

### Topic 3

## THE HISTORY OF AND DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL WELFARE IN THE UK:

The history of social welfare in the UK had gone through various phases

### Before the Old Poor Law:

- ✓ During the early 1500s, the English government made little effort to address the needs of the poor.
- ✓ Rather, the poor were taken care of by Christians who were undertaking the seven-corporal works of mercy.
- ✓ These were deeds aimed to remove the worries and distress of those in need in accordance with their religious teachings.
  - feed the hungry
  - give drink to the thirsty
  - welcome the stranger
  - clothe the naked
  - visit the sick
  - visit the prisoner
  - bury the dead
- ✓ The main formal organizations were the Church and the monasteries (a place reserved for prayer which may be a chapel, church or temple, or reserved for monks or nuns). The operation of charity made it possible for some poor people to survive if they left the land and came to the cities.
- ✓ However, when the Reformation<sup>1</sup> happened, many people stopped following this Christian practice and the poor began to suffer greatly.
- ✓ The poverty and the begging were the ultimate problems followed by the Reformation. In 1531 Henry VI issued license for begging in restricted areas; punishment was given to those who violated the law.
- ✓ Poverty was one of the major problems Elizabeth faced during her rule. During this period the number of unemployed people grew considerably for a

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<sup>1</sup> The Reformation was a movement in Western Europe that aimed at reforming the doctrines and practices of the Roman Catholic Church

The Monasteries had been dissolved by King Henry VIII in the years following 1536, this source of aid was no longer available to the poor. This in turn led to an increase in the number of beggars and those in need.

range of reasons. However, many people believed that the unemployed were just too lazy to find work. There was also only a very limited system of welfare to help those in need.

- ✓ The increase in unemployment was accompanied by an increase in the number of beggars wandering the countryside and towns. The issue of begging annoyed the ruling class (as it led to different problems like widespread diseases, crime, idleness, etc)

## Elizabethan **Poor Laws**<sup>2</sup> 1601: (ENGLISH POOR LAWS/ OLD POOR LAWS)

- ✓ It was at this point, during the rule of Elizabeth I, that legislation was finally passed to address the needs of the poor in England.
- ✓ In 1552, the legislature ordered each **parish**<sup>3</sup> to begin an official record of the poor in its area. At that time, there were about 15,000 parishes in England and Wales.
- ✓ In 1572, Queen Elizabeth introduced general tax for the protection of the poor and appointed overseers of the poor.
- ✓ In 1601, England was experiencing a severe **economic depression**<sup>4</sup>, with large scale unemployment and widespread food shortage.
- ✓ Queen Elizabeth announced a set of laws designed to maintain order and contribute to the general good of the kingdom: the English Poor Laws. This became known as the Elizabethan Poor Law and remained in effect for over 200 years with only minor changes.
- ✓ Elizabethan Poor Law introduced in 1601 was a landmark in the history of organized social welfare. Although the major aim of these poor laws was not to reduce the poverty rather address the issue of begging which was seem to annoy the ruling class.
- ✓ According to the law, the poor were divided into three categories:
  1. **The Able- Bodied** (those who could work but would not) unworthy poor/ unemployed
- ✓ those who turned to a life of crime or became beggars ( known as idle beggars)
- ✓ These were the idle poor.
- ✓ This group was given low grade employment.
- ✓ Citizens were prohibited from giving them financial help.
- ✓ Forced to work in the house of corrections or in the work house and they were kept to continual labour.
- ✓ Anyone who refused to work was placed in jail /house of correction

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<sup>2</sup> Term used for collection of laws, principles, policies for providing help to the poor.

<sup>3</sup> A parish; a village or part of a town which has its own church and priest. a small administrative district, just like a system of local government.

<sup>4</sup> An economic (condition) downturn is longer and it is more severe that lasts several years.

2. **Impotent poor** (those who would work but could not) worthy poor/deserving

- ✓ They were the aged, chronically ill, physically or mentally handicapped
- ✓ They were usually placed together in an alms house,
- ✓ Those who were in need of medical help, were cared for in hospitals
- ✓ The children (mainly orphans) who were too young to work were to be looked after in orphanages or poor houses.
- ✓ If the impotent poor were having a place to live then they were granted outdoor relief usually in the form of food, clothing, fuel etc.

