

How successfully did
the liberal
government attack
poverty essay sample



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The Liberal Party came into power in the 1906 general election. They had been convinced by the writing of Charles Booth and Seebohm Rowntree that the poor were rarely to blame for their own poverty and they were shocked that they had no way of getting out of this poverty. However, the Liberal Party also realised something had to be done about the poor as many were sickly, and if there was a war there wouldn't be enough healthy men to fight.

They started by providing free meals at school for poor children. Next they provided compulsory medical checks for pupils, where any treatment thought necessary was recommended. This treatment, however, wasn't free until 1912. In 1908 The Children's Act was passed. This made children 'protected persons' so that if their parents mistreated them they could be prosecuted. Also, all children's homes were registered and inspected.

Children who had broken the law under the age of 14 were no longer sent to adult prisons and Juvenile courts were set up. Children under 14 were not allowed into pubs, and children under 16 were unable to buy cigarettes. In 1912 school clinics were set up which provided free medical treatment for children.

In 1909 the Labour Exchanges Act was set up, which enabled the unemployed to go to a labour exchange to find work, rather than having to look from workplace to workplace. However, what had the greatest impact was the laws the Liberal Party passed to help prevent poverty caused by sickness and unemployment. The National Insurance Act, passed in 1911, enabled workers to insure themselves in case they fell sick so could not work. In 1912, The National Insurance Act Part II was passed. This allowed workers to insure themselves against periods when they could be out of

work. In 1908 the government set up the Pension Act in which the government gave weekly pensions to the elderly.

The Liberal Party's reforms didn't help all old people. The pensions were only for those aged over 70, were very small and had conditions. National insurance only covered those who were on low incomes and made contributions, and national insurance against unemployment only covered trades where seasonal unemployment was common. However, I think that even if the Liberal reforms towards poverty only made a small difference, they did make a difference, and were a great step in the right direction.