</sup>

It is true that the NHS helped millions of citizens to feel less discomfort and stress, offering better quality of medical care. Citizens had experienced the best

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<sup>12</sup>Arthur Marwick, British Society since 1945 (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1996) 53

dental and ophthalmic care ever, spreading accessible specialist medical services across the country and dealing with a great amount of medical problems that have remained neglected. For the first time, citizens would be able to receive modern medical treatment if they became ill, without having to pay for it.

In addition to the medical profession, many other professions like physiotherapy, clinical psychology, and radiology were able to emerge within the new NHS. New technology brought new laboratories able to do more investigations, mainly on a mass-production basis and new types of scientific worker entered the NHS. The service also included free dental and eye treatment. The rush for glasses was greater than expected. Dental and ophthalmic care were luxuries for the middle and upper classes. The worker went to the dentist only because of sharp toothache, and then only to have teeth pulled out. Glasses, they obtained direct from *Woolworths* or other department stores. The last elements of medical provision were to be found in the compulsory inspection and treatment of school children at the state schools, imposed by the Education Act of 1918, and in the distribution of milk and welfare foods developed during the war. The one major piece of social legislation actually enacted by Churchill's National Government was the Education Act of 1944. This Act continued the policy of local authority responsibility for the health care of school children while, in keeping with the tenor of the times, it abolished all charges made to parents.

The Conservative efforts to attack the NHS were made on the grounds that it cost too much and these costs were rising fast. These efforts were defeated with the publication of the *Guillebaud Report* on NHS costs in 1956, although this defeat did not prevent Conservative governments from holding down NHS expenditure throughout the 1950s.

In February 1949 a supplementary estimate of £52 million was necessary for the National Health Service. Nearly twice that supplement was required in the following year. But costs were bound to be uncertain at first. Yet, the Guillebaud Committee in January 1956 that the service had in fact been absorbing a decreasing proportion of the country's resources since 1949-1950. In any case, part of the cost of the service could be balanced by the gains of the community as a whole through the general improvement in health. Its preventive as well as its curative roles should also be noted. In its first years blindness from cataracts was reduced by a quarter, thereby enabling many people to continue their normal lives. Unfortunately about half the hospitals taken over in 1948 were obsolete (most of these had been built before 1891), and little new building was undertaken before the 1960s. In time even former critics became more kindly towards the service, even there were increasing costs to improve medical treatment. Such costs made a national approach desirable.

Throughout our work of the document, the very remarkable point I have to refer to, marked the real weakness of Health Service in particular and Labour's social policies in general, that reflected a socialist mood. The NHS like other nationalized industries was only nominally owned by the people of Britain. Citizens had no power to influence its development without recourse to politicians' interests. Opportunities for trade unions to influence the NHS even indirectly through Community Health Councils were rarely taken. Some changes from outside the NHS occurred but this was uncommon and difficult. The 1945-50 Labour government wanted to create something good for those who had suffered during the Depression, and those who had sacrificed so much during the war. Perhaps the National Health Service was to be the best of its achievement, but it was built as an institution that did thing for and to people, but not with them. It was entirely the fault of the Government, under which

the Labour government and Bevan wanted to remove the burden off from the back of the trade union movement which struggled for decades to improve medical care for working people.

#### IV. Unemployment:

While it is not always easy to see just what social philosophies lay behind policy in the previous areas of: security, health housing, and education, that can be no doubt that both Labour and Conservative Governments were fully committed to a philosophy of the avoidance of mass unemployment.

In economics, full employment has more than one meaning. To most people, it means zero unemployment. The majority of economists believe the unemployment rate is greater than 0% when there is full employment. They correspond this idea to the Non-Accelerating Inflation Rate of Unemployment (NAIRO). The twentieth century British economist William Beveridge stated that an unemployment rate of 3% was full employment. While other economists have provided estimates between 2% and 7%, depending on the country, time period, and the various economists' political biases.

