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Introduction

The history of British social policy, exactly as vast majority of social policies of developed states, can be viewed as a transition from the state, where the one is always responsible for making his/her living, despite any kind of social risks he/she experienced, to the welfare state, where none permits social or natural contingencies to fully determine the lives of people, and a range of programs to protect children and adults from illness, disability, poverty and unemployment exist (Gutmann, 1988, p. 1).

In the history of British policy the concept of welfare state is for the first time mentioned with regard to a range of social reforms, which were being introduced by the Liberal government over the period from 1906 to 1911.

For the purposes of this assignment I will discuss the reasons, which determine the reforms under study to be considered to setting the foundations of the modern welfare state.

In order to answer this question I will firstly research into the scope of the notion “welfare state”, which can be characterized with a range of special peculiarities and then elaborate on finding the reflections of these peculiarities of the welfare state in terms of the reforms, which were introduced by the Liberal government.

The concept of welfare state: origin and scope

The welfare state is a concept of government, which is characterized by a state playing a key role in the protection and promotion of citizens' wellbeing.

Basic principles to be attributed to the notion of welfare state are equality of

opportunities, distribution of wealth, as well as introducing public responsibility for those, lacking means to provide themselves with basic prerequisites for well-being. According to Esping-Andersen (1985), the welfare state concept is to be viewed as a government's attempt to fundamentally marginalize the role of the market as the major determinant of people's chances in terms of their lives, and thus introduce a crucial alteration to the way human wellbeing is being produced (p. 245). In this light public welfare programs can be considered to give tangible expression to a controversial contention, presuming that the status of citizen should be of greater importance for determining the distribution of wellbeing than actual class position of a person (Marshall, 1950).

Marshall (1950) also considered democracy and capitalism to be necessary prerequisites for creating a welfare state. Modern concept of the welfare state is based on transferring funds, which are being accumulated due to taxation, from the state to entities, providing services (e. g., schools, hospitals, nursing homes) and directly to individuals in need of care in the form of so-called benefits.

According to Kitao (2010), redistribution taxation constitutes the most important economic foundation for practical implementation of the welfare concept (p. 3). The redistribution taxation model is usually based on progressive taxation, which provides higher taxes for people with higher income, as well as provides for considerable number of taxes, accompanying different activities of people, e. g., property deals.

The peculiarity of welfare state lies in the fact that it aims at addressing most vulnerable population groups, whose vulnerability may stem from a

broad range of factors, such as developmental issues, lack of personal capacities, inadequacy of personal networks and support, as well as disadvantaged social status (Mechanic&Tanner n. d.) Special attention is being paid to vulnerable communities, which can be described as groups of people, who tend to lack adequate social status in order to freely participate in market activities and gain relevant profit.

The welfare state (or Sozialstaat) is considered to originate in Germany of 19th century, namely from state support programs, having been launched under the rule of Bismarck. Vast majority of social support programs, introduced by Bismarck, were initially based on insurance scheme, while some of them were characterized by more paternalistic nature, and financed from federal and local budgets. Particularly Bismarck's model of welfare state is nowadays viewed as a basis for this concept's becoming wide-spread in Europe and overseas.

After having basically characterized the concept of welfare state, I would like to refer to the reasons, which called forth the fact that Liberal Government introduced a range of social security reforms in early 20th century.

Historical prerequisites for the reforms having been introduced

Poverty has always been a challenge for Great Britain, nevertheless, its real scope and influence on people's life had seldom become a central topic for scientific research. Thus in early 20th century a study of poverty in York, having been published by S. Rowntree (1901) has drawn significant attention to this issue as with the help of his research found out that almost 30 per cent of people in this city have at least once in their lives experienced

poverty at some time point.

The decision to pay more attention to wellbeing of citizens was also called forth by the findings, which were made during the Boer War in 1899, which showed that some of volunteers, who wanted to join the army, did not have well-developed capacities to do so.

Significant reason for Britain to reconsider its social policies was connected with the rapid growth and expansion of trade unions, which have gained enough power to get a chance to influence the way the government approached issues, influencing the lives of workers. Government's decision to follow the way trade unions were suggesting was partially motivated by the fact that unsatisfied workers could have joined Communists or even rebellion. Another factor to mention is the fact that in nineteenth a number of pressure groups, campaigning for the rights of vulnerable groups, such as children and the elderly, have significantly increased due to the fact that the Poor Law, promulgated in early 19th century remained the only public provision for those in need. Despite the fact that women did not have the right to participate in elections, the Liberals also had to take into account the objectives of women's campaigns as women were considered to exert significant influence on male voters, who would likely benefit from the introduction of a viable welfare system (Thane 2011, p. 3)

Nevertheless, in this regard the most considerable threat was associated with the growth of the Labour Party, which viewed social security as a cornerstone of its program and, therefore, was capable of attracting many voters' votes.

Demonstrating to the working class the fact that the Liberal Party could

support their interests became of great importance of Liberals with regard to maintaining the future of their party. Nonetheless, the reforms were promoted by the fact that Liberal and Labour parties' representatives made a secret pact before the 1906 elections, aimed at not opposing each other at 1906 election (Thane 2011, p. 2)

Extra factors can be associated with Lloyd George considering “ wage war” a topical priority for policymaking, as well as rapid development of the welfare state in Germany.

How the scope of reform was determined?

The scope of the reform, conducted by Liberals, was to great extent determined with the help of the study of poverty by S. Rowntree (1901). The study showed that people tend to experience poverty under three major conditions. The first one to be considered is person's being a young child, while the second is him/her being old. Last, but also a very important condition in terms of technologically dangerous work, was workers' being sick or unemployed. Thus, reforms, which were launched in 1906, were aimed at providing extra social support for children, workers and the elderly.

