

The government assignment



The government did little to improve the lives of the people throughout the 1930s. Discuss (40) Four months after the Labor party won the general election in 1929, the Wall Street crash spurred Ramsey MacDonald- as the leader of Labor, to seize this as an opportunity to make changes in Britain. The question as to whether these changes were comprehensive or brought about and improvement to the lives of people in Britain as a whole will be discussed in the following essay.

Despite seeing an opportunity to initiate change for the better, Labor found balancing the annual budget difficult, the problem with increasing unemployment meant more had to be paid out in benefits as old industrial heartlands continued to decline after the war due to reduced demand. The government were said to have significantly worsened the economy by introducing the Import Duties Act (1932) which discouraged foreign trade and worsened Britain's place within the global market. Labor was said on the 19th August to have argued for 12 hours about government cuts to try and reduce the deficit.

This showed an unstable government in which the public, especially the working class could not put faith in, as there was not real guarantee that unemployment would be reduced during the depression, suggesting life did not improve significantly for many classes, particularly the lower class. This dissatisfaction with the government was represented in the 'Sorrow March' of 1936 where 300 miles were traveled by 207 marchers to highlight the poverty due to unemployment they faced to the government.

The disappointment with the government from Labor voters worsened when a £5 million cuts were agreed by Henderson and many supporters felt betrayal. So in 1931 unemployment benefits were cut by 10%. Nevertheless the cuts were administered by Public Assistance Councils (PACE) which understood the situation of the individual families within their council, so the government reached the public on a more personal level. The cuts were also restored in 1934 showing improvement in Laborer's empathy towards the unemployed.

However it is said that many unemployed people did not get over the humiliating experience of the means test introduced in 1931, which assessed a benefits seeker's belongings to see how much they were entitled to claim, despite being better than the previous National Insurance scheme. Arguably, the government set up the unemployment Assistance board in 1936 which aided workers who had run out of benefit, which improved the life of workers promoting employability, however the board was not comprehensive so could not be said to improve the lives of all people.

Although there was support for many employed and unemployed by the government, the employed could enjoy very little leisure time, which made working less appealing. The government introduced the 'Holiday with pay act' in 1938 to appease this, and due to a number of factors including employment becoming more appealing unemployment dropped from 17% in 1932 to below 10% in 1938.

This arguably encouraged holiday camps such as Button's to flourish which meant people started to spend money that was not just on bare necessities

but luxuries throughout the asses, this gave people the opportunity to relax and escape the harsh realities of life, which in its own suggests the government were trying to appease the public with leisure as they could not fix unemployment or housing issues completely.

Many people tried to gain money by gambling this shows that besides being a fun leisure activity the government were not doing enough to help with family economic situations as they had to go searching for money opportunities where possible. The government however did go a far way to investing in housing because of the 600, 000 slum houses were barely habitable with an 800, 000 shortage of homes. By introducing the Special Areas Act in 1934 E million was invested in run down industrial areas such as Density and South Wales. This gives the opportunity to Penn limited government budget on improving life for people in the worst areas.

However this act was not comprehensive for all regions so cannot be an improvement for the country on a whole. In Birmingham council housing estates just outside of the city were available to upper working class which was an improvement from slums, despite not having the same community spirit. Due to the estates being out of the city, transport links were improved to be able to get around. This is coupled with the sales of private cars like Ford, which increased its sales and could therefore drop rises so the lower classes could afford them, which technically stemmed from government input.

The government terminating the gold standard in 1931 was against the government's original will to save the pound, resulted in actually helping to

save Britain's economy. This allowed for internal and external trade to increase, but coupled with cuts of interest rates from 6% to 2% meaning businesses could take out loans. This evidently spurred on many opportunities for entrepreneurs who originally would have been stuck in an unskilled job to support a family. Therefore wowing government intervention allowed aspects of opportunity to flourish for some, despite not being comprehensive.

Although money was being spent on luxuries and leisure by all classes, healthcare still remained a neglected issue amongst Britain. A report from save the children suggested that there was more malnutrition in 1932 than years before due to government spending cuts, this is vital as the next generation would be weak to fight in wars if nothing was done. The reaction of the government introducing school milk in 1934 would improve bone strength and went far way to improving the health of children.

It can be argued that it wasn't the government input that advanced healthcare throughout the asses, but scientists who invented blood transfusion (1930), yellow fever (1935) and Typhus vaccine (1937). It Nas these inventions that reduced mortality rates, not school milk so the government may not have improved the lives of people enough. The working class could benefit from the National health insurance scheme which covered 19 million workers by 1936, and in order to try and improve the lives of a wider section of society some free medical services were available to the sick and unemployed.

These services combined with better nutrition helped to keep people in Jobs and fit to fight in wars. However the improvement in health tended to correlate to the class system, the more affluent you were the better your health was. For men between 20 and 64 in higher occupational classes the death rate was 10% below the national average; but for unskilled laborers the death rate was 11% above. This is substantiated by the fact ridden slums with little access to healthcare showing that a more comprehensive system needed to be enforced to help the health of Britain as a whole.

Throughout he asses many acts were introduced with the best intentions to improve the lives of the people. However it is clear that failed to improve life due to the fact that the acts Nerve not comprehensive to all regions and classes, which is evidenced in reports by Renters and John Boyd in 1936. However ironically it was the reduction of interest rates in order to reduce national debt and abolishing Gold standard that actually helped the economy. The acts intended to help were ineffective, so cannot be said that they intentionally improved the lives of the people throughout the asses.