Beveridge had published a book in 1944 entitled '*Full Employment in a Free Society*', attacking government policy for being too careful. The government was not alone in its doubts. British employers asked how could exports bear the cost of the Beveridge's plans, though there had been a realistic attempt to cost their recommendations. Keynes commented on Beveridge's hope that unemployment

could be maintained at an average of 3 percent: "No harm in aiming at 3 per cent unemployment, but I shall be surprised if we succeed"<sup>13</sup>. His own expectation was around 6 per cent, while Bevin in April 1943, thought that up to 8 per cent unemployment could be regarded as normal labour turnover, and that state immediate reaction should be required if it occurred beyond that point. There was more general agreement that full employment if attained could lead to serious inflation, and there was much interest in the sort of controls that might be introduced. Beveridge himself talked of the need for compulsory decisions or some unified wages policy involving the Trade Union Congress.

In 1948 there was an impressive increase of British exports. The result was an expanded output and government restrictions for domestic demands. So fears of devaluation increased. Apart from taxation, domestic demand was limited by wage restraint. In return for government assurances on profits and prices, the TUC finally agreed to conditional wage restraint in March 1948 and again a year later. A reliable ally of the government was Arthur Deakin, General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union. His own experience of industry had made him convinced that if high wages are not related with higher output this could lead to unemployment. He believed that workers must look mainly to modernize industry for prosperity, while some opponents that this would lead to inflation. Despite much protests and discontent, wage rates rose on average only 5 per cent between February 1948 and the autumn of 1950.

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<sup>13</sup> Jim Fyrth, Labour's High Noon: The Government and the Economy, 1945-51 (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1993. Questia. 11 Apr. 2009 <http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=112041852>) 8.

Industry recognized the clear effect of wage restraint which was further conciliated by the government's reliance on direct controls and more on indirect economic management as well as consultations with employers and trade unionists. The government also continued to approach economic problems. It achieved less than it hoped in reducing Aneurin Bevan's housing programme. The nationalized industries also suffered when the chance of a national energy policy was neglected. There was no systematic examination of Britain's needs.

There were elements in the thinking of the TUC which wanted to protect jobs and profits that were similar to the Keynesians' view. A national investment board should decide on the overall level of investment to preserve full employment, and deficit spending was advocated if it were necessary to prevent unemployment.

The conclusion was that the side of industry was not prepared to abandon the old ways of doing things to achieve full employment. Even the government's limited plans for post-war intervention aroused their opposition and they were far more opposed to the far reaching controls advocated by Beveridge. 'the maintenance of employment and the prevention of mass unemployment', was the third Assumption in the Beveridge Report. A low level of unemployment would certainly reduce the finance of social security scheme, but there had been no organized plans for a full employment policy.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Housing and Education

#### I. Housing the People:

##### **1. The Historical Roots of Housing Policy:**

Housing was one of the stress points of war. London and other big cities lost 20 per cent or more of their pre-war numbers, while towns were centres of defence where industries became seriously overcrowded. Nearly 3 million families had no choice but to go to live in houses that already condemned or due to be condemned as unfit in 1939, or in bomb damaged houses with only first and repairs. At the end of the war around 6 percent of the pre-war houses had been destroyed or seriously damaged. Meanwhile there was an increasing housing demand due to a rising birth rate which shot up a third above its pre-war level.

In 1918 the vast majority of people of all classes lived in landlord owned houses, many of them dating from the early years of the industrial revolution and many with two or more families in a house indented for only one. Until 1939 there was a continuing and clear association between bad housing and mortality and disease, as well as clear class differences. "There was also a deeply engrained loathing of

private landlords and habitual warfare between them and tenants that sometimes broke out in organized militancy as in the tenants movements of the 1930s”<sup>14</sup>.

The Rent and Mortgage Interest Restriction Act in 1915 which fixed rents to the 1914 levels and in 1939 the rents were again frozen. In this way, landlords had little motives to keep their property in good conditions, although they received some provision for raising rents after repairs. The consequences were homes increasingly old and broken while the level of rents was not encouraged to be changed. With the shortage of this stock of older houses because of the clearance of old cities during the 1930s, private rentals were hard to get. Consequently, the tenure lost what had always been considered its main advantage, flexibility and freedom of movement for people who were relatively poor.

