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Magister Thesis in British Civilization

Welfare State and Thatcherism

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Academic Year: 2011-2012

Acknowledgements

My first thanks go to my supervisor Dr. Belmekki Belkacem for his outstanding remarks, considerable pieces of advice, seriousness, and availability during the fulfilment of this dissertation. I also express my sincere gratefulness to Professor Aghamir Mohamed from the University of Oran for his high encouragement.

I am fully indebted to Professor Michell Nauman who provided me with constructive ideas which elaborated my thoughts and guided me in my research. My gratitude is also for Mrs. Kehili Z. , Mr. Nourai Hichem, Djamel, Rabah and Benabdallah for their valuable collaboration. I seize the opportunity here to acknowledge my colleagues specifically Zahira and Amel who sustained me in my difficult moments.

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Abstract

Distinctive social changes characterised the new culture of the twentieth century all over the world. In Europe, for example, wars and conflicts did not prevent growth. The standard of living progressed and prosperity prevailed due to the welfare state which was created in 1945; its wide services fulfilled the hopes of the great majority of people who looked forward to the improvement of their lives.

To learn more about the history of the welfare state in Britain, the origin, evolution, and the downfall of this state are the major points which are suggested for discussion in the current dissertation. Moreover, the debate will include a variety of upheavals and struggles for survival under the poor-law system which emerged in the Elizabethan era and continued till the modern era.

There will be also a focus on the most significant political, economic and social transformations in the United Kingdom during and after the two world-wars. This will lead certainly to talk about the shift of power from the Conservatives to Liberals then to Labours, as it will record the society's feedback towards those Governments' policies. In addition to that, the investigation will shed some light on the radical movement which contributed vitally in fighting poverty, persecution, and oppression.

The study will respectively enlighten both of the reforms which led to affluence and the recessions that disturbed the community and economy as well. The hard years of the seventies were followed by the decades of Thatcherism which dominated the political life in the eighties. Mrs. Thatcher, who promised a better future for the British society, referred the decline to the inefficiency of the Labour leadership; she decided, therefore, to break down the consensus with the former ideologies. Consequently, Thatcher's Government abandoned entirely the welfare system and embarked on new reforms.

General Introduction

Welfare as an individual practice and social behaviour existed since the early years of humankind's history. No one could live without the assistance of the others. Moreover, help became a recurrent word in religious and social meetings which called basically for good fellowship, cooperation, unity, and brotherhood. Thus, if welfare from a religious point of view was one of the various human duties, in politics it took another dimension in most parts of the world.

In the United States, for example, Franklin Roosevelt enjoyed a great popularity due to his New Deal program, which aimed at helping the poor who lived in misery since the world depression of the 1930s. This measure was indeed paramount in developing social policies in the U.S.A. Furthermore, the welfare state became a field of interest for many scholars and intellectuals whose arguments contributed to understand the political thinking towards social improvement, as it will be debated throughout this dissertation.

The economics professor Paul Krugman for instance believed that economy would crumble if social welfare was wholly abandoned. This latter idea was a major point of discussion in Paul Spicker's article "An introduction to Social Policy", in which he warned from foreign intervention in local affairs.

The World Bank and International Monetary Fund could be influential in countries whose governments were unable to expand their social policies for the benefit of their people. Therefore, promoting schemes in public services could avoid so many threats. In contrast, reducing the public expenditure could not advance economy but rather regress it. In the same article, Spicker opposed intensively the use of cuttings in repaying bank loans.

On the other hand, Noam Chomsky being a libertarian and anarchist criticised

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welfare policies for being less practical than it were expected; he perceived that politicians were still lacking competence in dealing with vital issues. In this respect Richard Titmuss, the author of *Essays on the Welfare State*, stated an example on Canada whose social services' performance was weak; at the same time, he mentioned that Trade Unions, church, and other institutions of solidarity should equally collaborate to reduce poverty.

According to the American historian James T. Kloppenburg, the principle of equal opportunities in the U.S.A existed in speeches only, as he pointed at in his article "Who's Afraid of the Welfare State?" But, in practice the poor had to pay for services as the rich did. It was said that it was a preventive measure against unexpected economic distress. More restrictions were announced in a speech made by George W. Bush who wanted to privatise the social security service. Being shocked of this proposal people protested vigorously against his policies.

Nevertheless, the welfare state evolution continued to be one of the most controversial themes of the twentieth century. It extended in Europe to three distinct shapes: the corporatist, the social democratic, and the liberal one. For this reason, the application of the welfare system varied from one country to another. The experience brought a great prosperity for Finland, Denmark, Sweden, Iceland, Norway, the Netherlands, Uruguay, and New Zealand.

However, both of Helga Hernes , the Norwegian political scientist , and Professor Birte Siim, an outstanding member in the Feminist Research Centre of Aalborg in Denmark, criticized the patriarchal role of the state whose care for men exceeded the one for women in Scandinavian countries during the seventies and the eighties .

As far as the United Kingdom was concerned, welfare as a political ideology existed since the Tudor era; yet, it was highly affected by the industrial revolution which broadened alienation between the social classes. The secret of this social decline was a subject for different interpretations. The historian Helaire Belloc,

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for example, referred the loss of moral values to the dissolution of monasteries, while a group of social reformers and economists linked the increasing numbers of the poor to the excess of bounties by the late years of the nineteenth century.

The same remarks were done by both political economists David Ricardo and Thomas Malthus. The latter accused the poor of being improvident and dependent, therefore their laziness and idleness prevented them from producing for themselves; he similarly attacked utilitarianism, a philosophy of Jeremy Bentham, which tried to restore confidence in power.

In fact, these thoughts were respectively fundamental in reshaping the British social politics. Sir Edwin Chadwick, the English reformer of poor laws, associated the despair in which the poor lived with the absence of control. Hence, the authority reorganised the poorhouses' system.

Even Literature depicted vivid images on the Victorian mind fascinated by capital accumulation, whatever the price would be. Charles Dickens reflected varied pictures of individualism in most of his novels. In *Oliver Twist*, for instance, he denounced humiliation in workhouses in which the poor were treated as prisoners. A similar opposition to capitalism principles was displayed in *David Copperfield*, *Hard Times*, *Little Dorrit* and *Bleak House*.

Another group of writers which was consisted of Matthew Arnold, George Elliot, Thomas Hardy and Elizabeth Gaskell portrayed Victorian Britain to be a two-world nation, which meant a world for the wealthy and another one for the poor. On the same point, Benjamin Disraeli demonstrated in *Sybil* how alienation could be a real danger for the unity of the nation.

Such reflexions, however, diverted the public opinion to strive against the new poor law using special devices; this research work will enlighten some of them. The analysis will correspondingly concentrate on the Trade Union's struggle for social justice. Therefore, a spot on the socio-political environment in which the

Union sprung and progressed will be surely made.

In the meantime, discussions over poverty will incorporate the poor law of 1834 which replaced the former Elizabethan amendment of 1598. In truth, much was said about the new Poor Law Act, but the ambiguity over this issue raised a persistent question. What was the aim of this legislation? Was it fighting poverty or a fight against the poor themselves? To clarify these points, the current investigation will go deeper in analysis.

The shift from Victorianism to modernism will certainly lead to talk about one of the most significant changes of the twentieth century, which was the welfare state. The present enquiry is supposed to examine the social and cultural impact of the welfare state on the British society. Yet, at an early stage, it will be dealing with historical backgrounds. Then, there will be a wide discussion on modern Britain and the Liberal reformers who collaborated greatly in the foundation of the welfare state in the United Kingdom.

The breakdown of the Second World War was a turning point in the history of the welfare state. John Kent, in his piece of writing entitled *William Temple: Church, State and Society*, wrote about the crucial role of Temple in theorising the kind of society that the post war politics had to forge. The aim was to remind the future governors to work for the individuals' well-being, as it was also an attempt to empower the Anglican Church whose services in times of recessions and wars were almost absent.

Moreover, the fears from founding a communist state or a fascist system in Great Britain during the thirties encouraged the revival of Anglicanism to protect the British identity and build up a strong community. Therefore, this work will highlight some of the most successful social reforms that were implied during these war circumstances. The other step will be dealing with the post-war government including its struggle against the five giants as it will be obviously explained later on.

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Although the state's intervention led to affluence in the sixties, it was accused of extravagance and short-sightedness. From a critical point of view, Helaire Belloc said in *The Servile State* that insurance policies transferred the welfare state to a slavery institution. One class had to work for the benefit of the others who were of course unemployed.

Besides, Helaire Belloc observed that this system, unable to achieve a true democracy, would destruct socialism and capitalism alike. Accordingly, he suggested distributivism instead. Belloc argued that means of production had to be distributed for workers who would be owners and producers at the same time.

However, Theodore Dalrymple, the psychiatrist, contradicted in his book *Our Culture, What is Left for it* the theories which linked economic progress to social affluence, the latter according to his convenience was behind the young's frustration, drugs, violence, crimes, and imprisonment.

Conversely, Stephen Berry's article "The Rise and Fall of the British Welfare State" displayed the weak services that administrations presented in housing, pensions and national health. In addition to that, he blamed the welfare system for permissiveness whose most victims were women who turned to be delinquents.

The same article embodied a criticism on the state's monopoly, for its effect on the private sector was bitter and brought economic crises as well. Furthermore, according to Stephen Berry the welfare state's cradles to grave policies were unsuccessful, since they could not ensure sufficient provisions for its recipients who could be richer in private business.

Frank Field, the Conservative and former member in Parliament, asserted in his article "The Welfare State Never Ending Reform" that welfare was free from any dependence to the state in the past; and it must remain so for ever. Steve Schaffer's vision, in his article "Is the UK a Model Welfare State?" was that the system was

much more developed in the other European communities than it was in Britain.

The same attack on public spending involved the Marxists who noted that the state interference in ensuring minimum wages and unemployment insurance for the poor out of the high taxes, it imposed on the rich, could not only disturb the market but also cripple labour and investment, as Schweickart David reported in one of his articles entitled “Market Socialism”.

Even Mrs. Thatcher campaigned against the inefficiency of the previous system which precipitated the economic downfall. Was the welfare state really a source of decline as Mrs. Thatcher said? Were her reforms in the eighties more successful than those implied by the Labour leaders in the seventies? To tackle these questions three chapters are suggested.

The first chapter of *Welfare State and Thatcherism* will introduce an overview on the British society heavily struck by poverty from pre-Victorian to-Victorian era. The second chapter will be devoted to the study of the welfare state progress and decline from 1945 to 1978.

However, the third chapter will cover the years of Thatcherism from 1979 to 1990; the main concern here will be to identify Mrs Thatcher’s policies and reforms until the end of her leadership. Furthermore, the work will incorporate considerable outlooks of a group of scholars from different disciplines including historians, politicians, economists, and writers.

Chapter One

Pre-welfare Socio-economic Landscape of British Society

The increase of poverty in Britain referred indeed to a group of interrelated factors. The black plague, which stroke England in the 14th century for example, had an awful impact on economy and society likewise. Terrible human and material losses were produced; therefore, it was indispensable for the state to intervene for help.

As an immediate measure, the Poor Law Act of 1388, called also the Statute Cambridge, restricted wages and freedoms of labourers to prevent them from leaving their parishes in such a depressing situation. Moreover, the Parliamentary Act of Supremacy signed in 1534 permitted the dissolution of monasteries that provided work and alms. As a result, the poor's life became deeply offended under the rule of King Henry VIII.

1.1. The Origin of the British Poor-Law System

During the sixteen century, the British people, whether wealthy or poor, depended mostly on lands as a main source for their lives. However, the country suffered from wet summers all along the period of 1594 and 1597. Then, the scarcity of food impelled a terrible crisis. The worst of all was that of 1596, the prices rose and people starved. Consequently, riots against hunger and redundancy dominated the last years of the century.

Such hardship made it necessary to think about other sources apart from lands. Farm-owners, for instance , exploited their animals by buying their meat and wool to factories in East Anglia and other places in the west and the north . Yet, agriculture and industry were not the only activities on which the British economy depended; trade overseas was based on cloth which was imported from the Spanish Indies and used broadly in local industries.

However, the transition from land to factory and the shift from being peasants to being businessmen brought also a change at the level of the political thought. That poor man, who was at the bottom of the social ladder having neither a shelter nor food for survival, became a vital theme in political controversies for the first time in British history. Being aware that the problem of vagrancy, rogues, and wanderers might disturb the security of people and properties, the Queen Elizabeth I decided to relieve the poor and improve their lives.

For the same purpose, three categories of houses were legally founded. The Corporation of London accomplished the first type, called houses of correction, at the old royal palace of Bridewell in 1555. These houses were intended to deal with idlers and rogues, whereas the second type named the abiding places, being called afterwards the poorhouses, concerned the impotent poor who had no source of living. However, the third kind of houses dealt with the able-bodied unemployed who were provided with work in their homes or in workhouses, which appeared few years later.

Teaching children how to be producers was one of the most basic preoccupations of the Tudor Government, which put into practice the statute of apprentices in 1563. Observing that the number of the poor, moving from town to town increased despite the fact that it was restricted by the legislation of 1572, Sir Robert Cecil and Sir Francis Bacon debated the issue of indigence in Parliament. As a result, the Act of 1598 induced children of the poor families as well as jobless persons, married or single, to work. The amendment pointed correspondingly to the assistance of the blind and the old.

In the meantime, the Queen Elizabeth I followed regularly the news on the application of the poor laws through her private council to be sure that her orders were adequately executed. Furthermore, the government convinced

wealthy people to collaborate in all bequests so that poverty would diminish. Different schools, hospitals, and workhouses were built due to those charities.

The same legislation was re-enacted in 1601; it classified the poor into three categories. The first category was of the impotent poor which included the old and the ill persons who benefited from the parish's outdoor relief. The second category was of the able-bodied who were sent to work in houses of correction, while the third category dealt with a group of persistent idlers¹. This amendment was still practiced after the Queen's death in 1603.

On the other hand, signs of an economic distress were obvious, the export of cloth which was prosperous in 1614 started to diminish some years after. Trade became less active than it was earlier. Harvests were worse and industries based on wool declined², while prices were flattening out continuously. The case grew more drastic by the death of King James I.

The conflict between King Charles I and Parliament, which opposed all religious reforms suggested by His Majesty, was developed to a terrible disaster. The country sank into a bloody civil war from 1642 to 1645. Finally, the King Charles I was defeated, but he constantly disdained the parliamentary power. Being assisted by the Scottish army, he rebelled again in 1648. The British Parliament considered this war a high treason and executed him in 1649. As a result, monarchy was abolished.

The fear of unknown future made the Confederation of Kilkenny founded by Irish Catholics support the return of Charles II to the crown. Learning about this plan, Oliver Cromwell's New Model Army conquered Ireland in 1649. This military campaign against the Irish Catholics was dreadful. In his book *To Hell or Barbados* O' Callaghan Sean discussed 'the worst atrocities committed in

¹ Derek Fraser, *The Evolution of the Welfare State*, p. 40.

² Ibid.

Ireland, such as massacres, evictions, killings and deportation of over 50.000 men, women and children as slaves to Bermuda and Barbados'.³

More than that, hundreds of new settlers came from England to occupy the lands taken by force from the natives as the Act of the settlement of Ireland recommended in 1652. Being more powerful, Cromwell's military forces crushed the Royalist and confederation coalition's army which failed to resist. Consequently, a new state called the Cromwellian Interregnum, or the Republic of Commonwealth of England was founded under the leadership of the lord protector Oliver Cromwell in 1653.

What happened in Ireland influenced certainly life in the United Kingdom as a whole. Most of the areas were subjected to a more increasing poverty, starvation, and dangerous diseases. Financial difficulties restrained the parishes' relief. After all, no impairment is everlasting. The Cromwellian rule of both the father and the son Richard ended up in 1659. Monarchy was, then, restored in 1660 and Charles the Second became the King of Great Britain.