What were the reforms?

The first reform, introduced by the Government in 1906, was aimed at providing children in schools with free school meals. The Children and Young Persons Act (1908), now viewed as an integral part of Children's Charter, was introduced in order to provide complex regulation for a range of juvenile issues.

The first most important reform was setting up special juvenile courts, which

could consider cases with regard to peculiarities of offender's personality as opposed to usual courts, which did not make the distinction between young offenders and adults. Furthermore, the Act provided for sending children to special youth detention centers (borstals) instead of prisons.

The peculiarity of borstals lies in the fact that borstals were designed with more educational, rather than punitive aim, and also provided the inmates with minimum of social support and care. The borstal system was further adopted in almost all Commonwealth countries in order to avoid young delinquents' contacts with elder prisoners in terms of usual detention system and promote their socialization.

The Children and Young Persons Act (2008) also introduced more severe punishments for cruel behavior with children and neglecting them. The Act provided for penalizing selling alcohol and cigarettes to children. Moreover, the Act introduced the system of foster parents' registration, mainly aiming at preventing infanticide. Local authorities were granted extra powers to support children, lacking parental support, and living in the streets, so that they can be kept out of workhouses.

Particularly this innovation can be viewed as the one of equal importance with keeping children away from prisons. Workhouses of that time represented quite a miserable alternative for those, unable to support themselves, as they were characterized by lack of sanitary conditions, and the obligation to participate in different kinds of hard work. Neither medical care, nor education was available for children, living in workhouses.

The need to keep children away from both prisons and working houses had long-term consequences for the development of social support of young

people in the UK urban areas as many local authorities recognized the need to establish orphanages and launch basic social services for children.

Another set of reforms was introduced in order to meet the needs of the elderly. In 1908 Old Age Pensions were introduced. In order to qualify for a pension a person must have been over 70, earn less than 30 pounds per week and have been living in Britain for at least 20 years.

The importance of the pensions-related provisions was partially caused by the fact that the elderly tended to avoid benefiting from Poor Law due to related stigma (Thane 2011, p. 4) Pension has also become a crucial source of support for women, which had far fewer opportunities than men to continue working in older age due to the lack of relevant qualifications. Women tended to outlive men, who usually died quite early because of hard work-related consequences and, therefore, required extra support from the state. T

he pension scheme was actually very limited due to the age of 70 being a required qualification and the fact that people could be refused from the right to pension on the basis of their social behavior (e. g., criminal record or drunkenness).

According to Thane (2000), the pension was the one for very old, very poor and respected people (290). Assessment of pension-related claims was conducted by volunteers, appointed by local councils, usually the ones, being involved in trade unions' activities, the work of working class mutual aid societies or church charity.

Major initiative to support the workers in need was the introduction of so-called labour exchanges in 1909, aimed at helping the unemployed to find

work, and passing the 1911 National Insurance Act. Part I (“Health”) of the Act provided for launching a National Insurance Scheme, which introduced the system of medical benefits. The funding of the system was distributed between the employee himself, the employer and general taxation scheme, thus, allowing workers to get the sick leave and be paid over the period of being absent at work. The scheme provided for free tuberculosis treatment. Maternity benefits were also provided.

Part II of the Act (‘Unemployment’) provided for the time-limited benefit in case of worker’s being unemployed. The funding principle of the schema was the same one as for health-related issues. The contributions are made compulsory, so that insurance become more side-spread.

Funding of the initiatives

The Liberal welfare reforms were of great controversy as their introduction required considerable financial support from the state. In the 1909 Budget the basic rate of tax on earned income was significantly raised, and a new tax on earnings over 5000 pounds was introduced. Furthermore, a special tax on deals with land was introduced. In 1909 the tax for parents of children was reduced to different amounts, dependently on the number of children in the family. The funding of National health Insurance schemes was conducted with the help of contributions of employers, employees and from taxes. The funding of the reforms was one of most debatable issues due to the fact that some of the taxes, introduced by the Government, were imposing monetary challenges on influential landowners including the House of Lords members.

Conclusion

The paper under study was initially aimed at analyzing the reforms, introduced by the Liberals, conducted in early 20 century in the light of them as setting the foundation for a modern welfare state. The reforms created the basis for the welfare state as they initially aimed at protecting most vulnerable-to-poverty and disadvantaged population groups, such as children, the elderly and workers, who were either temporarily sick or unemployed with the help of redistribution of income scheme. Particularly this main principle found its reflection firstly in the Liberal reforms and thereafter in the modern concept of worldwide state.

Another reason to be formulated lies in the fact that the reforms encompassed significant number of social risks, such as poverty, unemployment, sickness, old age, and children's living at the street. Particularly these risks still tend to be considered in terms of modern social security systems, based on the concept of welfare state.

Moreover, the welfare state concept is not only about helping people in at-risk situations, but solving social problems. The reforms also provided for solving important social problems, such as homelessness, youth crime, domestic violence, as well as young alcohol and nicotine addictions.

Thirdly, progressive tax on income is to be viewed as common trait of welfare state.

Last, but not least to be mentioned is the fact that in modern state the concept of welfare state is being practically implemented not only by authorized governmental bodies, but by a range of other public and private actors, such as local authorities and non-governmental organizations. The

peculiarity of the Liberal reforms also lied in the fact that both local authorities and private actors (such as trade union and church representatives) were involved in them being implemented.

Thus the comparative study of Liberal reforms of early 20th century and the features of the modern concept of welfare state shows that these reforms can be viewed as setting the basis for the development of welfare state due to introducing state support to the most vulnerable social groups, basing its activities on redistribution of income.

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