

The development of the welfare state sociology essay



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The aim of this essay is to look at the development of the welfare state following the 1942 report by Beveridge and how successful this has been in eradicating poverty. This essay will outline the context the report by Beveridge was written in, what the report was trying to solve and how far it went in solving the problem of poverty. It will also look at the three assumptions made by Beveridge and what these assumptions achieved alongside how far these worked to eliminate poverty and inequality. Finally it will briefly look at poverty in today's society to see how far things have changed. The first part of this essay will look at Beveridge's report, the context it was written in and what it was trying to achieve. Beveridge's report was published in the aftermath of the Second World War. It was well received by the public who as a result of the war had been brought together and were now looking to the future. Previous to the Beveridge report, in the 1920's -1930's pre-war Britain was riddled with unemployment and poverty. During this time there was a level of support but it was inconsistent, time restricted and confusing, causing many people to fall through the net and live in absolute poverty. When the report was published it gave people hope of change and a more optimistic future. The aim of the report was for Beveridge to look at the social insurance scheme, but the report ended up shaping the welfare system. Beveridge identified the high levels of poverty in Britain and came up with a plan to overcome it. The report found five 'giant evils' in society which were 'want', 'ignorance', 'squalor', 'idleness' and 'disease.' The idea was to introduce a new plan for social security which would include social insurance, national assistance and voluntary assistance. This plan would work alongside three assumptions which were family

allowance, National Health Service and full employment. Beveridge felt if <https://assignbuster.com/the-development-of-the-welfare-state-sociology-essay/>

both of these things worked alongside each other poverty would be irradiated.

The second section of this essay will look at Beveridges plan for social security. A new plan was introduced by Beveridge for social security that he felt would go some way to tackle poverty. This plan consisted of Social insurance, National assistance and Voluntary insurance. Social insurance was paid by everybody that was working, it was a flat rate and if you had to stop working you received a flat rate back for that period. National assistance was created as a safety net for those who haven't paid into the social security scheme. It was income assessed so would only be received by those who were really in need. Voluntary insurance was a voluntary contribution you could make which meant that as an individual you could receive a better lifestyle if you choose to pay into it. It may be argued that this allowed for inequality because in effect only those who earned enough could pay into this scheme, whereas those who worked but couldn't afford to wouldn't have the option.

Beveridge felt that to tackle poverty the social security plan needed to be used alongside the three assumptions which were Family allowance, National Health Service and full employment. Family allowance was created at a time when there was a concern about birth rates falling. Many people couldn't afford to have and support children. This was introduced to stop child poverty and also with the knowledge that children were a major expense too many families so it would seem impossible to stop poverty whilst people still had children to support. It may be said that by having family allowance it encouraged people to have children to gain more money. The National

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Health Service was created to combat the 'giant evil' of 'disease'. Prior to the National Health Service poor people were terrified to become ill, because many couldn't afford to pay for any treatment. Ensuring that people had access to health care would also ensure that more people were treated and therefore fit to work. The National Health Service created a level of equality, everybody was entitled to the same care regardless of contribution. Full employment was introduced to combat the giant evil of 'idleness'. The view was that if the state could help with employment, more people would be able to work so they would be less likely to be in poverty, meaning that less people needed money from the state.

The third part of the essay will consider if poverty and inequality was irradiated. Following the implementation of the recommendations by Beveridge it seemed like there would be no more poverty. During the 1950s and 1960s research started to show poverty was still evident in society and in some areas was on the increase. These discoveries lead to a redefinition and rediscovery of poverty. Alcock, pg 7, 2003 highlights this when he states "Townsend and Abel-smith conducted research which showed that, despite the welfare reforms to combat want, many people were still living in poverty in Britain in the 1950s and 1960s (Abel-Smith and Townsend, 1965; Townsend, 1979)." When poverty was redefined it became evident that many people were still living below the poverty line, particularly single parent families, unemployed people and pensioners. During this time housing needs weren't met meaning many people continued to fall through the system and couldn't support themselves. Inequality was still evident despite Beveridges recommendations. Beveridges report did not stop all

inequality. There was a difference between the treatment of men and women. Women were expected to take on the caring role and be supported by their husbands. This may have left women financially dependent on their husbands.

The final part of this essay will consider poverty in modern society. Poverty is still evident in today's society, which may indicate that Beveridges recommendations didn't go as far as expected long term to reduce poverty. Beveridges report lead to the implementation of family allowance in order to support children and stop the existing child poverty. It now appears that in modern society, with a similar benefit still in place, child poverty could be on the increase. This is reflected by Child poverty action group, 2010, page 19 which states " The Institute for Fiscal Studies predicts that absolute poverty is already rising and relative poverty will soon rise as well. We can expect the wellbeing of children to fall." This indicates that child poverty is not irradiated.

In conclusion it appears that although Beveridges report went some way to limiting poverty, it has never been erased. Some things may have changed for the better following Beveridges report; a better welfare state was introduced alongside a national health service to care for people who previously couldn't afford it. However, the poverty and inequality identified by Beveridge is still evident in today's society. People still suffer from inadequate housing or homelessness, lack of money, illness and unemployment similar to the five giant evils identified by Beveridge.