Ravetz Alison explained how did surveys before the end of the war reflect public vision towards housing: “there was a common vision for a future, portrayed in the media and endlessly discussed among servicemen and women, among housewives, even between those sheltering in air-raid shelters. In this vision the homes of the future probably played the dominant part. Mass Observation’s Enquiry into People’s Homes was based on in-depth surveys of eleven different places as well as other material drawn from different parts of England and Wales. The Town and Country Planning Association and *Daily Mail* Ideal Home Exhibition were both able to report on attitude surveys among civilians and the armed forces, while the 1946 *Housing Digest*, put together for the Electrical Association for Women, compiled comments from no less than thirty-four professional, commercial, press, political, scientific, religious and women’s organisations, as well as twenty-three government reports, all

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<sup>14</sup> Alison Ravetz, “Housing the People” Labour's High Noon: The Government and the Economy 1945-51 (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1993) 147.

between 1941-45. It was, therefore, legitimate for the Dudley Report, which in 1944 set new official guidelines for post-war public housing, to be confident about the expectations and standards that would need to be met.”<sup>15</sup>

All this conveyed an impression that people would indeed have a real choice of homes after the war. People rushed to buy the Beveridge Report when it appeared in 1942 and despite its insistence on dry facts; this showed a quality in its description of five great social 'Evils' to be overcome. As we would expect that : the unhealthy decaying and badly planned homes and neighbourhoods were represented as 'Squalor' . Then, this was the basis from which the Labour Party promised to use every new resource including modern building technology and a new Ministry of Housing and Planning to produce good homes in a good environment for every family in need.

Actually, every candidate in the General Election , housing has been said to be the key issue to judge from their speeches that the housing problem existed in every town and rural area in Great Britain. This issue had made a large contribution to Labour's victory, particularly many women and also ex-service people who were angry about the housing shortage that would face them when they would return to civilian life.

## **2. The Promise of 1945**

The new Government did not innovate a new housing policy , not even did realize its promise to put housing into a new ministry with planning. Bevan, as Minister of

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid. 148

Health included housing in his portfolio, but planning was assigned its own Ministry of Town and Country Planning. In a remark, that it had been noted several times by historians, Bevan claimed to spend five minutes a week on housing. This did not reflect a real concern about the issue, but I think, there is no doubt that the task of setting up the National Health Service was precedent or that the responsibility to administer both the National Health Service and Housing together was an immense burden to be borne by only one man.

In addition to rent control and slum clearance the main function of local authorities was to build new dwellings for the needs of the working classes. The idea was already behind a long story of controversy and struggle when Addison instituted subsidised housing in 1919. His Act embodied a daring idea that public money should be used to give working class tenants the right to have the most advanced modern housing of that day.

The two different wings of housing policy were often represented as polarities, Tories and Labours. From 1919 onwards both parties had shared the idea of a mixed system of public and private housing, insisting to know how the exact role of the public sector should be. The Conservative governments continued the public subsidy by putting it at private enterprise in order to encourage entrepreneurs to take their old role of providing working-class housing for rent. On the other hand, the 1924 Labour government was prepared to let the standards fall to achieve higher numbers.

### **3. Bevan's Practice of the Policy:**

Over the policy and its practice there were a number of real dilemmas which by 1945 it had resulted in a large body of research and debate. Whether or not the new minister was aware of this, Bevan's first principle was that housing should not be a commodity to be brought and sold for profit. His vision of the future council estates was of a mixed class community, living in harmony as he supposed to be like the traditional English village. Later, he did a symbolic step by introducing the 1949 Housing Act to remove the condition that council housing should be exclusively for members of the working class. Symbolically it was important but in practice things were different, since in the post-war shortage council estates were contributed according to priority need which naturally discriminated in favour of poorer people. In the longer term when there would be enough public housing for all, the authorities would leave the necessity of discriminating between those who applied for a home and those who did not. Bevan was dominated by the idea that before the war the only way for working class family to get a satisfactory and acceptable house was either to live in a declared slum and so they would be re-housed or to buy their own home. In fact, this was not always true because there were many good, old and new houses for rent, and it did well for those who rented from private landlords. Therefore, with the Chancellor, Hugh Dalton, he fought and won the battle to hold down council rents to ten shillings rather than the twelve shillings demanded by the Treasury. The best was the supply of new houses not only to satisfy the demands of pre-war era but to realize Labour's promises to its electorate.