The political power reconsidered the poor- law's legislation, therefore the Act of 1662 obliged each parish to take care of its poor, and at the same time, it objected to receive any comers from other parishes. Thus, joining another parish was quite troublesome, for parishes feared that the new settlers might be under their own charge permanently.

Some years later, the Act of 1697 enabled paupers to introduce their certificate testifying settlement whenever they visited a new parish, while their relief depended most on political decisions and legislation which were changing in each period. Nonetheless, the poor living standard was getting from bad to worse. Charities failed to satisfy the needs of all the British destitute in the entire Kingdom.

³ Sean O' Callaghan, *To Hell or Barbados*, p. 86.

Such bitter realities made the politician Thomas Gilbert introduce a bill to Parliament; he suggested an out relief for the unemployed able - bodied and a relief of the unable - bodied that could be done by workhouses. Gilbert's Act of 1782 encouraged strongly the idea of combining the parishes into a single union so that the control might be easier; he believed in unity and mutual help as keys of strength and improvement. Gilbert's optimistic theories were highly significant for those who expected a better future for Britain.

1.2. The Impact of French Revolution on British Radicalism

The late years of the eighteenth century were characterised by an expanding poverty and a rising threat of the working class not only in Britain but also in the other territories. In France, for instance, the Sans-culottes representing the French lower and working classes declared war against their political system in May 1789. This great revolution fascinated workers of all nations, as it motivated historians to record this outstanding event for the future generations.

For a similar purpose, the French author Albert Soboul wrote a book that he called *Les Sans- Culottes Parisians En L' AN II*. The belief in change made those French protestors support any group sharing their ideas; they did so with the Jacobians till their collapse after Maxmillien Robespierre's execution on 28 July, 1794.

Being so close to France, geographically, the British radicals appreciated the way the French revolted. Dr Richard Price praised the French Revolution openly in his speech at the Meeting-House in the Old Jewry in November of 1789. Beyond that, he inspired 'people, as the true source of power . . . to choose their governors, to cashier them for misconduct, and to institute a new form of

government'.⁴ In fact, the idea of rebelling against corruption and tyranny of the British system split the community into two distinctive divisions. The backers induced revolutionaries while the opponents did not.

The belief that the stability of the Kingdom was in danger made Edmund Burke's response. In his book *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, published in November 1790, he advised the British people to avoid violence; at the same time, he never kept denouncing, in writings and meetings, the radical thoughts imported from the French Revolution. For example, in a parliamentary debate on the Army Estimates, in February of the same year, he expressed his grief towards France which was devastated by its own people, he said:

*. . . they had completely pulled down to the ground, their monarchy; their church; their nobility; their law; their revenue; their army; their navy; their commerce; their arts; and their manufactures...[there was a danger of] an imitation of the excesses of an irrational, unprincipled, proscribing, confiscating, plundering, ferocious, bloody and tyrannical democracy.*⁵

Burke's statements intensified the radicals' support for the French question which drew incessantly thousands of sympathisers not from the entire world. Thomas Paine was one of those who admired the revolution in France, he believed in personal freedoms and abhorred slavery; his famous work *Rights of Man* that he issued in 1791 was greatly appreciated.

Mary Wollstone's standpoint was not quite distinct from that of Paine. In her publication *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, she discredited Burke's faithfulness to the monarchs rather than the subjects. The opposition incorporated other intellectuals like James Mackintosh who contended, in his book *Vindiciae*

⁴ Robert K. Webb, *Modern England*, p. 129.

⁵ Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, pp. 66-7.

Gallicae that man should never give up defending his emancipation and dignity.

Moreover, the execution of Louis XVI pushed some French refuges to join London. Their talks on their own revolutionary experience in France motivated their British fellows to think seriously about their future. Consequently, the propertied gentlemen, noble Whigs, Nonconformist radicals, and Liberals called persistently for urgent reforms in Britain.⁶

Being loyal to the French revolutionaries, a group of British radicals celebrated the anniversary of the storming of the Bastille in Birmingham by 1791, but the end of this feast turned to a real tragedy. The feasters were assaulted and both of the New and Old Meeting Churches were fully destroyed. Both of Dr. Joseph Priestley's house and laboratory were burned.⁷ Feeling threatened, Dr. Priestly left with his family to Hackney in Middlesex in which they spent three years before they moved to Pennsylvania.

One more year, Charles James Fox founded the Society of Friends of the People in 1792. Meanwhile, artisans in London and England formed other radical societies; Thomas Hardy unified them into a single group called London Corresponding Society. About the role of these societies in spreading out consciousness in the community, Robert Webb asserted:

*Never numbering more than a tiny minority, these societies seemed more threatening than they actually were. But their members read, thought, questioned, and planned; they held meetings, borrowed French rhetoric and distributed propaganda with great enthusiasm.*⁸

⁶ Robert K. Webb, *ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

As a warning, the political authority urged to refer to strict measures against offenders of the crown's order and properties. Robert Webb wrote about pain's allegation and the measure of 'issuing a proclamation against seditious publications, the government prosecuted Paine who fled to France and others for seditious libel'.⁹ Furthermore, during the year of 1793 William Pitt's Government decided to fight radicals in the entire Kingdom. In Scotland for instance many activists were sanctioned as Robert Webb illustrated, here:

Savage sentences of transportation were passed on reformers who had come as delegates to a convention to agitate and possibly to prepare for drastic changes: to timid souls the very word was an ominous reminder of the revolutionary Convention across the channel... Priestley, and a good many others who thought like him, decided to immigrate to the United States. By 1794, both reformers and anti reformers had turned extreme.¹⁰

Despite those firm restrictions, the radical movement did not fail. A good example for that was the Association for the Preservation of Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers which opened its doors to receive new adherents.¹¹ The demand of reformation expended more and more.

All shapes of tyranny were repudiated. A vivid image on this was the protest of ordinary people in Bristol against the building of a bridge near their houses. Philip John pointed that 'the Bristol bridge riot of 1793 was one of the most serious riots, in terms of killed and injured, to occur in Britain during the last half of the eighteenth century'.¹²

⁹ Robert K. Webb, *ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Robert K. Webb, *op.cit.*, p. 131.

¹² Philip D. Jones, "The Bristol Bridge Riot and its Antecedents :Eighteenth Century Perceptions of the Crowd ", *Crowds and History: Mass phenomena in English Towns, 1790-183*, p. 270.

Observing that Britain was on the verge of a bloody revolution, the English philosopher and political radical Jeremy Bentham proposed utilitarianism, he called for conciliation and hard work to make a greatest number of individuals enjoy happiness. After all, destitution was still a stronger enemy for the nation.

As early as 1820, some radicals who were influenced by the French Revolution rebelled in Scotland against the authority. The insurrection extended to other areas. In Glasgow, for example, one of the most violent uprisings took place. A Committee for Forming a Provisional Government organised a march towards Carron company ironworks to take weapons, but the rioters were attacked in Bonnymuir by the Hussar. Consequently, Andrew Hardie and John Baird were executed in Stirling, whereas James Wilson, the leader of the march at Strathaven, was hung and decapitated at Glasgow. Fortunately, people released demonstrators who were taken to Greenock jail.

To avoid such kind of clashes, utilitarianism principles were widely applied by the various existing societies and Trade Unions which relieved excessively the poor families. Yet, the industrial revolution, which favoured factory owners to be wealthier, offended at the same time agriculturalists extremely.

The Swing riots of 1830 displayed how starvation could be effectual in manipulating minds and producing rage among the people. Hunger, thus, inspired the rural workers, unable to feed their families to rebel against misery. John Harrison attested that '2000 protestors were brought to trial in 1830-1831, 252 sentenced to death, 19 of them were hanged, 644 imprisoned and 481 transported to Australia'.¹³ But would this repression break off radicalism in Britain?

¹³John Fletcher Harrison. *The Common People of Great Britain: A History from the Norman Conquest to the Present*, pp. 249-253.

Certainly, the impact of the Swing riots on economy was so strong. A hundred of threshing machines were shattered in Kent and a large number of barns were burned in different areas of the South and East of England. This event was followed by Bristol riots which occurred in the year of 1831.

Although, anger was differently expressed, justice remained a common purpose for the British everywhere. For this aim, Earl Greg introduced a bill of reforms in which he suggested that the House of Commons should include members from the major industrial cities as Manchester, Bradford and Leeds as well as urbanising rotten boroughs. The House of Lords rebuffed the bill.

The visit of the local magistrate Sir Charles Wetherell, one of those who disapproved the reform bill caused acute tensions. In Queen Square, a large crowd rioted near the court, which he intended to open. In the meantime, the Bishop's Palace, the Mansion House, the Custom House, and other houses and properties, were looted and scratched. These acts of violence, stealing, and burning jails disturbed the stability of the area.

The Whig Government considered both participants and those who protected them as outlaws. Accused of alliance after his refusal to shoot rioters, Thomas Brereton, the British Dragoons' Lieutenant Colonel committed a suicide before his sentence. A hundred of those who were arrested were imprisoned; four of them were executed by January, 1832.

Bristol's riots ended but the hope in reforms was still there. According to some historians the Reform Act of 7 June, 1832 was a primary step towards a real democracy in Britain. Eric J. Evans, for example, said that the Act 'marked the true beginning of the development of a recognizably modern political system'¹⁴, while G. M. Trevelyan mentioned that the year of 1832 was 'a

¹⁴ Eric J. Evans, *The Forging of the Modern State: Early Industrial Britain, 1783-1870*, p. 229.

watershed moment at which “the sovereignty of the people” had been established in fact if not in law’.¹⁵

However, Sir Erskine May depicted the new parliament as ‘more liberal and progressive . . . more vigorous and active; more susceptible to the influence of public opinion and more secure in the confidence of the people’.¹⁶

After long years of distress, the economy was progressing; British trade dominated the world markets. Nevertheless, poverty was growing up and the poor-law system was incapable of supplying all the demands. Opportunely, some social organisations, known since 1793 and legalised by the Acts of 1846 and 1875, were ready for consolation. Societies of good fellowship had also escorted orphans, widows, and sick.

The Fabien Society, like all the other associations, collaborated efficiently in humanitarian aids; its activists did not hesitate to give a hand to the needy whenever it was required. The same wish existed among the leaders of the other societies. Liverpool Victoria, Royal Liver, and Scottish Legal Societies teamed up to organise death ceremonies likewise; they collected premiums once a week, whereas the Prudential, a former industrial assurance company set up in the epidemic period of 1848-49, had to deal with burials.¹⁷

On the other hand, restlessness due to the French Wars, the poor harvest, and a soaring inflation were real burdens for the power and the people particularly of the rural areas. As early as 1795, the Speenhamland’s Berkshire Justices decided, in a meeting at Pelican Inn, to rise wages taking into account the bread’s price and family’s size; they also recommended the outdoor relief to diminish the hard effects of the crisis.

¹⁵ Trevelyan, G. M. *British History in the Nineteenth Century and After (1782–1901)*, p. 242.

¹⁶ Sir Erskine May. *The Constitutional History of England since the Accession of George the Third*, p. 431.

¹⁷ Maurice Bruce, *The Coming of the Welfare State*, p. 46.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Actually, this legislation, aiming at protecting the poor of England from hunger, was a basic theme for various controversies. Both proponents and opponents showed their view. Maurice Bruce for instance believed that:

*... the measure was, in fact, one of relief to employers rather than employed, ... it tied workers still more to the land at a time when there was redundancy in the rural counties and great need of labour in the industrial areas, when, indeed, the rapid spread of enclosures for improved farming was forcing men off the land, all this was far from clear to those who, with a mixture of motives, but with much real concern, approved the policy of 1795.*¹⁸

However, the Prime Minister William Pitt had a distinct perception, he alleged:

*This will make a large family a blessing, not a curse, and thus will draw a proper line of distinction between those who are able to provide for themselves by their labour, and those who, having enriched their country with a number of children, have a claim upon its assistance for support.*¹⁹

Consequently, the cost of poor relief doubled from 4 million to 8 million pounds between 1802 and 1818; it remained high till 1832 in which it reached 7 million.²⁰ Conversely, the British economist Thomas Malthus criticised the Speenhamland system sharply in his work *An Essay on Principles of Population*. According to his convenience, a poor man should avoid to 'bring beings into the world for whom he cannot find the means of support'²¹ because this wrong behaviour would permit the rise of a consuming society and not a productive one.

Although, the Act of 1832, previously mentioned, was important in getting some political rights, the working class remained unrepresented in

¹⁸ Maurice Bruce, *ibid.*

¹⁹ Maurice Bruce, *The Coming of the Welfare State*, p. 42.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

Parliament. This feeling of isolation pushed a group of activists such as William Lovett, John Cleave, Henry Hetherington, and James Watson to create the London Working Men's Association in 1836.

Struggling for social justice and liberties was a fundamental objective for these radicals. Being supported by the Birmingham Political Union presided by Thomas Attwood, they revolted against the high stamp duty imposed by the central authority on newspapers that same year. The attempt was effective and the government reduced the taxes on papers and pamphlets.

The experience, mentioned above, encouraged the reformers to exercise more pressure on the political system. The People's Charter was published in 1838; it was based on six crucial points which were universal manhood suffrage, annual elections, the secret ballot, equal electoral districts, abolition of the property qualification for membership in the House of Commons, and payment of members.²²

But, the charter was rejected by Parliament in June 1839. This refusal resulted in a violent clash between people and the government. Accordingly, the authority decided to crash down the movement. Henry Vincent and others were arrested, meanwhile John Frost, the chartist delegate, succeeded to organise marches in Newport on 4 November. A huge number of workers and supporters of the charter participated. The aim was to liberate the imprisoned chartists in the Westgate Hotel.

Glenn Everett wrote an article headed "Chartism or the Chartist Movement" on the Newport rising in which 'troops opened fire killing 24 and wounding 40 more'.²³ A group of rioters including their leaders were arrested. John Frost and his two colleagues Zephaniah Williams and Jone William were removed to Australia while the other activists of the movement were still under

²² Robert. K Webb, *op.cit.*, p. 249.

²³ Glenn Everett, "Chartism or the Chartist Movement", in www.victorianweb.org/history/hist3.htm. Accessed on 17 February 2011.

political control.

However, Feargus O' Connor, accused of publishing seditious libels on his paper the *Northern Star*, was tried in March 1840, he was jailed for 18 months. These abuses never frustrated the radicals; their desire to continue their fight grew stronger than before.

A second petition consisted of the same previous claims was submitted to Parliament in May 1842. The Bill was refused once more. The chartists' feedback, this time, was the plug plot which meant the interruption of all economic activities in Britain. Staffordshire and England were the first two areas in which the industrial action began.

Under the slogan of "Food or Money," 300 Longton miners struck to denounce the cut of 7 pounds per day from their wages.²⁴ In this respect, John Charlton noted:

*The depression of 1841-42 had hit the capital hard... Numerous trade associations...had signed the second petition to parliament.*²⁵

Thompson Dorothy viewed the year of 1842 as exceptional 'more energy was hurled against the authorities than in any other of the nineteenth century'.²⁶ Workers in coalmines, mills, and factories south of Wales, Cornwall, Dundee, Stalybridge, Manchester, and Ashton followed the same process of strikes.

William Peel's Government determined to put an end to those strives. Prices of food were reduced so that stability would return to the revolting towns.

²⁴ John Charlton, *The Chartists: The First National Workers' Movement*, p. 29.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Thompson Dorothy, *The Chartists: Popular Politics in the Industrial Revolution*, p. 295.

Yet, accusations of planning for strikes included Thomas Cooper, O'Connor and George Julian Harney. Cooper was guilty of violence in Staffordshire; therefore, he was sent to prison. O'Connor was released, but he never kept supporting the working-class. As a first step, he established the Chartist Cooperative Land Company in 1845; then, he introduced a new petition to the House of Commons.