3. **The dependent child:**

- ✓ Orphans, the **deserted**,<sup>5</sup> children from very poor families.
- ✓ No social support networks (family, relatives, community)
- ✓ Orphans and children of the poor were to be given a trade **apprenticeship**<sup>6</sup> so that they would have a means of earning when they grew up.
- ✓ Boys were taught the trade of their masters and had to serve till their 24th birthday.
- ✓ Girls were brought up as domestic servants and were required to remain until they were 21 or married.

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<sup>5</sup> When parents leave a child and do not fulfill their legal and moral responsibility to provide for the care, protection, or support to the child.

<sup>6</sup> A system in which someone learns an art, trade, or job under another skilled person.

## **Types of Relief:**

There were two main modes or system of providing help to the poor:

### **1. Outdoor relief:**

- ✓ The system of providing help/ benefits to the poor out of the government institutions (workhouse/ almshouse/ orphanages)
- ✓ That were designed to support people in their homes or community.
- ✓ The poor who still resided in their own homes, would be left in their own homes.
- ✓ They would be given either financial support (a 'dole' of money on which to live) or be given non-monetary ( in kind) relief in the form of clothing, fuel and food.

### **2. Indoor relief:**

- ✓ The assistance to those living in almshouses and poorhouses, if they didn't have their own homes.
- ✓ This system required the deserving persons to reside in government institutions in order to get the benefits.
- ✓ the poor would be taken into the local almshouse, the ill would be admitted to the hospital, orphans were taken into the orphanage, the idle poor would be taken into the poor-house or workhouse where they would be set to work.

### **The Administration of the Poor Laws:**

The Poor Law of 1601 in England assigned responsibility '*Overseers of the poor*' for the implementation of the poor laws.

**Who were the Overseers of the Poor?** Also known as *The Collector of the Poor* and sometimes the *Distributor*.

A person who is appointed or elected to take care of the poor of his area. Each parish appointed two 'Overseers'.

The responsibilities of the Overseers of the Poor were;

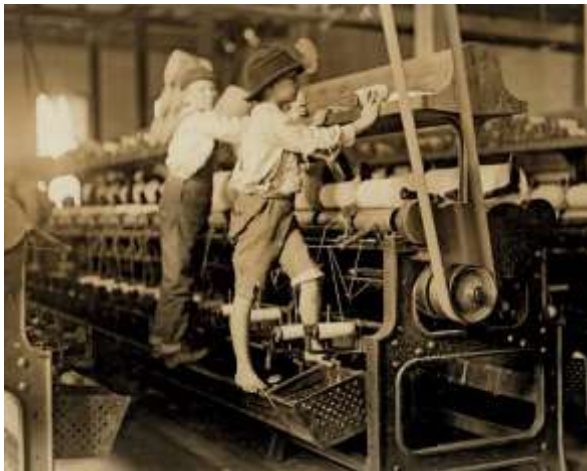
- ✓ Receive application of the poor person for relief
  - ✓ To investigate his/her condition
  - ✓ To decide whether (s)he was eligible for relief
  - ✓ To decide whether the applicant and his family should be placed in 'work house' or 'alms house', or should they receive 'outdoor relief'
  - ✓ Collect poor tax from the community
  - ✓ The almshouses and workhouses were managed by Overseers of the Poor.
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## **PARTIAL RELIEF SYSTEM 1795**

- ✓ It was set up in the village of Speenhamland (in Berkshire County, England), so it can also be termed as Speenhamland System.
  - ✓ The method of giving relief to the poor introduced in 1795 by local magistrates.
  - ✓ They felt that 'the present state of the poor laws require further assistance than has generally been given them'.
  - ✓ There was possibility of food shortage in the UK because of ; 1.short supply of wheat due to a series of bad harvests and the price of bread had risen sharply 2. growing population 3. The wheat could not be imported from Europe due to the French Wars.
  - ✓ So, they introduced a method of helping the poor, based on the price of bread and the number of children a man had/ the size of the family.
  - ✓ Under this system, a household head (whether employed or unemployed) was given a minimum weekly income, determined by the price of bread and by the size of his or her family.
  - ✓ Such scales typically were used only during years of high food prices, such as 1795-96 and 1800-01, and removed when prices declined.
  - ✓ However, the system faced the criticism because it seemed to fail to benefit the deserving poor and at the same time making some poor as permanent beggars / dependents.
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## CHILD LABOUR AND FACTORY LEGISLATION:

- ✓ The workers in the factories were mainly below the age of ten. Many of them were orphans, sent into factory employment by the Poor Law authorities, very far from their home parishes.
- ✓ In 1800 some 20,000 children (orphans/ deserted) were employed in cotton mills as cheap labourers. In the next decade as many as a fifth of workers in the cotton industry were children under the age of 13.
- ✓ In 1833 the Government passed a Factory Act to improve conditions for children working in factories.
- ✓ Young children were working very long hours in workplaces where conditions were often terrible.
- ✓ The basic act was as follows:
  - a. no child workers under nine years of age
  - b. children of 9-13 years to work no more than nine hours a day
  - c. children of 13-18 years to work no more than 12 hours a day
  - d. children are not to work at night
  - e. two hours schooling each day for children
  - f. four Factory inspectors to be placed to make sure the laws are in action.





## THE POOR LAW **AMENDMENT** <sup>7</sup>ACT 1834:( NEW POOR LAW)

- ✓ In 1832, the government appointed a **royal commission**<sup>8</sup> to investigate the workings of the Poor Laws and make recommendations for improvement.
  - ✓ The commission's report and recommendations were published in 1834 and soon after that the Poor Law Amendment Act was passed by the Parliament.
  - ✓ Outdoor relief - the financial support formerly given to the able-bodied - was no longer to be available to them so as to compel them to work. Outdoor relief was widely available to the sick and elderly.
  - ✓ Now if people wanted help, they had to go into a workhouse to get it. People had to wear a type of uniform, follow strict rules and were on a bad diet of bread and watery soup. Conditions were made so terrible that only those people who desperately needed help would go there.
  - ✓ The poor were given clothes and food in the workhouse in exchange for several hours of manual labour each day. Families were split up inside the workhouse.
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<sup>7</sup> A minor change or addition to an existing law in order to improve that legislation.

<sup>8</sup> A group of officials/ commission of inquiry appointed by the King/Queen on the recommendation of the (Parliament) Government.

## **LIBERAL REFORMS 1906-1914:**

Background: Some researchers conducted the studies to find out the causes of poverty. They discovered that the causes were low pay, unemployment, large families, illness and old age – not laziness. The effects of poverty were damaging to society (the health problems due to malnutrition, weak and sick children, crime etc.)

The Liberal government in the UK (1906-1914) is often cited as an example of a government that brought about reform and introduced positive changes that really improved people's lives.

In 1906 to 1914 the Liberal Government passed reforms to help reduce poverty.

Basic social welfare service had been created which greatly improved the conditions for poorer people in British society.

To pay for this social reform the Liberals increased the taxes on the rich.

The reforms aimed to help the following people:

1. Reforms for the Young :

- ✓ In 1906 the Liberal Government introduced Free School Meals for children.<sup>9</sup>
- ✓ In 1907 a series of free medical tests were introduced for children, and the school children received free medical inspections during their school years (free treatments were given to school children after 1912)
- ✓ Children were banned from begging
- ✓ Children were no longer sent to adult prisons. Juvenile courts and **borstals**<sup>10</sup> were established to separate adult and child offenders

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<sup>9</sup> The limitations of this scheme: health issues arise again during school holidays and it was costly for the Government

<sup>10</sup> The institutions as an alternate to the prison for the reformation and socialization of the youth between 16 and 21 who committed the crime.