The problems of the post-war economy in particular serious shortages of building materials and skilled labour, causes Bevan to change the plan of housing

construction that took place into the public sector rather than the private sector. Restrictions were placed to give licences which were needed for any private building. As licences and materials became available, such private houses were often constructed in stages with a ratio of five public to one private dwelling was achieved.

The first post-war Housing act was passed in 1949, increased the subsidy for council houses and gave a special subsidy for flats. It also extended controls on private landlords by bringing furnished accommodation and new flats within rent control and setting up rent tribunals. But the most important Housing Act of the Labour administration was that of 1949 which confirmed a relief of the building of new stock by local authorities. In addition to a number of innovations reflected Bevan's idealistic vision including improvement grants for older property, powers to build hostels with subsidy, and to sell furniture for the new dwellings. For all these activities the councils had the right to borrow at low rates of interest from the Public Works Loan Board.

All these achievements demonstrated the confidence of the Labour government in public housing as a universal and permanent service which received a welcome from all parties in the House. There was much debate concerned about the whole principle of improvement grants on the grounds that, unlike the subsidy for new council houses, they would not necessarily benefit the neediest.

#### **4. The Best for the People:**

The final dimension of this policy was Bevan's idealism regarding housing standards. He had the garden city tradition of cottage-style houses adopted for

council estates by the Tudor Walters Report in 1918. Above all he followed the recommendations of the Dudley Report of 1944 which were based on the reported performance of council dwellings and estates since Tudor Walters, with further evidence given by over fifty non- government organisations. Not many of these could be termed working-class, but Bevan could be confident that, had working-class people been directly consulted, as in the wartime surveys and its conclusions have not been any different.

The Dudley Report aimed at new standards both for dwellings and estates. Floor areas of houses were increased and houses of five or more people provided with downstairs cloakrooms and utility rooms. These early post-war houses were the best ever built by councils, although there were widespread criticism of extravagance. Despite all of these he did not change his principles saying ' while we shall be judged for a year or two by the number of houses we build... we shall be judged in ten years. Time by the type of houses we build'. In the new towns and with their special resources it was possible for public housing to reach higher standards.

But the first batch of new towns had hardly taken shape by 1951, when only a few thousand houses had been completed and many of them occupied by their own building workers.

In the Dudley Report, the main recommendation for estates was that they should no longer be planned by only one or two types of families, but should be completed neighbourhood catering for social diversity with flats and maisonettes as well as houses. For the reasons of density, the estates were consisted mainly in blocks of flats had their subsidies slanted so that some houses could be included. Council housing was now to provide the elderly with bungalows, flats or hostels. Before the

war only progressive authorities had built for the elderly, but now there was a new annual subsidy of £5 per room for old people's accommodation for both purposes whether to build or to convert.

Taking the responsibility for older people's housing needs marks a very important event in welfare Britain. Until 1948, any older people who could not look after their own housing needs went to Public Assistance Committee institutions which had been created in 1929. Under the National Health Service Act of 1948, such institutions were allocated either to the National Health Service for use as hospitals and to local authorities for residential homes. From that time councils began to build or to change their own homes. In addition and under the 1949 Housing Act they used their powers to build early forms of protected housing.

## **5. The Result:**

By this time housing results were not something of which Labour felt proud. From the beginning, Attlee and other members of the Cabinet criticised the slow progress made. The Prime Minister's economic adviser, Douglas Jay, attacked Bevan for relying too much on local councils. Attlee himself intervened to increase house production, first by introducing Cabinet Committee presided by he himself and later by creating a Housing Production Executive. There was much political capital to be used to produce only half-finished houses, and while in 1948 Bevan proudly claimed that the target of three quarters of million new houses were set by the previous Government. It became clear that this figure had seriously underestimated the needs of people. In that year the peak of the production came in when 227,000 houses were completed but after that, yearly there was a total of less than 200,000 houses to