However, an investigating committee, appointed by Parliament, proved the inaccuracy of signatures; it was for this reason that the petition was totally rejected. Moreover, O'Connor's National Land Company was declared illegal on 6 June, 1848. Unfortunately, the *Northern Star* that he used to influence the public opinion lost also its power by 1850.²⁷

Being so depressed by these failures, O'Connor spent the rest of his life in Dr. Tuke's private asylum at Chiswick from 1852 to 1854; by his death in 1855, the radical movement lost an outstanding member that could never be replaced. Yet, the triumph of the government, in the battle against Chartism, never meant for radicals to give up thinking about the creation of new social movements in Britain.

In 1813, a House of Commons' Committee advised for the application of Corn Laws²⁸ for economic recovery. The Prime Minister Lord Liverpool approved the idea and the Importation Act was ultimately passed in 1815. The purpose of this legislation was to close doors in front of foreign corns' import.

The same amendment stimulated a variety of arguments among economists. Thomas Malthus persuaded that the Act of 1815 was compulsory for the economy's protection while David Ricardo claimed that it was a real

²⁷ George Douglas Cole, *Chartists Portraits*, p. 334.

²⁸ A set of laws which appeared between 1773 and 1815 to protect cereal producers in the United Kingdom and Ireland from importation and foreign competition. Source: Philippe Chassaingne. *Lexique d' Histoire et de Civilisation Britanniques*, p. 64.

handicap for both free trade and economy.²⁹ Socially, the effect of this Act was alarming. Bread prices grew higher than the purchasing power of individuals who were badly paid. Starvation, ill nutrition, sicknesses, and death spread out. Consequently, people of London rioted.³⁰

As early as 1836, an association whose aim was to abolish the corn laws emerged in London; then, its leader John Bright moved to Manchester to carry on the work under the name of the Anti-Corn Law League during 1838. The activists' enthusiasm did not diminish all over years; the outcome was the publication of *The League* newspaper in 1843.

Most importantly, plenty of meetings were attended in different places of the country. Seeking to get a powerful endorsement, the anti-corn reformers tried to convince the populace that a decent life for every man was a legal right that the government should not violate and people must not abandon. Robert Peel, the Prime Minister, on his turn, counselled his opponents in Parliament to ban the Corn Laws which harmed the community more than they helped. Unfortunately, Peel's attempt was in vain since his proposition was ignored.

The disagreement over this particular issue, explained above, led disappointingly to the Irish famine which was the worst catastrophe in the history of Ireland. Some Irishmen were obliged to sell their lands and properties to survive; others found no choice except leaving to the United States of America, Canada, or Australia. The first political reaction was the bill that Robert Peel presented immediately to parliament; it was highly supported by the Whigs and radicals but rejected by the Conservatives.

Ultimately, the Corn Laws were repealed through the Importation Act of 15 May, 1846. Because of his former attitudes against the Corn Laws, which

²⁹ Ernest Llewellyn Sir Woodward, *The Age of Reform*, p. 61.

³⁰ Francis Wrigley Hirst, *From Adam Smith to Philip Snowden: A History of Free Trade in Great Britain*, p. 15.

quarrelled with the interests of the landowners, Robert Peel lost, with a great majority, votes for his Irish Coercion Bill on 25 June. Being affected by this failure, he retired on 29 June, 1846. Yet, this resignation did not prevent the league's militants to perpetuate their strife for a free trade economy.

On the other side, Samuel Smiles, the Scottish Doctor and Writer, believed that the poor had to overcome impediments through being producers rather than dependents; therefore, he published his book *Self-help* in 1882. In this piece of writing, Samuel Smiles introduced distinct models who constructed their own success by hard work, perseverance, and self-reliance. Kathleen Duffy described this manuscript in her article "Samuel Smiles Victorian Self-Help Author" as 'the most popular self-improvement book and a Victorian publishing phenomenon which went through five editions in one year'.³¹

1.3. The New Poor Law's Paradoxes

1.3.1. Children in Mines and Mills rather than Schools

The highly speeded industrial progress, which reached its pick in the Victorian era, was too costly for both adults and children. Despite their young age, they were harshly exploited in hard toils in mines, lands, and seas; they worked similarly for long hours as apprentices in factories, domestic servants, drudges, chimney-sweepers, and in other risky jobs. The cotton mills for example employed twenty thousand children aged less than 13, and more than eighty thousand between 13 and 18, whereas the number of women aged more than 18 rated one hundred thousand.³²

In some cases, the kids were responsible for feeding their parents who observed their older children carrying on their backs the younger ones, almost

³¹ Kathleen Duffy, " Samuel Smiles Victorian Self Help Author," in <http://www.suite101.com/article/samuel-smiles-self-help-author-a129363>. Accessed on 20 June 2011.

³² Maurice Bruce, op.cit., p. 63.

asleep, and left their homes in the early morning towards the mills; they did not join their families except at night.³³ Added to this mournful image, some of those young labourers encountered various obstructions at work. The cruelty of their employers was obviously pictured, here:

The same boy told me that he had been frequently knocked down with the billy-roller, and that on one occasion, he had been hung up by a rope round the body, and almost frightened to death... . I have seen their bodies almost broken down, so that they could not walk without assistance, when they have been 17 or 18 years of age. I know many cases of poor young creatures who have worked in factories, and who have been worn down by the system at the age of 16 and 17.³⁴

As a feedback to those inhuman practices, a wide campaign against child labour in Yorkshire and elsewhere started. Numerous social reformers denounced the issue. Richard Oastler, who was an outstanding figure in the factory movement, wrote his famous letter “Yorkshire Slavery” to the *Leeds Mercury* newspaper on 29 September, 1830 in which he complained that labour conditions in England were worse than those on the plantations of the West Indies. The same figure revealed incessantly his antagonism to the tyranny of the factory system ‘the very streets which receive the droppings of an ‘Anti -Slavery Society’ are every morning wet by the tears of innocent victims at the accursed shrine of avarice’.³⁵ Several of his publications like *the Law and the Needle*, *The Mischiefs and Iniquities of Paper Money*, and *The Curse of the Factory System* demonstrated his anti-factory attitudes. During the year of 1833 , he held his first meeting in London by the help of the London Society for the improvement of the factory children .

³³ Maurice Bruce, *ibid.*

³⁴ “Evidence of Richard Oastler on ‘Yorkshire Slavery’ ”, in www.historyhome.co.uk/people/oastbio.htm

³⁵ Quoted in Maurice Bruce, *op.cit.*, p. 61.

By 1840, new enquiries were made to examine the conditions in which children worked. The results were upsetting, as it will be cleared up in the coming illustrations. For the sake of removing that anguish in which the young labourers lived, Sir Robert Peel proposed for employers to improve conditions of work and wages for apprentices, but they refused. However, this intolerance made child labour in Britain worse than the other countries, as this slave owner maintained:

I have always thought myself disgraced by being the owner of black slaves, but we never, in the West Indies thought it was possible for any human being to be so cruel as to require a child of 9 years old to work 12½ hours a day; and that, you acknowledge, is your regular practice.³⁶

Moreover, the weak youngsters were not only separated from their parents, but they were also severely punished for minor mistakes they made. A vivid picture was portrayed, here:

One I have in my eye particularly now, whose forehead has been cut open by the thong; whose cheeks and lips have been laid open, and whose back has been almost covered with black stripes; and the only crime that little boy, who was 10 years and 3 months old, had committed, was that he retched three cardings.³⁷

Meanwhile, Oastler's anti-slavery theories were increasingly adopted. Many of his contemporaries such as John Fielden , George Bull , John Wood and Michael Sadler affirmed that slavery, in Britain, was not only a shame but also a crime which had to be fought by all means till it would be absolutely abolished .

³⁶ "Evidence of Richard Oastler on 'Yorkshire Slavery' ", in www.historyhome.co.uk/people/oastbio.htm

³⁷ "Evidence of Richard Oastler on 'Yorkshire Slavery' ", *ibid.*

After a long debate with the commissioners in Fixby, a large suburb in north-west Kirklees, Frankland Lewis asked Thomas Thornhill, the absentee landlord of Fixby, to think about a law that would protect children from ill-treatment at work. This request, however, bothered many capitalists whose great majority of employees were kids.

Moreover, the employers' irritation offended Oastler terribly, he lost his job first, and then he was taken to jail due to debts he could not pay for Thomas Thornhill in 1840. Of course, this end was the price that Oastler paid for the sake of children's emancipation. In this respect, he alleged:

*I have never ceased to use every legal means, which I had it in my power to use, for the purpose of emancipating these innocent slaves...I have since that had many opponents to contend against; but not one single fact which I have communicated has ever been contradicted, or ever can be... I have refrained from exposing the worst parts of the system, for they are so gross that I dare not publish them.*³⁸

Nevertheless, Oastler's internment did not prevent the ten-hours movement's activists to wrestle once more against exploitation. The result was the new law called the Mines Act in 1842; it prohibited women and children to work in mines and made the employment of boys less than 10 years illegal. Another regulation, emerging in 1844, reduced the hours of work in textile factories to six and a half for children less than 13 years old and to twelve for girls and women.³⁹

On the other hand, Richard Oastler did not abandon his beliefs, he wrote *the Fleet Papers* during his imprisonment. After his release in 1844, he endured his fighting until the Ten-Hours Act emerged in 1847. Although, this regulation

³⁸ "Evidence of Richard Oastler on 'Yorkshire Slavery'", *ibid.*

³⁹ Maurice Bruce, *op.cit.*, p. 63.

dealt only with children in mills, it remained a greatest achievement in labour history. Yet, it was extended later to involve children in all factories by 1861. The hours of work for both women and children were trimmed down.

1.3.2. Workhouses as Sources of Evil and Fear

The reforms that improved child labour to a certain extent were expected in workhouses likewise. The number of the poor was in a continuous rise. The Workhouse Test Act of 1723 imposed the indoor relief and work poor rate; therefore, the government had to open sufficient workhouses to receive all those poor.

Worse of all was that these workhouses faced tremendous troubles in feeding, clothing and taking care of their inmates' health for financial reasons. Misery, then, was beyond description. Gibson Colin cited one of the most striking examples that occurred in that era; women were sold in markets with low prices as he argued:

In some cases, like that of Henry Cook, in 1814 the poor law authorities forced the husband to sell his wife rather than have to maintain her and her child in the Effingham workhouse. She was bought at Croydon Market for one shilling, the parish paid for the cost of the journey and a wedding dinner.⁴⁰

Signs of elaboration remained imperceptible for several decades. Not until 1831 that the government took some procedures for improvement; it spent £7 million on poor relief which meant more than 10 shilling per head.⁴¹ Yet this move was criticised by Fowler Simon who noted that 'those seeking assistance

⁴⁰ Gibson Colin, *Dissolving Wedlock*, p. 51.

⁴¹ Derek Fraser, *The Evolution of the Welfare State*, p. 40.

pushed the system to the verge of collapse'.⁴² Such a thought influenced the continuity of this financial help and the budget was lowered again.

Conversely, Jeremy Bentham's ideas had great social and political effects. Philanthropy, then, was a good remedy for social disintegration, since it strengthened relations between members of the community, as it was the only weapon used to overwhelm poverty.

The progress in thought diverted people towards efficient cooperation as it encouraged similarly the Fenwick Weavers Society to set up the First Consumer Cooperative during the year of 1769 in East Ayrshire; it sold bulk food and books. In the same area, a library was opened as early as 1808 under the cooperative system that helped the birth of other organisations such as the Friendly Victualling Society in Lennox town during 1812.

At the political level, the Whig Government appointed a royal commission headed by Edwin Chadwick as a secretary to enquire on the poor-law system. The commissioners visited a large number of parishes and workhouses in rural and industrial areas of both England and Wales, 'the sick, the aged and the young among the poorer but self-supporting classes were far from well off; the conditions for those who had to come into the workhouse had therefore to be still worse'.⁴³

Marjorie Kohli portrayed how the exploitation of orphans and foundlings as factory slaves was greater than the help they were given, about this carelessness, he argued:

Moreover, the mills, being isolated from centres of population and for many years free from inspections, the public were kept ignorant

⁴² Fowler Simon, *Workhouse: The People : The Places: The Life Behind the Closed Doors*, p. 130.

⁴³ Maurice Bruce, *op.cit*, p. 99.

of the price in human suffering which was being paid for cheap cloth.⁴⁴

Hence, the commissioners who were convinced that the maladministration in the mixed workhouses was the cause of evil recommended a set of reforms in their report. It was suggested to abolish the rate-in-aid to supplement low wages, isolate individuals according to age, and sex considerations in separated workhouses. The same report pointed that the central authority should control practices of administrators to protect the poor from any abuses indoors.

In addition to that, Chadwick's commission proposed to gather the old parishes into new unions and prohibit the outdoor relief so that the workhouse would be the only way for getting help. Eventually, these recommendations were enacted by Parliament in 1834. About this legislation, Marjorie Kohli said:

The Poor-Law Amendment Act of 1834 gave the unions the power to separate children from their parents. Trade union saw as its duty the training of the child to ensure that each child had some form of livelihood (thus preventing him or her from becoming a burden on the parish when of age.⁴⁵

Effectively, several institutions were opened across the country to apply the theory of separation that Marjorie Kohli mentioned. These newborn Unions followed strict internal rules that concerned diet, discipline, dress, education, and uniforms for men and women.⁴⁶

The famous actor Charlie Chaplin lived with his mother Hannah in Lambeth workhouse, he and his half-brother were from those who benefited from education in Hanwell School.⁴⁷ However, the Act was not executed in all areas

⁴⁴ Marjorie Kohli, *The Golden Bridge*, p. 266.

⁴⁵ Marjorie Kohli, *op.cit.*, p. 265.

⁴⁶ Marjorie Kohli, *ibid.*

⁴⁷ Fowler Simon, *op.cit.*, pp. 130-31.

such as the Northern and the Midland industrial districts where a wide number of the poor lived in misery.

After a couple of years, the commissioners modified their instructions, the out-relief was allowed in Nottingham whose workhouse, recently built, was unable to deal with all the unemployed. Few years later, the northern unions granted food, potatoes and bread in return for some products made by the poor in their homes. By 1841, a statistical study mentioned that 192,000 individuals were in workhouses and around 1,108,000 persons received an outdoor relief.⁴⁸

During that same year, the authority spent £892,000 on workhouses and £3 million on out relief⁴⁹; nevertheless, these amounts could not prevent Andover and Huddersfield scandals. The primary scandal occurred in 1845, the poor were subjected to a severe starvation which ended with a quarrel over bones, used in fertilizing lands, to eat.

John Walter, *The Times* editor and politician, denounced the practice of hunger policies inside the workhouses in both Parliament and press. The Huddersfield workhouse was the scene for a second scandal which attracted attentions of the public opinion in 1848 as it was portrayed in the following quotation:

*No terms could be too strong to characterize the abominations that had been practiced towards the poor...beds in which patients suffering in typhus, have died one after another, have been again and again repeatedly used for fresh patients, without any change or attempt at purification.*⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Fowler Simon, *ibid.*

⁴⁹ Fowler Simon, *ibid.*

⁵⁰ "Evidence of Richard Oastler on 'Yorkshire Slavery'," in <http://www.victorianweb.org/history/yorkslave.html>. Accessed on 15 June 2011.

Moreover, sanctions like beating, preventing meals, or decreasing them, spending a night or days in jail depended on the size of mistakes made by the inmates were tolerated in this workhouse. On the other hand, the industrial boom that Britain was living required more labour force. For this reason, hundreds of people went to work in towns which were already overcrowded.