## 2. Reforms for The old :

- ✓ The Government accepted the responsibility to protect the elderly and introduced the old age pension in 1908. The pension of five shillings per week was introduced for those over 70. <sup>11</sup>
- ✓ Problem: Many pensioners had no birth certificate to prove their age and died from hardship before they reached 70

## 3. Reforms for The sick :

- ✓ All manual workers and people in low-paid jobs had to join (National Insurance Act 1911)
- ✓ The employee, the employer and the state contributed money to the scheme
- ✓ Provided compulsory health insurance for workers earning under £160 per year
- ✓ If ill, an employee was paid 10 shillings (for up to 13 weeks) then 5 shillings<sup>12</sup> for an additional 13 weeks
- ✓ Workers in the scheme could have free medical care, especially for injuries during their work

## 4. Reforms for the Unemployed :

- ✓ Offices were set up to help the unemployed find work
  - ✓ Unemployment benefit was introduced into certain industries where there was seasonal employment (e.g. Shipbuilding).
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<sup>11</sup> Pensions were only provided if people were British and had lived in the UK for 20 years  
Pensions were also only provided if people had not been imprisoned in the last ten years

<sup>12</sup> British coin and monetary unit equal to one twentieth of a pound

## THE BEVERIDGE REPORT 1942:

- ✓ Officially known as the *Report on Social Insurance and Allied Services*
- ✓ The Report was presented by its author, Sir William Beveridge, to the British parliament in November 1942 who was given the task of discovering what kind of Britain people wanted to see after the war.
- ✓ The Beveridge Report is widely regarded as the foundation stone of the post-war British welfare state, published in the middle of the Second World War
- ✓ It was seen by many throughout the world as the origin of a new system (the welfare state) to plan a successful strategy for dealing with the problems of largescale unemployment, inability to afford health care, and poverty in sickness, widowhood and old age.
- ✓ The Beveridge Report claimed to offer all citizens protection as of right "from the cradle to the grave" at subsistence level to guarantee the elimination of poverty.
- ✓ It identified the five 'Giant Evils' in the UK ;'Want, Disease, Ignorance, Squalor<sup>13</sup> and Idleness'.
- ✓ Major recommendation was that the government should find ways of fighting these five 'Giant Evils'

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<sup>13</sup> the state of being extremely dirty and unpleasant, especially as a result of poverty or neglect.



## How were the 5 giants to be tackled?

- To tackle the five 'Giant Evils' the Beveridge Report suggested:
- Universal benefits that would cover old age, unemployment and sickness
- A comprehensive health service
- Vastly expanded public sector housing
- Free and universal education
- Full employment

Founding Principles of Welfare State/  
5 giants of poverty

- Want      —————>   • Income
- Disease   —————>   • Health
- Ignorance   —————>   • Education
- Squalor    —————>   • Housing
- Idleness    —————>   • Employment

Giant                      How to overcome it

Want	An adequate income for all
Disease	Access to free health care
Ignorance	Access to education for all
Squalor	Adequate housing
Idleness	Full employment

## The Principles to Follow

Principle	Purpose
Collectivist	The state would fund the services needed through taxation and National Insurance.
Universal	The services provided for the population would be "free at the point of need."
Comprehensive	The state would provide for all aspects of need - it would care for the population from "the cradle to the grave."
Equality	Equal provision for all people in all regions.

- ✓ The report suggested a comprehensive plan of a unified system of social insurance and social security on a national basis and for this Ministry of Social Security would be authorized to implement the plan.
  - ✓ The government was required to help anyone in need, regardless of age, class or geography (protection of citizens from cradle to grave)
  - ✓ Every adult in the country would have to pay the same proportion of insurance tax to cover the proposed benefits scheme
  - ✓ The British Government accepted the Beveridge report as the basis on which the social security structure should be built.
  - ✓ Between 1946-1951 a wide range of welfare measures were introduced.
1. WANT:
    - Introduced Family allowances (1945) that were paid for each child in a family.
    - 5 shillings a week per child, paid to the mother
  2. IGNORANCE:
    - Education Act 1944; There was to be free education for all up to the age of 15.
    - Based on students' ability at 11+ exam, they were either given an academic or vocational education.