be finished. Labour's General Election manifesto of 1950 was brief and very far from the subject of housing which was however the dominant theme of all Conservative election addresses. In the next General Election Labour intended to maintain housing production at 200,000 units a year and to raise this as soon as possible. On the other hand, the Conservatives called housing 'the first of the social services' and promised for 300,000 houses a year, a target that Harold Macmillan, as Housing Minister reached in 1953. Dissatisfaction with the slow rate of building exploded in the movement of the squatters in the summer of 1946. This began among ex-servicemen and others who were in need of homes by a spontaneous invasion which spread rapidly to many parts of the country. By the autumn over a thousand camps had been occupied by more than forty thousand families. Other empty buildings such as hotels and schools were also invaded, and by September of that year a series of squats began in London with the occupation of a vacant block of luxury flats where hundreds of homeless or badly housed Londoners, ex-servicemen prominent among them took part in these occupations, in which a number of Communist councillors took a leading role. These had been offered by the Government to Kensington Borough Council for temporary housing, but this offer had been declined.

The protesters received considerable public help in connecting water, gas and electricity and supplying food and necessities, but after the police turned hostile.

For some it was a never to be forgotten experience, and the Communist Party gained a number of members through it. Bevan accused the squatters of jumping the housing queue and demanded that the councils concerned should cut off gas and electricity supplies. Eventually, five Communist councillor leaders were brought to trial for criminal conspiracy while they had in fact led an orderly retreat from the occupied buildings. Throughout the country many of the former squatters were re-

housed and in some cases tenants, including original squatters remained in them for years, and a few of the camps were gradually converted into permanent council estates.

Labour's housing achievements in six years of government reflected a mosaic of reform and conservatism that one comes to expect of the Welfare State. Housing programme confirmed the mainstream policies developed during the inter-war years, by establishing council housing as something accepted by Tories and Labour alike; until the Thatcher revolution that put an end to this consensus in housing as well as in all fields of social welfare.

Bevan's vision was for public renting to become universal, depending on local authorities to take over older houses from landlords and to accept a limited amount of home ownership. But the realization of the vision was deeply dependent on producing a sufficient quantity of houses. Without this, council housing was going to work in conditions of shortage and consequently invidious discrimination between different categories of housing need. It was the situation that, as Bevan himself remarked, was aggravated by the very success of the Welfare State, which enabled more people than ever before to afford a council tenancy. Macmillan's increased production in the 1950s could not satisfy demand.

As many who think that Labour's housing policy was supposed that it did more than a Conservative government of this time would have done. The interest to high quality housing and the little attention paid to landlord owned sector resulted in a critical situation among some social minorities who found that the stock of housing available to them was decreasing. The weight placed on local councils as both owners and managers had made them unchallengeable landlords for decades. It is a

situation that explains their unstable decisions and management styles. Indeed, it was hard for Labour politicians or in other terms anyone to have expected all this in the 1940s. The fact that the Government 's leaders single vision ruled out any new policy whatever the task was to be , for producing and managing affordable housing.

## II. The Labour Government and Schools:

The Labour Party had long stood for educational reform as a way to achieve equality and more democratic society. Labour's policy statement of the 1945 *'Let Us Face the Future'* contained only one inherited proposal for educational reform that the school leaving age should be raised to sixteen as soon as possible. Labour believed that its educational aims had been achieved with the passing of the Education Act in 1944. The Act's provision for free grammar school education for all children was accepted as meaning that working-class children now had the same chance of reaching the same educational level as middle-class children . Working-class Labour leaders such as Ernest Bevin, who had themselves been deprived of such a chance, saw grammar schools as the goal for the children of working-class families. It was a hard task for the new Government which found that educational improvements needed large funds, were restricted by the problems of the economy. Nor could the Labour Ministers of Education, Ellen Wilkinson (1945-47) and George Tomlinson (1947-51), were able to stand up to those who were anxious to preserve the grammar school tradition and feared radical change. The Government and the Labour Party based on a more pragmatic administration of existing legislation, they were no longer concerned about the development of new ideas and policies.