Yet, it was difficult to cope with the gloomy atmosphere of the workhouses. Maurice Bruce as the other intellectuals felt sorry for the reputation of ‘the prison-like character of the workhouses made the poor law an object of horror to the working-classes in the nineteenth century’.⁵¹ George Lansbury who was elected as a guardian in 1892 expressed similar opinions; he narrated:

Going down the narrow lane, ringing the bell, waiting while an official with a not too pleasant face looked through a grating to see who was there, and hearing his unpleasant voice... made it easy for me to understand why the poor dreaded and hated these places It was not necessary to write up the words “Abandon hope all ye who enter here”... everything possibly was done to inflict mental and moral degradation... of goodwill, kindness, there was none.⁵²

The lively description that George Lansbury pointed to, just before, demonstrated how inappropriate these workhouses were for survival. Therefore, the government opened the doors for contributions. The existing associations and societies such as the Metropolitan Association for Befriending Young Servants⁵³, the Association for Befriending Boys and the Girl’s Friendly Society⁵⁴ collaborated with the Boards of Guardians in the poor relief operations. Actually, hundreds of children immigrated to Canada with the help of these societies.

⁵¹ Maurice Bruce, op.cit., p. 91.

⁵² Quoted in Maurice Bruce, *The Coming of the Welfare State*, p. 92.

⁵³ The M. A. B. Y. S was established in 1875 by Jane Nassau senior and Henrietta Barnett.

⁵⁴ It was founded in 1875 by Mary Townsend.

Those distressing facts, illustrated earlier, intensified the outcry against the mistreatment of the poor inside the workhouses. George Lansbury's statement 'decent treatment and hung the rates'⁵⁵, was a wish for tolerance and humanity. John Galsworthy also disgraced human beings' exploitation in a civilised country as Great Britain.

1.4. The Rise of Socialism in the United Kingdom

By the early years of the 19th century, the Industrial Revolution afflicted hundreds of workers who depended on the products of traditional industries for survival. Since, mechanised looms took their places, the Luddites, who were a group of unemployed textile artisans led by General Ned Ludd, revolted in November 1811 in Nottingham.

The angry handloom weavers burned cotton and wool mills, they also broke machines in Nottingham and England. Although, the British army intervened to re-establish order in these two towns, already mentioned, the events shifted to Yorkshire in 1812. Besides, serious clashes with military forces took place in Lancashire during the year of 1813 in both Westthonghton and Burton mills.

The Luddites' violent actions inflicted a real terror for businessmen and magistrates who feared death at the hands of King Ludd's sympathizers. In an attempt to save themselves from any possible danger, they built secret hidings as a BBC News' correspondent reported 'the bolt hole was designed to hide from angry textile workers'.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Quoted in Maurice Bruce, *The Coming of the Welfare State*, p. 93.

⁵⁶ "Workmen Discover Secret Chambers", BBC News, Tuesday, 15 August 2006.

The luddism⁵⁷ became a national threat that had to be fought by the political power. Eric Hobsbawn's remark 'at one time there were more British soldiers fighting the luddites than Napoleon 1 on the Iberian Peninsula' made the authority ready to riposte .⁵⁸ Therefore, the Frame Breaking Act and the Malicious Damage Act of 1812 prohibited all offences against means of production and properties.

In York, as an example, the trial of protestors who were involved in the precedent year's events ended with the execution of some of them and the transportation of others to Australia in 1813.

In the after math of the Napoleonic Wars, Great Britain confronted a highly severe depression. In 1815, a group of interweaved factors worsened the economic and social life together. Machines replaced increasingly men in factories; this matter drove thousands of workers to unemployment. The crisis grew more complicated by the Corn Laws. The price of bread was elevated; consequently, hunger threatened most of the poor families.

Economically, iron and coal industries were seriously afflicted; their production decreased and their incomes were minimised. It seemed paradoxical at that particular moment, with all pressures formerly described, to introduce McKenna duties that were supposed to protect economy which was already weakened by the slump. What were these duties about and what was their impact on the British society?

The Liberal Reginald McKenna, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, limited the importation of foreign luxuries by imposing a tariff of 33 ⅓ per cent on motor-cars and cycles, clocks, watches, musical instruments, and of varying rates on films.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ A weaver's movement which defended traditional industries against the threats of industrialism.

⁵⁸ Eric Hobsbawn, "The Machine Breakers," *Labouring men: Studies in the History of Labour*, p. 12.

⁵⁹ Charles Loch Mowat, *Britain Between the Wars*, p. 131.

Such a policy led to several social upheavals against the political power. Pentrich Rising of 1817, for example, demonstrated those heavy consequences that poverty still had in manipulating human beings' thoughts. A large number of Pentrich's dwellers, stockings, ironworkers, and quarrymen went out in a march, to Nottingham, organised by Jeremiah Brandreth who was an unemployed stockinger. The authority stopped this march and arrested some of the participants.

The captain Jeremiah Brandreth, accused of treason, was hanged then beheaded with an axe. This tragic end was a lesson for those who would think to disturb the order in the future. Nonetheless, the rebellion against power never gave up. The rising of 1820 after the general strike in Scotland was one example from the various confrontations to the government.

Having a strong belief that neither protestations nor violence would solve the economic problems of Britain, the philanthropist Robert Owen advised the workers to organise themselves into groups and run their own businesses. This proposal would enable them to overcome poverty and secure their future.

Such a suggestion was highly significant in the establishment of the workers' co-operative store in Scotland, mainly in the cotton mills of New Lanark. Motivated by the success of this experience, Owen expended his scheme; he created new communities in Orbison and other areas so that all the poor could contribute.

The Americans admired Owen's achievement; they invited him to New Harmony to apply a similar plan. Effectively, these projects produced good incomes for the poor families, but they were impeded by financial problems that prevented their continuance. Yet, the hopes of Robert Owen in fighting despair that poverty compelled made him work harder to elaborate socialism through a more powerful co-operative system.

As early as 1828, William King, who was influenced by Owen's views, founded a monthly periodical, *The Co-operator*, in which he suggested to avoid drinking and create shops with cooperative principles having three trustees and a weekly account audit. The role of this publication in rising consciousness in the British society was paramount indeed.

The number of societies increased in Manchester to reach 16 by 1830. One year later, the first co-operative congress was organised by the Manchester and Salford co-operative council. The movement expanded in the 1830s, more than 250 towns and villages launched co-operative societies.⁶⁰

Robert Owen's Grand National Consolidated Trades Union was founded in 1834. Yet, its protest following the Tolpuddle⁶¹ case ended its powers; however its downfall influenced the run of many cooperatives which were shut at the end. Nevertheless, Owen persisted to execute a variety of philanthropist programs. As a starting point, he formed the Friendly Association of Unionists of all Classes of all Nations in 1835.

A couple of years later, the National Community of Friendly Society opened 50 branches in Yorkshire, Cheshire, and Lancashire. By 1839, the two organisations were united in a Universal Community Society of Rational Religionists.⁶² The movement grew stronger from one year to another. The Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers, one of the most important co-operatives of the nineteenth century that called for political and religious neutrality, democracy, and social justice, was established in 1844.

⁶⁰ Doug Picock, "social Strife: the birth of the Co-op", p. 2.

⁶¹ Six trade unionists from the mining village of Tolpuddle were accused and convicted of administering unlawful oaths under the Mutiny Act of 1749 while their combination held abortive discussions with their employers, who had cut their miserably low wages from nine to six shillings. Their sentence to transportation provoked large - scale demonstrations in London and other cities. Source: Asa Briggs, *Social History of England*, p. 202.

⁶² Edward Royle, *Robert Owen (1771-1858) and the Commencement of the Millennium*, p. 95.

If Robert Owen could share the pain and joy of workers he met on the ground, Frederick Engels could only feel their despair and denounced it in his writings, as he did in *Conditions on the working class in England* published in 1845, he reported:

*I have never seen so deeply demoralized, so incurably debased by selfishness, so corroded within, so incapable of progress the English bourgeoisie... It knows no bliss save that of rapid gain, no pain save that of losing gold. In the presence of this avarice and lust of gain, it is not possible for a single human sentiment or opinion to remain untainted. . . The relation of the manufacturer to his operatives has nothing human in it; it is purely economic. The manufacturer is the Capital, the operative Labour.*⁶³

Nonetheless, solidarity among the workers remained powerful. The London Trade Council was founded in 1860. After the success of Rochdale whose unemployed weavers and tradesmen sold food items, other towns adopted the system. Furthermore, in 1863 the North of England Cooperative Society grouped 300 co-ops from Lancashire and Yorkshire.⁶⁴

David Thompson wrote in his article “Co-op Then and Now” about the overwhelming progress of the co-operative system ‘from the little shop which still stands on Toad Lane, the modern cooperative began its journey. Today, 720 million people in almost every country in the world participate in cooperative enterprises’.⁶⁵

⁶³Frederick Engels, “Conditions on the Working Class in England”, in www.marxists.org/archives/works/1845/index.htm. Accessed on 31 March, 2011.

⁶⁴Doug Picoock, *ibid*.

⁶⁵David Thompson, “Co-op Then and Now”, in www.cooperativegrocer.coop/articles/2004-01-09. Accessed on 30 March 2011.

On the other side, the royal commission recognised the Union in 1867; it was a great event for workers. Additionally, the Sheffield scandal was behind the emergence of Trade Unions Congress during 1868. The Union held its first annual congress in the same year as it took part in the co-operative movement that was represented by 300.000 members in 1870. Meanwhile, the Union's councils increased and its branches grew to 927.⁶⁶

The Trade Union was legalised in 1871; yet some laws appeared to prohibit its involvement in any violent act or criminal offence against the nation and its properties. Moreover, A Social Democratic Federation emerged in 1882, Eleanor Marx accepted to join it but Frederick Engels and Karl Marx refused to take part. A conflict raised between the Marxists and the Socialist League headed by William Morris, hence this disagreement allowed the foundation of the Socialist Party of Great Britain.

During the same period, the Union's popularity exceeded, new members were joined and their number augmented from 800, 000 persons in 1888 to 1, 500, 000 by 1891.⁶⁷ In the meantime, the paradoxes of industrialism were not limited to much work and low wages, but they also subjected the workers' health to risk. Factories polluted the air and killing viruses threatened life. In contrast, it was a golden age for some professionals. Doctors and lawyers became wealthier while factory labourers were getting poorer.

The case was worsened by the problem of demography, the census of 1801 indicated that the number of population grew from 5 million in 1660 to seven million in 1760, whereas the number shifted to 14 million in 1831 and to 18 million by 1851,⁶⁸ (see page 116). The rates continued to develop higher from one year to another. Consequently, it was too hard for health services to deal with the huge number of the sick, especially in times of epidemics. Nonetheless, vaccination against smallpox became free by 1840.

⁶⁶ Asa Briggs, *op. cit.*, p. 203.

⁶⁷ Asa Briggs, *ibid.*

⁶⁸ Maurice Bruce, *ibid.*, p. 45.

A great interest was given to the environment's protection through the Nuisances-Removal Act appearing in 1846; it was about cleaning, draining and water supply. Yet, this law was not applied due to the absence of a competent executive authority. In the subsequent year, Dr William Duncan was elected as first medical officer of health in Britain; he indicated that the level of infant mortality was very high in Liverpool, for it represented 225 deaths against a national average of 153 and 19 births against the national average of 40.⁶⁹

According to Dr John Simon, who was nominated in London during the year of 1848, the current reforms would not go further without the existence of a true Ministry of Health. However, creating a sane surrounding was the aim of the Act of that same year.

Combining all efforts both socially and politically in the cleaning-up of the environment was certainly essential for a healthy society. Therefore, vaccination against epidemics, which was free in 1840, became compulsory in 1853; moreover, prevention against illnesses was a main concern for legislation, accordingly enquiries started to deal with causes of sicknesses by 1855.⁷⁰

Furthermore, the Adulteration of Food Act was passed in 1860; it prohibited the use of dangerous ingredients in food industry. This step was followed in 1879 by the inauguration of the public analyst whose role was to protect individuals from any contamination. In addition to that, a general medical council as well as a medical register came into existence in 1858; their powers were reinforced by the Act of 1866 which aimed at treating all illnesses that were caused by the epidemics which occurred during the same year.

⁶⁹ Maurice Bruce, *op.cit.*, p. 112.

⁷⁰ Maurice Bruce, *ibid.*

In 1870, medical officers were trained to get their diploma at the end of their studies in order to work in health services. Subsequently, the appointment of medical officers of health was obligatory by the Act of 1872. Simultaneously, Disraeli's government established more health institutions including a general board and a set of other local boards in various parts of the country.⁷¹ Meanwhile, the Registration Act of 1874 compelled doctors to sign their certification about the diseases they discovered.

Sanitary services existed everywhere by the year of 1875, municipal authorities became responsible for health in towns but in rural areas it was the task of the poor-law unions. In the same year, a campaign against fraud in selling food and medicines started. As a result, the Sale of Food and Drugs Act appeared. However, the selection of job appliers in public health services was based on new considerations; competence and diploma were essentially required.

The wave of reforms extended to involve other citizens from other areas. In 1889, a county council was instituted so that health conditions in county parts would be improved. In the meantime, the Notification of Disease Act obligated the doctors to inform the patients about their infectious illnesses when ascertained.

In an attempt to develop a sound surrounding, the government persisted to broaden its campaign against diseases, which did not only hurt individuals only but threatened also the whole environment. Powers were given to the local authorities to demolish the unsanitary buildings. Moreover, the law impelled repairing and reconstructing the old houses.

However, demography in the late years of the nineteenth century created a

⁷¹ Maurice Bruce, *op.cit.*, p. 112.

severe housing crisis. Nonetheless, the government thought of solving the problem. The great exhibition of 1851 introduced model houses which were intended to be distributed to workers later. In addition to that, the Common Lodging-Houses Act was passed in order to deal with the issue of homelessness. Yet, having no local executive bodies to apply this project made the construction of these buildings go to the private enterprise.

The Artisans' and Labourers' Dwellings Improvements Act of 1875 was also worth to mention. The purpose of this legislation was to create new sanitary areas with suitable healthy buildings. The same Act made the local authority legally responsible for compensating the house owner's losses.

Although, R. A. Cross, the Home Secretary of Disraeli's Government, perceived that the reforms were of urgent need for the whole community, they could not go further because of the heavy costs of such kind of operations. In London, for example, the amount required to clean 59 acres was 1,500,000 as the Acts of 1868 and 1875 displayed.⁷²

More annoying was the result of the royal commission's enquiry; the report of 1885 revealed that the poor, whose inferior salaries did not permit the payment of rents of their old houses, lived in horrible conditions. Rottenness and air pollution killed many of them. Accordingly, the authority pulled down thousands of slums and built new houses in London, Liverpool, Manchester, and Birmingham.

The reforms were not restricted to health and housing only, but education was also considered. As early as 1833, the central government granted both societies: the National Secular Society and the British Foreign School Society the amount of 20.000 pounds to build primary schools.⁷³

⁷² Maurice Bruce, *op.cit.*, p. 121.

⁷³ Maurice Bruce, *ibid*

Yet, the country needed more schools in 1838. The private council designed a committee headed by Dr. Kay Shuttleworth to achieve a school-building project. As a result, new schools were built in different areas. The belief that science would push the country towards advance encouraged Joseph Chamberlain to create the National Education League in Birmingham in 1869.

Further than that, 2.568 school boards that provided two and a half million school places were opened, while the government supported fourteen thousand voluntary schools.⁷⁴ Education became compulsory by 1870. But, would illiteracy disappear totally from Britain? According to Maurice Bruce, this wish was everybody's dream but a hard task to fulfil at the same time because:

*The curriculum was too narrow, the methods were too rigid, the classes too large and many children lacked the health and nourishment to benefit fully, while in any case schooling ended early and few parents would have had it otherwise when a child's earnings mattered to the meagre family budget.*⁷⁵

In fact, those obstacles, mentioned above, restrained the success of the whole process of education; nonetheless, more investigations to examine deficiencies were made. The census of 1881 indicated that the number of blinds in Scotland was 3,650 persons, 240 of them were at school age. Around 108 of these blinds received no education apart from some occasional visits of teachers of the Out-door Blind Association.⁷⁶

On the other hand, the Education of Blind and Deaf-mute Children Act of 1889, which appeared in Scotland, was important in terms of presenting equal opportunities of learning for all British kids whether they were able-bodied or

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ J. A. Haythornthwaite, *Scotland in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 73.

disabled. Conversely, education became free in 1891. Advanced evening and technical classes started in schools where attendance was fundamental.

