

Roles and purpose of british welfare state



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This assignment is going to discuss the roles and purpose of British welfare state. This assignment will look at what welfare state is and the problems which society faced in the past century about the poor people. Also, the first administrative unit of Britain alongside with how poor law passed and the beverage report.

This assignment is based on roles and purpose of welfare state. The United Kingdom welfare state was established in 1942 by William Beveridge due to the Second World War which caused social problems to the British citizens. The Government stepped forward as to provide for its people by introducing Welfare State as a way of controlling these problems. Welfare state is a response to social problems whereby government undertakes the responsible to safeguard the health and well-being of its people, particularly those in financial or social need, by means of grants, pensions, and other benefits(Lutz Leistering and Robert Walker 1998). It is based on the principals of equal opportunity, equitable distribution of wealth and public responsibilities of people that lack provision for a good life.

The origin of the welfare state was from the 16th century. Britain expected the worst when the Second World War broke up in 1939. Due to war many people were affected by poverty and many lost their jobs which resulted in high unemployment. The majority of the people were living in overcrowded poor housing facilities such as (slums) because council houses were not enough. Diseases were spreading because of lack of clean water, and sick people could not have money to seek treatment and this resulted in many people dying. Due to these events the government policy brought a change towards the care that was provided for the people. Welfare legislation was

developed to make sure that everyone had access to quality of life due to the world war.

Elizabeth government realised that they would create some system to support people. Parish was the first basic administrative unit in Britain to take responsibility for the people who were poor and also power to force people to pay a local tax to help the poor. People who could not work such as old people and disabled were provided with accommodation in parish houses and also given money called the ' outdoor relief'. However, this caused an impact on the increase of the cost of poor relief. The outdoor relief pay which was given to the poor over in hard times and was regarded as encouraging workers to remain inactive undermining the 19th century principles of thrift and hard work (Frohman, 2008). It was also argued that that the poor law encouraged the growth of poverty.

In 1834 a new Poor Law was introduced. People assumed that it would reduce the cost of looking after the poor and they welcomed it. People thought that beggars were going to be taken off the streets and for those people who were poor were going to be encouraged to work hard to support themselves. The new poor law help people to be independent; they should help themselves by making ends meet. The new Poor Law ensured that the poor were housed in workhouses were the ones getting assistant in terms of clothes and food . Children who entered the workhouse would receive some schooling. In return for this care, all workhouse paupers would have to work for several hours each day. The new poor law also help children who entered the work house to be educated it also ensure that the less privilege to get house in return.

In reaction, the poor law of 1834 introduced a poor relief which imposed the principle of 'less eligibility'. This new system act took a much harsher line towards help for the poor people whereby strict rules and regulations were put in place for people to follow (Harris, 2004). Families were separated and were not allowed to see each other. The Law stated that no able-bodied person was to receive money or other help from the Poor Law authorities except in a workhouse and the unemployed benefits was to be provided as a last resort. Conditions in the workhouse were intentionally made harsh, in the hope that the poor would seek work elsewhere.

In 20th century the poor law was gradually replaced by a new welfare state. During 1906 a liberal government was elected and introduce some reforms. In 1908 an old age pension came to existence which allow pension to be given to people over 70's, from 1925 pension were paid to men that is over 65 and to women over 60.

The national insurance act was passed in 1911 and all employees were made to contribute from their wage and the aim was to build and also for every worker who felt sick was entitled to free treatment were given to every worker that feel sick. The contributions were to help the workers in future in situations when they become ill or out of work.

In 1920 the scheme was extended to most people but not all work house became unnecessary and then poor law was abolished. p43 Social Policy & Welfare (2000) published by Stanely Thornes Ltd. United kingdom

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In 1941 an enquiry was established to plan how best to tidy up state welfare. Beveridge seized the opportunity, rewrote the script, and then redesigned the contours of British welfare. By accident the report of the publication of his report was delayed. When it was produced in November 1942 it followed hard on the heels of the Allies first major victory of World War Two. Although largely a creation of ideas including Beveridge's which had been around for some time, it was the blueprint for successful to tackle social problems such as the five giants.

In 1942 William beverage prepared a report called the Beveridge report regarding the welfare of the individuals on how the government could help people in poverty and also to reduce inequality. This report focused on how Britain could be rebuilt after the war and also how the government should find ways of fighting the five ' Giant Evils' of ' Want, Disease, Ignorance, Squalor and Idleness. The government was committed to provide care for the people of Britain to ensure that everyone had quality of life. The 1942 beveridge report started in the introduction of welfare state, and involved the main changes and these included the national health service act of 1945 which make benefit available to children and families and the National insurance act this act provides unemployment and sickness some benefits and housing The welfare state was not a response to poverty but was produced to encourage the provision of services for the public. Implementing Beveridge was immediately seen as part of winning the peace and also served as the blue print for the British welfare state.

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In 1945 labour was elected and promised to introduce a welfare state. The welfare state involved introducing new services these included family allowances, the (Laybourn, 1995) this is where a major criticism lies within debates regarding the welfare state within current governments. The government introduced the Education Act 1944 which tackled lack of schooling. The 1946 National Health Act was concerned with improving the quality of health among the population. The 1946 National Insurance Act was created to cover all personal risks such as unemployment and illness. 1948 labour government extended the social security and a program of free medical care, Housing, Education and the Welfare of the Children. The National Assistance Act 1948 means- tested for people in lower income below a standard set by government and for unemployed people. In the 1950's the provision of welfare state services became problematic, government interventions at the time didn't help and caused further problems so the Conservative government took over and cut the help given to the poor and sick. This then made the distribution of income more imbalanced and although attempted to make the poor more hardworking and self sufficient it didn't work.

The rolling back the state was revolved around the need to cut public spending as a way of reducing impact on public affair. Thatcher (1979-97) promised to reduce taxes and to lower the level of public spending and less state intervention. Thatcher opposed a welfare system and the welfare state began to break down resulted in retreat for housing and pension. The Conservative changed the balance of welfare spending towards health and social security at the expense of education and housing. Thatcher revolution

was less radical welfare spending remained stationary between the late 1970's. Thatcher stated that welfare spending was weighing down the international competitiveness and also creating a 'dependency culture' which also was supported by the government and acted to cut back the welfare state (Clasen, 2003). They were some cut back in Housing such as in building, maintenance and subsidization as a way of driving up local authority rent levels (Maclennan and Gibb, 1990). In Social Security welfare bills were introduced by cutting entitlements such as Unemployment Benefit and people were pushed on to means-tested support (Clasen, 2003). Under Child Support Scheme absent parents were required to contribute towards the child maintenance as a way of serving some of the welfare state money.

When new labour came into office in 1997 welfare remained in the top priority. Regardless of Conservative critics of the welfare, new labour argued that new welfare policies were needed to improve poverty, inequality, health and education.

In conclusion the welfare state was developed due to the number of factors contributed by world war such as unemployment, sickness and poverty.