## **1. The 1944 Education Act:**

Labour's lack of ability to see what will probably happen in the future and its satisfaction of the 1944 Act have been blamed for the inequalities in the secondary school system of the 1950s and 1960s. The main feature of the Act was to replace both of the 'elementary and secondary schools by three progressive stages of primary, secondary and further education under the responsibility of local education authorities. primary and secondary education were to be provided in separate schools, in contrast to the past when many elementary schools had continued to provide schooling for children to fourteen. The Act also recognised the need of children less than five years for provision, through nursery schools. Local authorities were also obliged to provide free medical treatment and free milk and meals were to become a feature of British school until the 1970. Another central feature of the Act was the creation of a new partnership between central and local government. The Minister for Education had increased powers of local education authorities to secure the effectiveness of the national educational policy. In theory, the authorities were responsible for their own systems but in practice they would look to government for guidance and had to obtain its approval in order to implement their recommendations.

Therefore, the new Ministry was faced with considerable challenges. The war had left much of disorder in the school system, many school buildings needed to be rebuilt or refurbished and a severe shortage of teachers.

When Labour won the election it was expected that Chuter Ede who had been Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education during the war would be the new

Minister of Education. But Attlee told him that he had something more important in store; it was the Home Office. The other surprise that astonished many educationalists and politicians, Attlee appointed Ellen Wilkinson. She had been Herbert Morrison's Parliamentary Secretary during the wartime Coalition government and was known for having led the Jarrow March of 1936. She had a reputation as a 'fiery left-winger', from working class background who had to fight her own way through to university. Although she had not played a leading role in the Party's discussions on education between the wars, she was well known for her commitment to reform, and specifically asked Attlee to be considered for the post. During the last year of the war, she was chair of the Party's National Executive Committee and by 1945 was seen to be part of the mainstream of the Parliamentary Party despite her left-wing background.

D .R. Hardman, a Cambridge man, primarily interested in higher education, became her Parliamentary Secretary, and H. D. Hughes, later Principal of Ruskin College, her Parliamentary Private Secretary. Ellen Wilkinson was conscious of the need to be supported by key specialists, but her attempts to develop a Standing Committee to discuss policy matters never got off the ground. This was a serious failure because she lost touch with key figures in the Party who had played such an important role in developing a new consensus on educational reform during the war.

Her immediate tasks were to provide local authorities with the resources for building programme and to raise the teaching force by 50 per cent within two years. The building programme was partially successful because an increasing economic problem which meant that the main beneficiaries were those living in the new suburbs and housing estates, but for older school buildings had to make few additions or no improvements at all. The initial targets in the teacher training

programme were achieved, because a large number of the trainees had been involved in educational work during the war. So, the programme re-in forced divisions, the vast majority of emergency trained teachers found employment in the new secondary moderns or in the primary sector, not in the grammar schools. Several authorities took the view that primary was best served by women teachers who themselves had been educated in secondary modern schools.

## **2. What sort of Secondary schools?**

The Act had felt the door open to the future nature of secondary schooling. From the 1926 Hadow Report to the Spens Report of 1938 and the Norwood Committee of 1942, the dominant view was that there should be three types of secondary schooling linked to different and 'innate' abilities of children; in addition and above all, the grammar school tradition should be preserved. The Labour policy supported this approach, but there was a growing support led by Labour teachers for the idea of multilateral school. The Labour Party Conferences of 1942 and 1945 supported this idea, but there were more radical ideas emerged within the Party during the war. The multilateral idea had supported the view of innate differences in children which in practice meant three different schools under one roof. In contrast, the Party's Advisory Committee in 1943 which was influenced by the ideas of Labour teachers, began to talk about a common curriculum to age thirteen with the emphasis on equal opportunities for all children. From this point we can talk about the principle of the 'comprehensive school'. Although the Labour Party had supports a policy of

promoting the development of single secondary schools in 1945 there were no serious discussion to negotiate what this meant.