In addition to those privileges, the poor pupils were given clothes, meals with low prices, and even examined by doctors who visited them, from time to time in medical inspections, to check their health. Nonetheless, children were not exploited only in factories, as previously illustrated, but also they were at schools.

Such practices, which contradicted utilitarianism principles, caused a real suffering for the whole lower class during the last decades of the Victorian age as explained earlier. In other words, the new poor-law system brought more frustration than it was in Elizabethan times.

Nevertheless, a group of varied political parties and organisations appeared to decrease pressure and widen the social solidarity. In June 1880, for example, Henry M. Hyndman founded the Social Democratic Federation, whereas the Fabian Society was established in 4 January 1884.

Few years later, the Scottish Labour Party whose leader was Robert Bontine Cunningham, the first Socialist M. P. in the United Kingdom, was set up in 1888 precisely. However, Keir Hardy who appreciated Karl Marx's ideas in *Capital* formed the Independent Labour Party by 1893.

At the economic level, production developed and made more profits from one year to another meanwhile poverty increased speedily; this might lead at the end to question whether the twentieth century will have a similar declined society and a highly progressed economy, or will be there a rise of a stronger nation both economically and socially? This subject matter will be tackled in the second chapter of the current research work with a deeper investigation.

Chapter Two

Welfare State: Equal Opportunities for All

Despite the huge humanitarian aids that the philanthropist organisations and Trade Unions provided for social relief, poverty in Britain continued to be a major trouble. How to get rid of was a primary preoccupation for the twentieth century's politicians. Nevertheless, the political consensus that characterised the modern era, paved the way to a continual process of reforms which contributed more or less in overwhelming hardships, as it will be displayed later.

2.1. The Liberal Welfare Reforms

There was a common agreement among scholars over the concept of the welfare state. According to David Thomson, the system signified 'a whole programme of political, economic, and social reforms strongly tinged with the ideas of nationalisation, economic planning, social security, and a more social democracy'.¹

Being unable for long years to save people from the bitter offences caused by unemployment and starvation, the Conservative Government lost its reputation. Furthermore the fears of increasing bread prices made people lost confidence in the governing system, as E. N. Nash stated 'the Conservative Party was under attack for its failure to keep down the price of bread, and its support for the exploitation of Chinese workmen in cruel conditions in South African goldmines'.²

Thus, this attitude against the Conservatives enabled both Liberals and Labours to raise their powers. For instance, Thomas .R. Steels, a member of the amalgamated society of railway servants, proposed for his union to gather all left-wing organisations in a conference and unite them in a single body to sponsor Parliament candidates.

¹ David Thomson, *England in the Twentieth Century*, p. 212.

² E. N. Nash, *Britain in the Modern World*, p. 12.

At the memorial Hall of Farringdon Street, the debates started on 26 and 27 February 1900. In this meeting, the delegates decided to establish the Labour Representation Committee whose secretary was Ramsay Macdonald; the purpose was to support the Labour candidates in Parliament financially. Another gain for Labours in the same year was the election of the two Socialists Keir Hardie and Richard Bell as parliamentary members.

Being backed by the Trade Union and the working-class, the Liberals won the election of 1906, while the Labour activists founded their own party. But, would this swing of power from the Conservatives to Liberals improve the British life? Things will be clearer after the examination of the Liberals' achievements across this chapter.

The new elected authority appointed a commission to enquire on the working of the poor-law system. After the task was over, the commission's members recorded their remarks as well as their recommendations in the majority report; their observations were not contrasting those of David March who claimed:

There was real poverty to be found among hardworking men and women whose wages after working long hours under intolerable conditions were insufficient to provide for a reasonable standard of life , and of course it was quite impossible for them to save in order to protect themselves in sickness, unemployment ,old age, or widowhood.¹

As far as mixed workhouses were concerned, the commissioners asked for a good treatment of the inmates, for they did more harm than good as already explained. The report objected respectively the use of some offensive names and suggested their replacement.

¹ David March, op. cit., p. 2.

For instance, the name of “Associations of Harshness and Hopelessness” changed to “Public Assistance,” whereas the term “destitute” was replaced in the report by “necessitous.” The commissioners proposed equally employment, outdoor relief, insurance against unemployment and invalidity, public works and labour exchanges to lessen the sharpness of misery.

Concerning health, it was advised that both children and old-aged should benefit from a fitting medical care. The same commissioners declared that it would be safer to allow the county council coordinate between the two committees of the public assistance and the voluntary aid; they similarly described the British educational system as outdated and incompetent, they suggested, therefore, quick reforms for better results in learning.

Although the report insisted on urgent help for the poor, the board of trade presidencies and the Presidents of the local government board were the first to demand a rise in their wage. John Burns’ salary for example increased from £2,000 to £5,000.² This meant that satisfying all the needs of all classes of society would be quite troublesome for the Liberal Government.

Nevertheless, as a starting point the authority nominated a committee to observe how the poor were treated in workhouses. Thereafter, the investigation revealed how much the paupers were tortured indoors; E. N. Nash expressed a little part of this suffering in the subsequent quotation:

*We have seen half-witted women nursing the sick, feeble-minded women in charge of babies, and imbecile old men put to look after the boys out of school hours.*³

² Maurice Bruce, op. cit., p. 178.

³ Quoted in E. N. Nash, *Britain in the Modern World*, p. 14.

The picture that E. N. Nash portrayed above was neither a fiction nor a dream but a reality observed by those who visited the workhouses. It was more striking that indigence remained at the top of social problems in a rich country like Great Britain. Analysing this case seemed to be paradoxical for Maurice Bruce who claimed that 'the commission had brought to a point the unease at social conditions which was the reverse side of the gaiety and opulence of the Edwardian era'.⁴

Moreover, Beatrice Webb, the English sociologist and economist, pointed that large masses of population were threatened by the danger of an extreme poverty leading almost to death. According to Beatrice and her husband Sidney Webb, who played a prominent role in shaping the friendly society, destitution was strongly linked to personal failures. Therefore, individuals should protect themselves in times of recessions, unemployment, illnesses, and old age.

Building additional social services to take care of the dispossessed was another objective stated in the minority report. In other words, the authorities had to assume their full responsibilities concerning the relief of all members of society from children to old- aged. For example, the Ministry of Labour should deal with the unemployed, whereas the medical service would be responsible for the sick of different ages, while the local councils were supposed to appoint committees dealing with the varied social cases.

Furthermore, the Webbs who believed in gradual improvement of society recommended some important solutions to minimize the grief that unemployment entailed; according to them, industrial training and longer school courses for the young would be helpful to be confident and forget despair. For adults, a ten-year programme of public works in urgent economic projects was advised.

⁴ Maurice Bruce, op.cit. , p. 181.

In the meantime, this report which displayed harmful realities and attacked the workhouse system disturbed the guardians who rejected the Webb's proposals entirely; yet, at the end as John Burns argued, they accepted change but never admitted expulsion.⁵

In fact, it was due to the minority report that the government determined to reconsider its policies. Firstly, the term "workhouses" disappeared from use definitely, it was replaced by "the poor- law institutions" in which lower-class people, capable of producing any kind of work, were authorised to live.⁶ Secondly, the political system promoted a good treatment of the inmates of the new institutions ran by the local authorities which intended also the outdoor relief enhancement.

Maurice Bruce affirmed that the poor had to be "sufficiently fed, clothed and lodged. Moreover, cases were to be followed up."⁷ Meanwhile, the ill-reputed workhouses' guardians tried to purify their dirty image. Nursing was a good example which reflected this favourable attempt. The poor's health, which was neglected earlier, became regularly controlled.

According to the Liberal leaders, poverty was not a shame, but the shame was in maintaining it forever. Therefore, a considerable change to support powerless members of society was noticeable. Being convinced that children would be the future of the nation; the authority felt more concerned with their physical and mental protection. For that purpose, the state appointed a medical service in schools to take care of pupils' health as it impelled their feeding by the School Meals Act of 1906.⁸

⁵ Maurice Bruce, *ibid.*, p. 180.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ E. N. Nash, *op.cit.*, p. 15.

In addition to children welfare, the insurance of the old people, whose neither age nor a fitting body enabled them to work, was a part of Liberal primary preoccupations. Lloyd George defended ironically in Parliament the rights of the old men in getting a relief so that they could feed their kids.

After hot debates in the House of Commons, Lloyd George proposals were approved. The Act of Old Age Pensions was passed in 1908; the persons over seventy were given the sum of 5 shillings a week. Certainly, the amount was not enough, but it could more or less provide some needs.

Although thousands of old- aged benefited from these grants, the policy was heavily criticised by the Liberal Lord Rosebery, a previous Prime Minister, who viewed the insurance system as ‘a scheme so prodigal of expenditure that might be dealing a blow at the Empire from which it would never recover’.⁹

Uncaring about his rivals’ opinions, Lloyd George carried on his reforms; he introduced a bill which he called the people’s budget in which he suggested to elevate taxation on incomes, spirits and lands in 1909.¹⁰ The Lords disapproved the bill and called for a general election that the Liberals won.

Despite the fact that the Lords continued their fierce campaign against Lloyd George’s social policies, the Act of the People’s Budget was finally passed in Parliament. Further reforms came through the National Insurance Act of 1911 which was supposed to modify the Pensions Act of 1908; it compelled the payment of four pence every week for workers, three pence for employers and two pence for the state.¹¹

A more vital Liberal achievement was the foundation of the Old Age Pension Fund; it ensured unemployment and medical fees out of the

⁹ Quoted in E. N. Nash, *Britain in the Modern World*, p. 17.

¹⁰ E. N. Nash, *op.cit.*, p. 25.

¹¹ E. N. Nash, *ibid.*

collaboration of the State, employers and workers, each had to pay two pence half penny. Seven shillings per week were granted to the unemployed office as a measure of insurance against a sudden loss of job. Besides, children and first offenders in prisons benefited from probation system under the Liberal leadership.

Yet, Osborne judgement of 1909 worsened the relationship between the Trade Unions and the government, whereas the number of Labour representatives increased from 29 to 42 members in the House of Commons. This success, however, disturbed Asquith Government which kept disregarding the Union's desire to pay the parliamentary members.

This unexpected attitude pushed the Labour leaders to respond through the street. Thus, the transport workers went out into large masses to claim better wages. Meanwhile, the authorities asked the Union to stop the strike as quickly as possible but this plea was disproved. Henceforth, an industrial action entailed a dreadful economic slump as E. N. Nash recorded, here :

Motor-cars and private vehicles of all kinds felt the pressure of shortage of petrol, and all the immense volume of trading traffic through the city streets from the docks to the warehouses and the great railway terminals ceased to move ... no trade was handled except by permission of the strike committee.¹²

To end up this crisis, the government ordered the army to re-establish order in streets. Simultaneously, the workers distributed a leaflet they wrote in 1912 in which they said:

*Don't Shoot...
When we go on strike to better Our lot which is the lot also of Your Fathers, Mothers Brothers and Sisters, you are called upon by your officers to Murder Us... Help us to win back Britain for the British and the World for the Workers.¹³*

¹² E. N. Nash, *ibid.*

¹³ E. N. Nash, *op.cit.* , p. 19.

Fearing to lose the support of the T. U. C, the Liberal authority passed the Dispute Act of 1913 , it abolished the Osborne judgement and permitted the Union to pay its Labour representatives in Parliament.

Unfortunately, the declaration of the First World War ceased, temporarily, the reforms carried out by the governing system. In 1916, Lloyd George was elected as a Prime Minister to lead the country in wartime. On the other hand, the Bolsheviks commanded by Vladimir Lenin overthrew the Russian Government in November 1917 and founded the Soviet Union.

Lenin started his primary reforms by taking back lands and factories from their owners and joined them to the state, whereas Lloyd George declared war against poverty in Britain when peace was re-established. About these latest reforms, David Marsh said:

. . . functions designed to improve the welfare of those citizens, comprising a majority of the population, who are unable through inadequate income to pay for the services necessary for the achievement of a reasonable standard of life. ¹⁴

Therefore, the head of government promised to rebuild ‘a fit country for the heroes’, men and women who ironically participated in the war¹⁵; in the meantime, he advocated feminine membership in political organisations. Indeed, the Lady Astor was the first appointed Conservative woman in the House of Commons. Another gain for women was the right to vote. Around 6 million females, including university graduates, householders and wives of householders aged of thirty and more were allowed to vote.

Despite the fact that the British society benefited widely from Lloyd George’s reforms, unemployment and briberies intensified stress socially.

¹⁴ David Marsh, op. cit, p. 2.

¹⁵ Peter Mauger, *The British People*, p. 61.

Honours were sold; £15,000 to be a knight and £ 50,000 to become a baron. Still, the government's inability to put an end to this corruption rendered people doubtful about the credibility of the Liberal power.¹⁶ Besides, the economic reforms were discredited when the duties on scientific instruments, optical glass, and dyes were banned.¹⁷ As a result, Lloyd George missed a great majority of his supporters. Worrying about his critical position, he determined coalition with the Conservatives who thought of him as Winston Churchill said 'the greatest master of the art of getting things done and putting things through that I ever knew'.¹⁸

Expressing a similar admiration, the Conservative leader Andrew Bonar-Law said 'we must never let the little man go'.¹⁹ This feeling of sympathy towards Lloyd George's personality influenced the people who kept regarding him as the man who won the war. Indeed, they were so numerous those who voted for him in the coupon election of 1918.²⁰

Subsequently, the rise of communism in Europe disturbed the capitalist governments which were afraid of Lenin's theories. Accordingly, they decided to fight in order to protect their interests, yet the British working-class refused to take part in the conflict.

A large campaign under the motto of 'Hands off Russia' was organised to prevent the involvement in Russian internal affairs. For the same purpose, the delegates, from all parts of the Kingdom, attended a conference in London in 1919; they warned that a general strike would take place, if Britain would interfere in destroying Russia.²¹ The passive response of the political system to this request made the Labour Party leaders impede the loading of the Jolly George ship with military supplies towards Poland in May, 1920. This pressure

¹⁶ E. N. Nash, op.cit., p. 8.

¹⁷ Charles Loch Mowat, op.cit., p. 132.

¹⁸ Quoted in E. N. Nash, *Britain in the Modern World*, p. 52.

¹⁹ E. N. Nash, *ibid.*

²⁰ Quoted in E. N. Nash, *Britain in the Modern World*, p. 54.

²¹ "Harry Pollitt: 1890- 1960", in [http : // www.comunist.party.org.uk](http://www.comunist.party.org.uk). Accessed on 27 October, 2010.

compelled the government to repel its violent plans.²² As inspirational as the French revolution was, the Bolshevik impact on the British political thought was substantial. David Thomson explained this point:

*Only now, indeed, did Marxism become a significant force in British politics...the existence of revolutionary Marxist government in Russia exerted new compulsions on Socialists to take a stand for or against the principles of Marxism. This pressure was intensified when, in 1920-1, an independent Communist Party of Great Britain came into existence.*²³

In addition to these conflicting political ideologies in the twenties, the burden of war debts, and the world recession effects undermined the British economic progress heavily. Hence, some legislative measures were immediately applied to avoid more deceptive results. The Dyestuffs Act, for example, embargoed the foreign goods so that the local industry could flourish. One year later, the Safeguarding of Industries Act imposed 33⅓% as duties on chemicals, optical glass, electrical instruments and dolls' glass eyes coming from Germany.²⁴

Simultaneously, Lord Rotherham's Anti-Waste League attacked David Lloyd George's policies which were considered to be wasteful. For that reason, Sir Eric Geddes, the Minister of Transport, was appointed at the head of a Committee on National Expenditure in August 1921. The purpose was to examine, with his colleagues Lord Inchcape, Lord Faringdon, Lord Maclay and Sir Guy Granet, next year's provisional estimates.