- In education, the biggest problem was shortage of schools, partly because of the bombing.
- By 1950, almost 1,176 schools, mostly primaries, were built.
- Few technical schools built

### 3. SQUALOR:

- Responsibility for housing was given to the Ministry of Health.
- The Town and country planning act 1947 gave councils more power to buy land and redevelop areas.
- 12 new towns were planned.
- Good quality housing and a good environment with shops and leisure facilities

### 4. IDLENESS:

- By 1946 unemployment was only 2.5% this could be due to the post war boom.
- Labour believed the state should take over industry and run them for the benefit of the people.
- Bank of England, civil aviation, coal, communications, transport, electricity, gas, iron and steel were all nationalized<sup>14</sup>.
- The government owned 20% of Britain's industries.

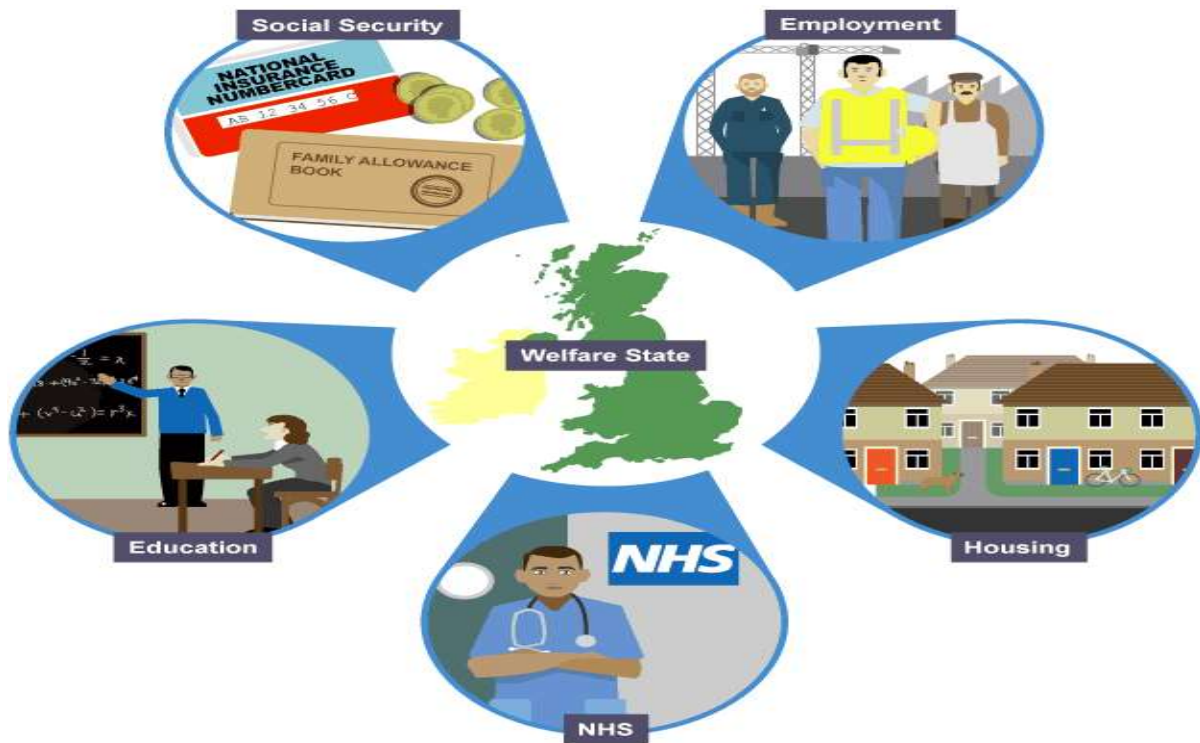
### 5. DISEASE:

- Doctors, hospital, dentists, opticians, ambulances, midwives and health visitors were available, free to everybody and every British citizen could receive medical, dental and optical services free of charge (National Health Service Act 1948)

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<sup>14</sup> When the government takes control of a business or industry ( Nationalized means the institutions are not the personal property but belongs to the government like PIA, Pakistan Railways)





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For More Details on the *History of Social Welfare in the UK* you can visit the links given below:

<https://www.britannica.com/event/Poor-Law>

<https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/livinglearning/19thcentury/overview/poverty/>

<https://schoolshistory.org.uk/topics/british-history/elizabethan-era/elizabethan-poor-law/>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/timeline/factfiles/nonflash/a1143578.shtml>

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