The leading advocates of the comprehensive idea were the National Association of Labour Teachers (NALT) which had the support of the MPs, W. G. Cove, Leah Manning and Margaret Herbison and educationalists such as G.C.T. Giles, ex-President of the National Union of Teachers (NUT) who in the New Scholl Tie called for a new secondary system based on a core curriculum to the age of thirteen with differentiation on specialisation but not ability. "NALT developed these ideas in 1946 defining the purpose of the comprehensive school as a liberal education, ministering to three main types of interest: cultural for the enrichment of the personal leisure, vocational in preparation for the successful gaining of a livelihood and civic to prepare for responsible participation in the duties of citizenship."<sup>16</sup>

NALT tried to persuade the Labour Party to decide a clear policy but the Party was recommending local authorities that they should not support the development of comprehensive schools.

From the discussion at the 1946 Annual Conference, it became clear that there was no clear consensus in the Party. There were three contradictory themes within the Party . the defenders of the tripartite system who aimed to defend the working class opportunities, were the dominant group among MPS including, Ellen Wilkinson, Herbert Morrison and Creech-Jones. The other group included, Chuter Ede who reflected the middle way that supported multilateral schools while accepting the basic

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<sup>16</sup> Smith Harold,ed, War and Social Change: British Society in the Second World War ( Manchester University Press,1986)21.

tripartite principle. The last group of Labour teachers and Socialists, from inside and outside the party, called for comprehensive schools.

The Labour government neither gave a chance to promote a new concept of secondary schooling, nor encouraged experimentation with multilateral schools. It widely resisted experimentation except in few isolated areas like Anglesey. Or were there was a strong local pressure, as in the West Riding, London and Middlesex.

The Ministry stood against comprehensive schools and multilateralism, and gave clear guidelines for a tripartite system of grammar, technical and modern secondary schools.

Even before Ellen Wilkinson took office in 1945, the consultation with local authorities had begun with the pamphlet of *The Nation's Schools* whose main concept was a secondary education of a tripartite system. It was very critical to the multilateral school and stated that the new secondary modern schools should be conceived as schools of working-class children whose future employment will not demand any measure of technical skill knowledge.

The pamphlet was attacked by educationalists and was later withdrawn, but its main principles were adopted and incorporated in Ministry circulars and produced for the next five years. For example, Circular 73 entitled 'Organisation of Secondary Education' published in December 1945, recommended that 70 to 75 per cent of places should go to 'modern', the remaining 25 to 30 per cent would go to grammar or technical schools. At the 1946 Labour Party Conference, an influential advocate of comprehensive schools and key figure in the NALT, W. G. Cove MP, succeeded to win a support for demanding the withdrawal of *The Nation's Schools*, despite protests from Ellen Wilkinson. It was one of the only five occasions on which the

National Executive Committee was defeated at Conference during the six years of the Labour Administration.

Teachers in grammar schools feared that the development of multilateral schools would undermine the quality of secondary schooling. The teaching unions had been supporters of the concept of a single secondary school before the war, but that of types of schooling under one roof rather than a comprehensive principle.

Ellen Wilkinson in here public comments criticised those who said that to have the three types of schooling was an incorrect social philosophy. Her starting point was providing opportunities for working-class children. On 6 February 1947, Ellen Wilkinson died. She had fought hard in the Cabinet for educational reform, and her greatest achievements was the raising of the school leaving age to fifteen years. Opponents in the Cabinet said that this should be delayed because it would lead to a direct loss to the national labour force. She argued 'No educational grounds could justify the delay'. With support from Ede and Morrison she secured Cabinet approval.

Her successor, George Tomlinson, was a different kind of Labour politician. A trade union organiser and local councillor, Tomlinson was viewed as solid and reliable. He had been a member of the Party's Education Advisory Committee. He was more negotiator than Wilkinson. Like Wilkinson, he defended the tripartite system because it offered opportunities for working-class children. Pressures grew within the Labour Party for the rapid development of a common secondary school. In 1949 the NEC intervened to resolve the comprehensive issue. NALT also played a leading role with Alice Bacon an NEC member and MP as the chief advocate for comprehensive schools. The result of their discussions appeared in a new pamphlet published in 1951, saying that the tripartite system did not promote

equality of opportunity. The comprehensive school was seen as the solution to abolish injustice, by giving children a general education and opportunities to develop their own specialist interests.