Thereafter, the members of the committee published a couple of reports on February 10, 1922 in which savings of £ 57 were recommended. C. L. Mowat

²² "Harry Pollitt: 1890- 1960", *ibid.*

²³ David Thomson, *op.cit.*, p. 65.

²⁴ Charles Loch Mowat, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

commented ‘the army and navy were the victims of the deepest cuts, £20 million and £21 million..., including reductions of officers and men numbering 50.000 and 35.000 in the two services’.²⁵ Workers in social services and Admiralty repudiated entirely Gedde’s proposals.

Afterwards, the government moderated the cuts which became £64 million. Naval reduction was halved while the new amount suggested for education was limited to £6 ½. Nonetheless, the budget of 1922 remained the first post-war budget below £1,000 million; the government’s expenditure dropped from 1,136 million in 1921 to £910 million by 1922.²⁶

Furthermore, the Air estimates would have to submit a reduction of £5 ½ million, while education’s cut was supposed to be 18 million, health £2½ million and war pensions £3, 3000,000.²⁷ Other reductions included the police and prison warders’ payments. The abolition of some ministries and departments was also suggested in the reports. The Ministry of Labour and the Employment Exchanges, the Ministry of Transport, the Mines Department, the Electricity Commissioners as well as the Department of Overseas Trade were all involved. The third report published on February 24, recommended further cuts which overcame £11 million.²⁸

As previously explained, the recession of 1921 had a powerful impression on the British lives. Lord Inchcape emphasised this fact at the Mansion House on April 24, he proclaimed ‘the country was financially at death’s door, facing national bankruptcy’.²⁹ Consequently, neither could unemployment insurance scheme cover all areas of the United Kingdom nor the outdoor relief could provide the needs for the whole people who deserved help. The lack of assistance in these distressing circumstances referred to the low budget designed

²⁵ Charles Loch Mowat , *ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

for the boards of guardians.

On the other way, a statistical study indicated that the number of the poor who benefited from outdoor relief shifted from one period to another. For example, there were 224,000 out-relieved persons in March 1921, they increased to 831,000 in November then to 732,000 in December. In June 1922 the total of individuals who required help rose to 1,065,000 , whereas it diminished to 861,000 in August of the same year.³⁰

Thus, poverty continued to soar while the cost for out relief was decreasing. George Lansbury, the leader of the Poplar Council, was sent to prison with twenty nine councillors on September 1, 1921, for they protested against the law which compelled the pauper houses to pay their contributions for relief. Then, a Bill was passed to raise the costs of relief in London whose most dwellers were destitute.

On the other hand, the Safeguarding of Industries Act of 1921 created a high disagreement between the Liberals and Conservatives as Charles Loch Mowat expressed ‘ in a vote upon an order imposing a duty on fabric gloves in June 1922, over half the coalition Liberals abstained or voted against the government’.³¹

Additionally, Geddes’s axe, which imposed heavy cuts on social services as it was previously highlighted, influenced constantly the lives of ordinary people. By March 1921, there were 1,355,000 unemployed waiting for jobs.³² Urgent political reforms were, then, necessary, but David Lloyd George was incapable of finding the best solutions.

Losing hope in recovery, which was hard to reach, the Conservatives asked the Prime Minister to leave office as soon as possible, as Bonar Law

³⁰ Charles Loch Mowat, *ibid*

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² E. N. Nash, *op.cit.* , p. 57.

reported:

*Lloyd George had smashed the Liberal Party, and that if they went on with the coalition he would smash the Conservatives too, and they should get rid of this dangerous ally, leave the coalition, and fight the next election on their own.*³³

In fact, this resentment ended up Lloyd George's rule and brought back the Conservatives to power in 1922. Andrew Bonar Law headed the new government. Yet his dangerous illness forced him to retire in May 1923, King George V appointed Stanley Baldwin instead. In his early months of office, he invoked a mandate to modify the free-trade policy already dealt with by the former Prime Minister Bonar Law. The disapproval of this mandate entailed the collapse of his Ministry on 22 January, 1924.

2.2. The First Labour Government: War on Poverty

A new leadership started in Britain after the failure of Baldwin's government. Ramsay MacDonald, who believed that the poor must be paid according to their needs rather than their contributions, introduced a more beneficial unemployment system; he similarly admitted the suggestions of John Wheatley, the Health Minister, to extend municipal housing for employees insufficiently remunerated.

Being also a Foreign State Secretary, the Chief of Government worked for peace. In March 1924, he decided to stop the construction of the Singapore military base, though the Admiralty opposed this idea. In June, he invited the wartime allies to London to negotiate how to dissolve the problems of reparations and the French occupation of Ruhr. After the debates, the London Settlement Treaty was signed.

³³ Charles Loch Mowat, *op.cit.*, p.142.

MacDonald's attempts in reinforcing peace never interrupted; in February, he announced in Parliament that further trade treaties would be signed with the Soviet Union in which British bondholders contracting with the pre-revolutionary Russian Government were still living.

To strengthen relations for cooperation with foreign countries, the Prime Minister proposed to grant the Bolsheviks a loan, but this idea stimulated a cynical feedback. The Campbell case and the Zinoviev letter were the right weapons used to hang the nine-month Labour government's welfare policies which MacDonald tried to expand.

Subsequently, Baldwin Stanley restored his premiership on 4 November 1924. After a year, the poor benefited from an important insurance legislation which was the Widows' Orphans' and Old Age Contributory Pensions Act; it permitted a financial assistance, from the workers' fund, for widows over sixty-five and orphan children.³⁴ Nevertheless, Baldwin's Government failed to overcome a crisis in the coal industry.

In the meantime, the General Council of the Trades Union Congress learnt that the colliery proprietors determined to reduce their workers' wage. Therefore, a call for the Red Friday was made on 31 July 1925. Being aware that the general strike would cause serious economic troubles, the government provided the owners with the sum of £10,000,000 to pay their employees in coal industries for nine months.³⁵

Intending a similar process, the mine-owners informed their employees that there would be a cut in their salaries. Accordingly, in south Wales, Arthur James the miners' leader rejected the proposal; his famous statement 'not a

³⁴ E. N. Nash, *op.cit.*, p. 62.

³⁵ E. N. Nash, *ibid.*, p. 63

penny off the pay, not a minute on the day'³⁶, signified that the workers would not tolerate the violation of their rights .

On their turn, the mines' proprietors refused to negotiate. This extreme irritation between the two sides entailed the strike of 4 May 1926. More than 1.5 million miners protested against the tyranny of their employers.³⁷ A state of emergency was proclaimed.

The government used a number of volunteers in transport services, meanwhile students from Oxford and Cambridge Universities helped in docks. The dispute grew sharper when the Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies (O. M. S), a militia of special constables, was ordered to break down the industrial action. One of those soldiers regretted to be involved in this conflict, he said:

*It was not difficult to understand the strikers' attitude towards us, after few days I found my sympathy with them rather than with the employers. For one thing, I had never realised the appalling poverty which existed. If I had been aware of all the fact, I should not have joined up as a special constable.*³⁸

In addition to that, the government tried to win the battle through other devices. The *British Gazette*, for instance, appealed the strikers to give up their walkout. In one of its articles appearing on 6 May, 1926, it stated that the authority managed to solve the problem of transport, since 200 buses were driven by volunteers and blackleg workers³⁹; while, Symons Julian commented in his book *The General Strike* that only 86 buses circulated in streets.⁴⁰

³⁶ E. N. Nash, *ibid.*

³⁷ Maurice Bruce, *op.cit.*, p. 221.

³⁸ "The General Strike of 1926", in <http://www.nottinghamshireexminer.com/Nottinghamshire/Num-Area-History>. Accessed on 10 December 2010.

³⁹ "Why Walk to Work?", *British Worker*, issue 2, p. 1.

⁴⁰ Symons Julian, *The General Strike*, p. 158.

The B. B. C took also part in the conflict; it supplied listeners with daily news about the workers' strife as it invited Conservative politicians to express their views. Being excluded from discussions, the Trade Union published the *British Worker* to explain for the public opinion the real purpose of this strike.

Certainly, the mass media sustained the political system to gain much more support against the workers, but this attitude did not prevent sharing sympathy with the working-class. Hugh Gaitskell who was a student at Oxford University narrated:

The vast majority of undergraduates went off to unload ships or drive trams or Lorries. For me this was out of the question. All my sympathies were instinctively on the side of miners, the unions, and the labour party and the left generally. It was their cause I wanted to help.⁴¹

To avoid a bloody clash with the soldiers, the Trade Union asked the strikers to withdraw immediately from streets. The workers obeyed and returned to their jobs in November, without a rise in their salaries. A more restrictive measure was taken through the Trade Dispute Act in 1927 which prohibited the general strikes.

Each Union, as the Act mentioned, had to defend its rights alone without being supported by another Union. The non-respect of this amendment might lead to troubles with courts. Yet, no policies were planned to deal with the increasing redundancy this failure discouraged Baldwin to maintain power, thus he retired on 4 June 1929.

The Labour Party after a general election during the same year won 287 seats, whereas the Conservatives got only 261 and the Liberals 59 seats.⁴²

⁴¹ E. N. Nash, op.cit. , p. 67.

⁴² Robert Webb, op. cit. , p. 522 .

Consequently, the second Labour Government was formed by Ramsay MacDonald who tried hard to mend what was broken by Baldwin's policies. Margaret Bondfield was nominated at the head of the Ministry of Labour. In 1930, the Prime Minister inflated the unemployment payments as he passed two important Acts. The first Act concerned improving the workers' wages in coal industry while the second focused on slums' clearance.

The Labour reforms did not concern employment and housing only but also education was. Charles Trevelyan's proposal on raising the school leaving age to 15 was approved by the Prime Minister, in contrast the Roman Catholic Labour M. P. s and the Lords objected to the Bill⁴³. For that reason, the implementation of this important policy was postponed; it was put into practice by the beginning of September in 1939.⁴⁴

On 30 January 1930, Mosley Oswald recommended, in his memorandum, a public control over imports and banking; he simultaneously urged the elevation of pensions to improve the spending power, but the authority rejected his claims. Surprisingly, a vigorous economic slump struck the country. As a result, the government found itself in a critical case; it had to balance its budget to protect the pound. On the other side, the British economy encountered severe troubles. Unemployment doubled to over two and a half million by the end of 1930. Feeling disappointed, Mosley resigned in February 1931.

Opposition against the power broadened increasingly. Orthodox economists called for sharp cuts in expenditure, whereas the Liberal allies and Conservatives advised the Labour Government to take a quick decision to save the nation. Therefore, Philip Snowden, the exchequer, appointed a committee headed by Sir George May to review the financial policies.

⁴³ Charles Loch Mowat, *op.cit.*, pp.208- 10.

⁴⁴ Maurice Bruce, *op. cit.*, p. 252.

When the enquiry was over a report emerged in July 1931, it included huge reductions in salaries, unemployed payments and public spending in general, whereas the economist John Keynes perceived that devaluing the pound instead of balancing the budget would be a better solution.

On the other hand, the Trade Union objected to George May's suggestions. Consequently, the government could neither bear the burden nor overcome the split. Unable to take a firm decision for recovery, MacDonald resigned on 24 August 1931. Yet, King George V urged him to form a national government with Liberals and Conservatives.

Returning to office was a move that was badly interpreted. MacDonald's colleagues accused him of betrayal and expelled him from the Labour Party together with Philip Snowden and J. H. Thomas. Meanwhile, the unemployed rioted throughout Glasgow and Manchester.

The national government election was organised in October 1931, 472 seats were for the Conservatives, 72 for Liberals while Labours got 46 seats.⁴⁵ Still, MacDonald's domestic politics was not influential, since the last cuts he made, as explained earlier, created constantly severe tensions.

The National Unemployed Workers' Movement (N. U. W. M.) led by the Communist Wal Hannington, for instance, organised a massive demonstration against the government. By two o'clock in the afternoon of October 1932, there were 100.000 London workers, added to hundreds of hunger marchers coming from all the industrial areas of Britain.

This wide number of the employed and the unemployed were gathered around Marble Arch⁴⁶. The aim was to denounce the reduction of 10% from their

⁴⁵ Robert Webb, *op. cit.*, p. 525.

⁴⁶ Faulkner Neil, "Fighting Unemployment in the 1930s," in <http://www.counterfire>

unemployment payments and the means of test; they requested likewise compensations for those who the depression caused their joblessness. Neil Faulkner depicted this march:

It was Thursday, but many employed workers had taken the day off to show solidarity with the unemployed. When mounted and foot Police launched a series of truncheon charges, the workers fought back with banner poles and torn-up park railings.⁴⁷

In addition to these cuts which curtailed social welfare and drove people to rebel, the Import Duties Act of 1932 constrained free trade. A tariff of 10% was imposed on all goods apart from food and raw materials to be elevated later on to 15% then to 33%.⁴⁸

Nonetheless, MacDonald thought of protecting the country from foreign threats. For peace purposes, he collaborated in international negotiations in Geneva Disarmament Conference and Lausanne conference which took place in 1932. Domestically there was some recovery by 1933, especially after the hybrid bill introduced by Herbert Morrison, the Ex- Minister of Transport; it was enacted on 13 April. Thus, the London Passenger Transport Board (L. P. T. B) project started in July of the same year to cover all London area; it presented a good occasion for some unemployed to work.

As far as foreign relations were concerned, MacDonald did not miss the opportunity to attend the Stresa conference in Italy by the year of 1935 which dealt with Germany's violations of the Treaty of Versailles of 1919. However, for illness reasons, he left power. Baldwin Stanley succeeded him. No significant

org/index.php/features/51-analysis/3652. Accessed on 9 November 2010.

⁴⁷ Faulkner Neil, *ibid.*

⁴⁸ Charles Loch Mowat, *op.cit.*, pp.416-7. See also Smart Nick, Neville *Chamberlain*, p. 173.

poor-law amendments appeared in this era, because the government's main concern was to solve the crisis of the King Edward Baldwin's abdication.

The shift of power from Baldwin to Neville Chamberlain, the former Health Minister in the precedent government, in 1937 did not bring remarkable progress to the social life except armament policies which permitted the re-opening of war- industry factories where hundreds of persons were employed.

Yet, Chamberlain's restrictions were almost based on the abolition of boards of guardians. The Prime Minister perceived that those boards ran by Labour authorities extended the relief and implicated the able-bodied unemployed who should not be helped; his failure in negotiating with Hitler, the German leader, over peace drove the country to a disastrous war in 1939.

2.3. British Policies for Social Prosperity during the Second World-War

The battle did not prevent the wartime-government, chaired by Winston Churchill, to take key measures for the improvement of the people's life. For example, the national milk scheme which was first introduced in July 1940 made 70% of mothers and kids benefit from milk supply on the ninth month of the same year, as it allowed 30% of them to receive their milk freely.⁴⁹ Furthermore, the House of Commons discussed how to promote services designed for children and mothers.

In addition to nutrition, fighting against epidemics was taken into account as well. Being essential for survival, immunisation was free for all by the end of 1940 to avoid further deaths caused by Diphtheria as Churchill declared 'more children had been killed during the war by Diphtheria than by bombs'.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Maurice Bruce, *op.cit.*, p. 267.