Tomlinson remained stable and did not show any reaction, arguing that there was no mass support for comprehensive schools. He criticised the plan put by Middlesex arguing that all children differentiated from each others in their abilities.

The Party never resolved these differences during the lifetime of the Government and it was important to note that during these years no more than half a dozen Labour MPs were in full support of comprehensive schools.

### **3. The Continuity of Inequality:**

Support for the 1944 Act had come from all sections of the Labour Movement because they saw it based on the principles of equality of opportunity. But inequality continued by the Government's failure to deal with the grants for grammar schools and public schools. Ellen Wilkinson did refuse sixty direct grant schools admission to new regulations , but it did not fulfil the hope of many in the Party that all places to these schools would be free. Furthermore, public schools remained untouched despite protestations from NALT and the Workers' Education Association (WEA) . Tomlinson told a Party sub-committee in 1948: 'I do not think the time has come when the 'nationalisation' of these schools would be worth the very considerable opposition which any such proposals would create'. Later in his Ministry, he went further by reassuring the Incorporated Association of Preparatory Schools that the Education Act recognized a place for independent schools.

In the 1950s advancements for working class children restricted by the vision of secondary modern schools as the schools for them.

However the Government failed to deal with the deliberately undecided issues during the war and by the 1944 Act. The public schools remained untouched. The wartime concern over voluntary religious based schools was not resolved. Therefore, the division within the education system remained.

These failures reflected some contradictions in the Party in government. Was it the role of the government to shift power and class relations mainly to challenge and remove inequalities which existed?

## **Conclusion:**

It is interesting to think of the Attlee years to be a variety of levels of high and down. After the declaration of victory, the peace was a fearsome, attractive appointment. And after all the promises of a Welfare State, British life remained to a large extent not clear. As many historians who used to forget the Crisis of 1947, at times, food restrictions were even tighter than during the war, like bread which was rationed for the first time.

And yet, Britain in the Attlee years changed more than under any other government. The welfare reforms, and to a lesser extent the great experiment of state control of industry, had a profound effect on the way the people saw themselves and their country. The Labour Party depended heavily on local authorities in order to secure a national distribution of different provision of Social policies. This policy reminds me of USA domestic policy which depends on States separate systems but they overlap in their functions. But unfortunately Labour had failed to maintain or at least to resemble USA government

The aim of state welfare was to remove divisions in society, but nothing is clearer in the UK today than the accommodation gap between the homeowner and the tenant in public housing. Ironically, the effect has been to make those divisions more visible. Class enmities flourished; social and economic inequalities remained clear.

The charge sometimes is placed generally on the Welfare State by providing security 'from the cradle to the grave' is precisely misplaced. The Welfare State failed because the level of security provided was far below that which the citizen could have expected at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Yet and at a more important level, the impact of the Welfare State may not have been that great. I have already pointed out that in the areas of pensions and housing the vast majority of people have not been able to get houses which were provided by the state. Even with the NHS, U.K. hospitals' service, is not much different from that of third world countries which have not enjoyed such an extensive Nationalised Health Service. With the rising debt and the subsequent unemployment, however, England failed miserably at dealing with the social welfare. As a result, the Conservative party adopted the concept of a nation that succeeded only in producing lazy citizens who expected the government to take care of all their needs.

The next 50 years will see the further withdrawal of the state from welfare services and it was replaced by private provision. Like Rome, it was not built in a day, and its fall will be a matter of decades not something simply accomplished to disappear; although the end of the welfare state unlimited provision, if prolonged, is also certain.

In 1950, after five exhausting years, it was inevitable that the great electoral of 1945 would be turned. But in the general election of that year the Labour vote was less than 2%, and it was the first past the post system that saw the Tories gain 88 seats.

Even Labour had gained its highest ever share of the vote: 48.8% in 1945, it was still not enough. The key turned out in the next election to be the Liberal vote, which

suddenly evaporated, leaving the party with just 2.5% support and six MPs. The Conservatives ended up with fewer votes more than Labour, but 26 more MPs and Winston Churchill was back in Downing Street.

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