⁵⁰ Maurice Bruce, *ibid.*

The success of this campaign induced the medical officers to think about the establishment of new hospitals to treat dangerous illnesses. For a similar aim John Reith, the leader of the Office of Work, appointed a committee led by Mr. Justice Athwart in 1941 to select lands that would be used in rebuilding what was destroyed by the war.⁵¹

As early as 1942, William Beveridge, the social reformer, published his report. After an enquiry he made on the current insurance system ; he discovered that social services of the thirties worked badly and needed urgent reforms. The idea of creating an egalitarian society struck Beveridge deeply, he believed that both the rich and the poor of Great Britain shared the same land, identity, history and language; therefore they should share equally wealth without the distinction of one from the other.

Moreover, Beveridge advocated self-reliance and personal insurance in his report.⁵² People were advised to think about their future in cases of unemployment, old age, disability, illnesses, birth, maternity, and death funeral.⁵³ As far as family allowances were concerned, he acknowledged the great sacrifices that the housewives made for the happiness of their families and community. Thus, he recommended support for these women through their husbands' insurance, to protect them from destitution, widowhood, and sickness. Sir William Beveridge claimed also children allowances especially for those whose parents were unable to satisfy their needs. Further objectives were the old-age pensions' system and full- retirement policy that had to be revised.⁵⁴

These outstanding assumptions distinguished Beveridge from all the other social reformers. The relief was intended for all cases from cradle to grave. Shelter, food, and good health were the most vital issues that had to be treated

⁵¹ Maurice Bruce, *ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Maurice Bruce, *op.cit.* , p. 277.

urgently. Beveridge continued his talks with the authorities in charge until his suggestions were approved. As a result, a Ministry of National Insurance came to birth.⁵⁵

Furthermore, a Ministry of Town and Country Planning was set up in 1943 to study all what concerned health. After the examination of the whole sanitary system, the government published a White Paper labelled *National Health Service* in 1944; it informed people that remarkable changes would take place in public health services.⁵⁶ Moreover, the Milk and Dairies Act was passed in 1944, it insisted on the safety and quality of milk as a measure of protecting consumers. Other products like orange juice, cod- liver, oil, and Vitamin tablets were also controlled.⁵⁷

Britain celebrated its victory against the Nazis on 8 May 1945. Peace was restored and the parties started their campaigns. The Conservative mottoes such as ‘Let him finish the job’, and ‘the hero of the war’ were used to back Winston Churchill who was supposed to win the coming election. Would he govern Britain in peace as he did in war, or his people would disregard his great services? These points will be clarified throughout this chapter.

2.5. Post-war Government (1945): Reconstruction and Affluence

The welfare state is not certainly one of the latest creations of the twentieth century, but it is deeply uprooted in the past. From a historical point of view, David March asserted:

*Attempts by the state to relieve poverty have been made for over three centuries through the poor laws, but it is doubtful if anyone would attach the label of “welfare state” to the England of Queen Elizabeth I or even Victorian England.*⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Maurice Bruce, *ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Maurice Bruce, *ibid.*

⁵⁸ David March, *op.cit.*, p. 2

Moreover, the beginning of the welfare was strongly related to the Work Men's Compensation Service, which tried to elaborate the workers' conditions and regulate their hours of work by 1897. This procedure progressed in modern times more particularly after the decline of the aristocrats' powers.

Henceforth, a new class of civil servants, professionals, financiers, and landed proprietors, inculcated by a common education in public schools and ancient universities was able to lead vital political and social transformations in the United Kingdom.⁵⁹ Then, affluence prevailed under the welfare system which took different shapes as Professor Niels Kargard explained (refer to p. 115 for more details).

In Britain, people who associated Conservative policies with their unemployment and poverty lost confidence in their leaders, as this woman revealed when she was asked about vote. She told the journalists 'my son wrote to me and said I must vote Labour, or else he would be out of a job'.⁶⁰ Meanwhile, the Labour Party won 393 Seats in Parliament.⁶¹

Although the access of Labours to power was the happiest political event of the year, it remained a heaviest burden too. The traces of the war were left everywhere. People found themselves out, 5,000,000 of their houses were wrecked by bombardment. In addition to that, factories and military equipment were highly spoiled. Those tremendous losses in men and means were surely unforgettable.

Nevertheless, Beveridge's ideals influenced the Labour Government headed by Clement Attlee. The hope at that moment was to overlook the injuries of the past and look forward to a beautiful tomorrow. Henceforth, the Prime Minister determined to thrash the five giants: idleness, squalor, sickness, and

⁵⁹ Martin J. Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit 1850-1980*, P. 158.

⁶⁰ E. N. Nash, *op.cit.* , p. 120.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

ignorance.

Dealing with these major problems required, certainly, huge amounts; still, the loan of 3,000,000,000 dollars, received from the U.S.A. as an exchange for British goods, was invested in building new factories and reopening the old ones so that the unemployed could find jobs.⁶² As an example, 6,000,000 war-industries' workers were recruited in the new factories of goods for export; besides, they were provided with technical training based on modern technological sciences.⁶³

Consequently, unemployment began to decrease. Furthermore, Clement Attlee conceived that economy could be more prosperous through nationalisation. For this reason, the Bank of England was the first institution to be nationalised in February 1946, it was followed by Coal Mines which took the name of Nation Coal Boards in January 1947 after its nationalisation.

Unfortunately, these reforms were interrupted by a violent storm in 1947; this natural catastrophe diverted the country towards a serious food shortage when snow blocked all roads. Help became impossible; added to that, coal mines and all the other factories were closed.

The power outage, which prevented the governmental aids to reach the isolated areas, deepened the worseness of the position. This disaster stimulated a two-fold crisis: resentment among people and disagreement inside the government over the replacement of the Prime Minister Clement Attlee by Earnest Bevin.

Ironically, Attlee overcame impediments around him; he maintained his powers and decided to mend the damage. Life returned to its normal course,

⁶²E. N. Nash, *ibid.*

⁶³ E. N. Nash, *op.cit.* , p. 121.

people joined their work and children went back to their schools. On the other way, the Labour reformers carried on successfully nationalisation. The British railway network, road haulage, canals, airlines, cable, wireless, and power suppliers were all nationalised at the beginning of 1948, whereas steel industry was left for 1951.

Although, these achievements, stated above, were extremely essential for the economic growth, housing schemes were still inadequate according to the demands. Hundreds of families did not find where to dwell, in this instance the house sellers seized the occasion and raised the prices to three times, than they were before 1939.

Apparently, it was a considerable load on the government to reconstruct the old buildings. Nevertheless, 200,000 new houses were built, but the number could not satisfy all requirements. Being incapable of finding homes, some families chose army huts in the countryside to live in by September 1946⁶⁴, while 700 individuals took luxury flats in Kensington whose owners were absent. The police intervened and evacuated the building.⁶⁵

To avoid further troubles of this sort, the Labour Government introduced a new style of buildings called the pre-fabs. This measure was taken as a first step before getting the new houses ready for use. Moreover, the Act of New Towns in 1946 and the Act of Town and the Country Planning of 1947 permitted a larger evolution in the housing sector in Britain. Subsequently, whole recent towns such as Stevenage in Hertfordshire, Crawly, Harlow as well as Hemel Hempstead were built.⁶⁶

Even if, these towns were the product of long years of work and planning, the growth of population on the one hand, and the insufficient budget on the

⁶⁴ E. N. Nash, *ibid.*

⁶⁵ E.N. Nash, *op.cit.*, p. 126.

⁶⁶ E. N. Nash, *ibid.*

other one handicapped the endeavours of providing more houses and get rid of homelessness at the same time.

2.5. Public Services: A Bridge of Link between Power and People

Trying to set a bridge between the authority and the people, the Prime Minister Clement Attlee thought of expanding the social services so that citizens could express freely their demands in a more civilised way. Talking about the evolution of social services must be preceded at least by a simple identification of the term.

J. J. Clarke defined “social services” as different kinds of help for citizens ‘and to which the members of the community are entitled, to a greater or less degree, by reason of belonging to that community’.⁶⁷ Miss Penelope Hall shared to a certain extent Clarke’s perception she argued:

*The hallmark of a social service is that of direct concern with the personal well-being of the individual, and the basis is to be found in the obligation a person feels to help another in distress, which derives from the recognition that they are in some sense members one of another.*⁶⁸

However, the first appearance of the term in official reports referred to 1920 when the title of Annual return of expenditure on public social services replaced the Annual Treasury return for poor relief. Yet, these services developed progressively to include public education, unemployment, public health, old age pensions, in addition to health insurance.

The same concept was discussed in one of the investigations on social services which considered them ‘providing people whose incomes were lower or

⁶⁷ Quoted in David Marsh, *The Welfare State*, p. 4.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

precarious... with essential facilities and resources which well-to-do families would naturally obtain in case of emergency'.⁶⁹

As far as social insurance was concerned, the former policy of Lloyd George was modified in July of 1946. Retirement pensions were not distributed to men over 65 only, as it was dealt with before, but they were expanded to involve women over 60 likewise.

Children allowances were also provided by the system except for the first child in each family. Even, workers benefited from compensations in case of injuries and accidents. On the other hand, Aneurin Bevan, the Minister of Health, proposed his scheme of establishing a National Health Service (N. H. S.), but the British Medical Association objected strongly to this project which was postponed.⁷⁰

Nevertheless, Aneurin Bevan never lost hope until he convinced consultants in the private sector to join the N. H. S. in their spare time; he similarly accepted their request of high payments. By July 1948, free medical treatment, that was formerly a dream for the poor, became real. The National Health Service opened its door to all British citizens whether they were rich or poor.

The varied services of hospitalisation, dental and optical care in addition to general treatment that patients needed were all available indoors. British newspapers wrote about this social revolution in health services. For example, in July 1948 the *Daily Mail* reported:

On Monday morning, you will wake in a New Britain, in a state, which takes over its citizens six months before they are born, providing free care and services for their early years, their schooling, sickness, workless days,

⁶⁹ Quoted in David Marsh, *The Welfare State*, p. 5.

⁷⁰ E.N. Nash, *op.cit.*, p. 129.

*widow-hood and retirement. Finally, it helps defray the cost of their departure. All this, with free doctoring, dentistry and medicine free bath chairs too if needed - for four and eleven pence of your weekly pay packet.*⁷¹

Actually, Attlee's health reforms were amazing, still, illiteracy and the unpersuasive educational system annoyed him so much. Therefore, he debated the issue in the House of Commons. The result was quite satisfactory. Kids who had no fees to spend on their studies earlier could this time join public schools, which offered them a good education and training for a future career. Meanwhile, learners belonging to the middle-class, who would later be able to carry on their learning at universities, attended grammar schools.

On the other way, parents from the lower class sent their youngsters aged of five years old to elementary schools, whereas children above this age went to senior schools until the age of fourteen. The most intelligent pupils were fortunate, owing to scholarships the Act of Balfour of 1902 authorized, to access grammar schools.

Besides these advantages, the Labour authority decided to build supplementary schools and train other groups of teachers to execute the new secondary education's program. The benefits of these schools were diverse. Firstly, kids of the poor could attend without paying. Secondly, the age leaving school was elevated to fifteen. Thirdly, the best pupils would be supported financially by the system to carry on their higher education if they liked so.

Thus, secondary modern schools adopted the same old system of grammar schools, except the former admitted children of the poor who were given a chance in education that was impossible in precedent years. However, both parents and teachers worried about the learners who were obliged to pass an

⁷¹ Quoted in E.N. Nash, *Britain in the Modern World*, p. 129.

examination at the age of eleven. To avoid a further disagreement over this issue, the leading power introduced comprehensive schools at the right moment, attending them was without examination.

Apparently, the whole set of arrangements that the post-war Government accomplished in education displayed how much the Prime Minister Clement Attlee struggled against ignorance and worked earnestly to develop knowledge and science in Britain. The various types of schools, already stated, cost £1,000,000,000 for the political system.⁷²

Attlee's term in office ended in 1951 when the Conservatives won the election. Once in power, Winston Churchill denationalised most of the British companies. Simultaneously, he persisted Attlee's reforms in education. Recent universities were built in different areas like East Anglia, Sussex, Lancaster and York.

Furthermore, technical colleges were founded particularly in industrial areas to acquire highly developed skills.⁷³ Trying to end up the crisis of housing, the Conservative authority planned 300,000 houses each year.⁷⁴

After the end of Churchill's leadership, Macmillan's Government worked for the same aims. For reorganising the rent system, an important law was passed in 1957 so that people could find suitable houses. Gaiety prevailed and people's lives got more prosperous.

Although, the post-war consensus helped the country to progress both socially and economically, this affluence did not prevent a moral decline. Due to the excessive permissiveness particularly after the legalisation of abortion, homosexuality, and divorce in the sixties many persons were offended.

⁷²E.N. Nash , op.cit., p. 133.

⁷³ E. N. Nash, *ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

Nevertheless, Harold Wilson Government was considered to be the best provider of welfare in British history .

In fact, the Prime Minister Harold Wilson did much to renovate the British society. Among his exceptional social reforms were the ban of prescription of medical charges and the establishment of the ministry of social security. The latter combined the former boards of national assistance, national insurance and the ministry of pensions.

Most importantly were the policies applied in expending the benefits of unemployment, family allowances and pensions; whereas, expenditure on social services in the early seventies differed from that of the late sixties. Wilson's Government approved Alf Morris' bill which aimed at helping the disabled persons. Hence, the Act of Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons was signed in May 1970⁷⁵; this law made Britain pioneer in treating such category of people.

On the other hand, the rise of the immigrant population in the United Kingdom including large numbers of blacks coming from the British West Indies in the 1960s created many troubles. Yet, Edward Hallett Carr's thought that 'a state which does not conform to certain standards of behaviour towards its own citizens and, more particularly, towards foreigners will be branded as uncivilised'⁷⁶ influenced the power. Therefore, the Labour politicians intervened to protect those immigrants who felt themselves unwanted in the British society.

Frederic A. Youngs, enlightened, in *The English Heritage*, the emergence of racist organisations such as 'the National Front using bullyboy tactics reminiscent of the Nazis, and at times gangs of youths roamed the streets engaging in "Paki-bashing"'.⁷⁷ Subsequently, the Race Relations Act was passed in 1968; it gave rights to immigrants to get houses, jobs, and health care. Enoch

⁷⁵ Frederic A. Young, *The English Heritage*, p. 450.

⁷⁶ Edward Hallett Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis: 1919-1939*, p. 154.

⁷⁷ Frederic A. Young , *ibid.*

Powell criticised sharply the Act in his speech “Rivers of Blood,” here is an extract:

...legislation proposed in the Race Relation Bill is the very pabulum they need to flourish . Here is the means of sharing that the immigrant communities can organise to consolidate their members to agitate and campaign against their fellow citizens and to overawe and dominate the rest with the legal weapons which the ignorant and the ill-informed have provided. As I look ahead, I am filled with foreboding; like the Roman, I seem to see “the River Tiber foaming with much blood.”⁷⁸

Despite Powell’s pessimistic prospect, the Prime Minister carried on his reforms. Harold Wilson fought discrimination at work, for women were less waged than men were. Accordingly, the Equal Pay Act of 1970 settled the problem. The popularity of the Labour leader increased widely after the creation of the open universities for those whose hard conditions did not permit learning.

After the retirement of Harold Wilson, the power remained for Labours. James Callaghan was elected a Prime Minister. Yet the measure of 5% limit from workers’ wage caused a real dilemma. The trade unionists assailed this policy and applied overwhelmingly for a rise beyond the limit, yet the power neglected their petition. This clash between the authority and the Trade Unions was known as the winter of discontent. Strikes lasted several months. Consequently, the economy was deeply afflicted. Besides, the Conservatives led a fierce campaign against the Socialist policies.

Overall, the most successful system which defeated poverty in Britain was the Labour one. This latter point was the focus of Lane Kenworth’s investigation (refer to table 3 on page 113 for more information).

⁷⁸ Enoch Powell, “Rivers of Blood”, in www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/3643826. Accessed on 8 December 2010.

Chapter Three

Thatcherism versus Welfarism

The welfare state was usually regarded as an excellent perpetrator of social services¹ ; however, some opponents blamed for being a promoter of racism and crimes as well.² Nonetheless, most historians glorified its wonderful attainments. Peter Mauger, for example, displayed in his book *The British People* the change occurring in the poverty's rate. The number of the poor of York dwindled, for the first time in history, from 31.1 per cent in 1936 to 2.8 per cent in 1950.³

It was due to Beveridge's proposals, from cradle to grave, implemented by the Labour leadership in the after math of the Second World War that a huge mass of inhabitants enjoyed their rights of getting homes, education, cure, insurance, and work. About this admirable progress, Phyllis Willmott assumed that 'social services are continually developing and changing to meet new needs'.⁴

3.1. The End of the Paternalistic State

The anti-socialists kept criticizing the Labour politicians, they depicted them to be emotional, ineffective, cynical, and arriviste.⁵ Such kind of opinions were too much recurrent in the Conservatives' meetings, writings, and campaigns. Martin Wiener ,for instance, highlighted one of the visions that considered Socialists to be anti-industrial, he asserted:

They threw earlier enthusiasms for technology into disrepute, emphasized the social evils brought by the industrial revolution, directed attention to issues of the quality of life...⁶

¹ David Marsh, op. cit. , p. 4.

² Frederic A. Young , op. cit. , p. 451.

³ Peter Mauger and Leslie Smith, *The British People*, p. 177.

⁴ Phyllis Willmott, *Consumer's Guide to the British Social Services*, p. 13.

⁵ Sir Oswald Mosley, *My Life*, p. 272.

⁶ Martin J. Wiener, op. cit. , p. 158.

Conversely, David March established a link between the economic growth and social prosperity, he said:

One of the main areas of disagreement between major political parties concerned the extent to which the state should plan and control economic activity so as to ensure optimum economic growth and hence a continuously rising standard of living.¹

The State's intervention was positive in most of the cases, the best example for that was the affluence of the sixties as it was elaborated earlier. Yet, the strong world depression of the seventies shook the British economy vigorously. The industrial productivity was diminished to its lowest level. Meanwhile, the government tried hard to secure the country but Callaghan's opponents succeeded in diverting the public opinion against him.

Yet, T. Lupton in his article "The Culture is Wrong", contended that the political leaders' reforms would never satisfy the whole society for reasons he explained here 'British social structure is demonstrably highly resistant to shifts towards greater equality, power, and educational career opportunities'.²

Therefore, the British people demanded constantly change; hoping for improvement they voted in favour of Conservatives in a general election. Eventually, Mrs Margaret Thatcher succeeded James Callaghan, the ex- Prime Minister, on 4 May 1979. Would Mrs Thatcher overcome the economic hardship of the seventies and build a strong nation in the eighties as she promised? The current chapter will be focusing on these particular points.

¹David March, op. cit., p. 18.

²T. Lupton, "The Culture is Wrong", *The Sociology of Modern Britain*, ed. Eric Butterworth and David Weir, p. 491.

3.2. Britain towards a Liberal Market

In fact, the circumstances in which Mrs Margaret Thatcher took office were not favourable; the country was suffering from a severe social and economic deterioration including low production, massive unemployment, restless relations between the employers and the employed, alienation of youth and endless violence in Northern Ireland.

Added to that was the rise of racial conflicts all over the country for which a good solution remained uneasy to find. This issue stirred different feedbacks. Mrs. Thatcher put the blame on the Labour leaders who were behind this collapse. David Marsh noted that the 'Labour party was usually believed to be in favour of state planning and control of the commanding heights of economy.'³

According to Martin J. Wiener, the welfare state produced both good achievements and failures, he argued:

...it maintained a remarkable degree of political and social stability at home while presiding over a redistribution of power and an expansion of equality and security. It also presided over the steady and continued erosion of the nation's economic position in the world.⁴

If Martin J. Wiener recognised fairly some advantages of the welfare's politics, Mrs Thatcher ignored them entirely; she assumed that both the economic system and the social welfare were in danger. This leads to question whether she would be more successful than the Labours. The reply will certainly require a wide examination of the changes that took place in her period of office.

³David Marsh, op. cit. ,p. 18.

⁴Martin J. Wiener, op. cit. ,p. 158.

Opposing her predecessors' policies, the new revolutionary Prime Minister embarked on a set of various schemes to save the nation from monopoly which made 'the whole economic system under the control of state and hence to exercise considerable control over the lives of individual and their welfare,'⁵ as the Labours did.

As a starting point, she decided to flourish economy, which Socialists did little to support and much to discourage its dynamism. Therefore, she insisted on developing industries through modern technology and sciences. For a similar objective, a large group of companies were built in the south.

In addition to that, the other keys, which the iron-lady emphasized in her speeches, were the free market, privatization, and monetarism. As far as privatisation was concerned, the main industries of Britain were denationalised (see p.112). Frederic A. Youngs reflected that 'other nationalised industries were expected to become profitable, even at the cost of eliminating many jobs at a time of high unemployment'.⁶ In fact, she closed most of the companies ran by the public sector.

The most powerful steel corporations such the ones of Corby, Shotton, and Consett were all shut. Hence, signs of economic despair were not only noticeable in Scotland, Merseyside, and the north-east, but they reached further prosperous areas as well. In the West Midlands, as an example, the number of the unemployed overcame 15 per cent.⁷

Meanwhile, the government's leader extended her support to the private enterprises; she concurrently developed the means and ways of transport, so that trade would be easier in all parts of the Kingdom.

⁵David Marsh, op. cit. ,p. 18.

⁶Frederic A. Young , op. cit. , p. 437.

⁷Kenneth O. Morgan , "The Twentieth Century", *History of Britain1789-1983*, ed. Kenneth O. Morgan, p. 181.

Indeed, these reforms brought some progress to the economy during her early years of office. Inflation, as an example, which was high in 1980 regressed in the second semester of 1982 and the subsequent year as well. Taxes were also reduced and the government endorsed the free market.

On the other hand, the Prime Minister believed that the poor must have a new culture instead of the old one; being industrious and self-reliant would enable them to avoid starvation while dependency would offend their lives. Mrs Thatcher opened simultaneously the doors for competition and free market that she saw extremely important for recovery. In the meantime, she never kept denouncing state's intervention and men's passiveness.

Being wealth creators rather than consumers only was the point she often raised in her meetings. Yet, this ideology aiming at promoting private enterprises was paradoxical in itself; it prevented employment for a large part of society as it shook confidence in the Prime Minister herself especially among Trade Unions. Miners, for instance, went on strikes to renounce her privatisation policies. Martin J. Wiener , in his work *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit*, referred this failure to other factors, he explained:

*British economic retardation involved no "irrationalities". "The fault" lay not with the temperament, attitudes, or abilities of businessmen or workers, but with the self-defeating nature of the capitalist system. How, specifically, was this system self-defeating? It depended for its dynamism on one unreliable motor- private profit.*⁸

Nevertheless, Mrs. Thatcher kept encouraging private investment.

⁸Martin J. Wiener, op. cit. , p. 168.

3.2.1. The Defeat of Trade Unions

It is doubtless that the economy of any country, whatever its sources of wealth are, can reach a climax without the working- class' efforts. The United Kingdom, for instance, could never be an impressive industrial power in the world, during the nineteenth century, without the efficient collaboration of the workers who were as John Kenneth Galbraith pointed 'overworked and under-taught, weary and careworn, without quiet and without leisure, insufficiently fed, clothed, and housed'.⁹

Narrating the history of British Industrial Revolution and its drawbacks at this specific stage is not of course the aim; the issue is rather to investigate this transition from the Victorian to the post-Victorian age. Actually, tremendous changes distinguished the modern era not only in the conditions of labour but also in the whole political and social backgrounds. Therefore, it was hard for industrialists, who made easily large profits under *laissez-faire* policies in the previous eras, to cope with the new tendencies of the twentieth century which martin J. Wiener portrayed, here:

*... policy moved in a climate of opinion uncongenial to the world of industry. Most of them showed a striking fondness for gentry tastes an essential part of the modern British style of government. Political calls for economic growth went against the grain of the values and style of life actually believed in by most politicians and civil servants, as well as by the rest of the elite.*¹⁰

However, the iron- lady persisted to believe that Britain must be industrial again and restore its past venerable world position. As a first step, the Prime Minister appointed James Prior as Secretary of Employment in 1979. The latter,

⁹John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society*, p. 258.

¹⁰J. Wiener, *op. cit.* , p. 159

introduced a bill that concerned picketing, the closed shop, the provision of public funds, the secret ballot before strikes and the election of full-time trade union officers.

The bill was approved in Parliament, the result was the Employment Act of 1980 which made the secret ballots compulsory and banned the flying pickets. The unionists rejected this amendment which was against their interests and called for an industrial action by January 1980. The leading power broke this strike and sanctioned both organisers and participants.

The steelmen who strove three months successively gained an increase of 16% in their wages but each lost an average of £1,000, while their Corporation lost 10% of its markets.¹¹ The Trade Union Council did not accept defeat and formed a Triple Alliance incorporating the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation, the Railwaymen, and the Mineworkers. Nevertheless, the government managed to get rid of their threat; it expelled many workers from their jobs.

Further laws emerged on 13 November that same year to constrain picketing and the closed shop. Consequently, the T. U. C. lost its influence especially after the enclosures' policy. Kenneth O. Morgan portrayed the general atmosphere of Thatcher's early years of office as being 'a classical example on the post-Keynesian phenomenon of stagflation, with industrial recession and high inflation at one and the same time'.¹²

Careless about the results, the head of government continued her reforms; she dismantled a group of nationalized industries. In other companies, she decided to keep wages low; in this case, the workers had to choose between accepting their jobs with the same salaries and leaving. The choice was undoubtedly hard to make.

¹¹ Henry Pelling, *The Trade Unionism*, p.283.

¹² Kenneth O. Morgan, *op.cit.*, 181.

By the end of the year, two million persons were found without jobs¹³ ; it was a figure that some historical writings such as *History of Britain* referred to as ‘a total unknown since the thirties’¹⁴, whilst unemployment was regarded as a major internal scourge. Moreover, inflation skyrocketed to over 20 per cent,¹⁵ (see p. 111).

Meanwhile, the shortage of investment and money supply afflicted the workers’ life. The ratio of unemployment augmented to over three million by the spring of 1983¹⁶ (see p. 114). It was suspicious then that the people would keep confident to the current system whose first reforms were unworkable, as it was specified, here:

*There seemed to be a deep rot at the heart of the economy, with hundreds of thousands, many of them teenagers or other young people, doomed to perhaps years on national assistance, while public welfare services were steadily curtailed.*¹⁷

Added to these restrictions, the act of protesting was prohibited .The employees were exposed to endless abuses whenever they claimed their rights. Despite the fact that James Prior’s employment policies succeeded to restrain the Union’ s freedoms , Mrs Thatcher remained unsatisfied. Accordingly, she appointed Norman Tebbit instead, he inaugurated more restrictive laws that imposed 85% of workers’ votes to found an organisation.¹⁸

In the meantime, a Green Paper labelled *Democracy in Trade Unions* was published¹⁹; it explained for workers that there would be a change which would end the conflict between the government and the employed representatives. Yet,

¹³Henry Pelling,*The Trade Unionism*, p. 282.

¹⁴Kenneth O. Morgan, *ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁷Kenneth O. Morgan, *ibid.*

¹⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁹*Ibid.*

the Union leaders distrusted Tebbit's policies and persisted to struggle against Thatcher's rule.

Conversely, the Chief Minister could wisely attract the working-class support by some influential measures that she took; workers were given the right to own the enterprises and houses they occupied. The aim of the same policy was to create a certain gap between the employees and their union to weaken the latter more and more.

Nevertheless, the Trade Union did not lose hope; it endorsed labourers whenever it was required. The best illustration for that was the story of the three workers who were offended by the loss of their jobs, as it was previously clarified ; they won eventually their case before the European Court of Human Rights by summer 1981 and secured compensation from the British Railway Company due to the considerable help of the Union.

On the other hand, immigration towards Britain was still controversial. A wide black community lived in ghettos in the Notting Hill area of London and the St. Paul's district of Bristol. The constraints of the varied social problems led to further discrimination and crimes. Therefore, blacks living in Toxteth, located in Liverpool, and the Brixton district, south London, protested vigorously against humiliation, unemployment, homelessness, intolerance, and alienation. Kenneth O. Morgan described this tragic event 'in the summer of 1981 it seemed for a time that Britain was experiencing the full horrors of race riots on the American pattern'.²⁰

Lord Scarman advocated the reinforcement of the security sector in his report of 1981; he appealed to improve the immigrants' life and avoid racism that would surely shake the stability of the United Kingdom someday; accordingly, he advised for more recruitment in the police with new criteria in selection. For

²⁰Kenneth O. Morgan,op.cit. , p. 182.

example, coloured people could be admitted, well paid, and well treated.²¹ Indeed, the central authority responded positively to these propositions. More security guards were appointed as well as immigration from the non-white parts of the empire towards Britain was restricted.

However, the victory at the Falkland War²² brought a worldwide popularity for Mrs. Thatcher who remained in power for a second term, after the election of 1983. Yet, her people who admired her irony in the war turned against her interior politics for multiple reasons that will be explained later. Kenneth O. Morgan described the situation of Great Britain in the aftermath of this war, he said:

*National pride was refurbished . But the jingoism of the Falklands petered out almost as soon as it began. Britain returned to the familiar domestic scene of strikes, economic decline , and social discontent.*²³

In this phase, she concentrated her thinking on how to smash the Union whose perpetual strikes disturbed the economy.²⁴ Despite all the threats that surrounded the workers' environment, the unionists 'continued to be assertive in right-to-work demonstrations in protest at cuts in public spending and the high rate of unemployment'.²⁵

Certainly, the miners' Union refused defeat; henceforth, its Marxist leader Arthur Seargill called for a walk out in 1984, when Thatcher's Government rebuffed the increase of miners' wages . On the other side, the iron-lady was well prepared to win this strife; she ordered the power stations to stockpile coal more

²¹ Frederic A. Young ,op.cit. , p. 450.

²² Mrs. Thatcher responded to the cries of the British who lived in Falklands Isles which were invaded by the Argentinean troops in March 1982. She sent a considerable military force that defeated the Argentinean army. For more information about this war, see Kenneth O. Morgan, *History of Britain*, p. 185.

²³ Kenneth O. Morgan , ibid.

²⁴ "What is Thatcherism?", in <http://www.courseworkhelp.co.uk>. Accessed on 25 April 2010.

²⁵ Kenneth O. Morgan ,ibid.

sufficiently to prevent a probable crisis. Finally, she could break down the strike successfully.

Seeking employment, thousands of immigrants from different parts of the world joined Britain. Some of them managed to find certain jobs, but they worked under harsh circumstances, while others were victims of numerous aggressions in streets. Thus, *Trade Unions and Black Worker* pamphlet was published by 1985 to denounce both hostility and abuses against black workers. Besides black workers' rights, the union's leaders thought of the feminine promotion as well. Females worked as hard as men did but they were less paid. Therefore, it grew irrational to overlook women's remuneration and position as Henry Pelling discussed here:

... They persuaded the Congress in 1989 to expand the membership of the General Council to 53, including a minimum of twelve seats for women. This was against a background of continued gender differentials at work, with women manual workers receiving only 72% of the average hourly pay of men, and women non-manual worker only 61%. The Equal Opportunities Commission, which produced these figures, spoke of 'an overwhelming picture of inequality in Britain'.²⁶

It was probably a good step that would enable women to collaborate more enthusiastically in building a strong society. Yet, men's contribution in economic investment remained powerful. By October 1987, the Ford Electrical and Electronics Division made a deal for a components factory at Dundee. They chose the engineers' Union to represent them. Some unionists in Ford factories opposed the whole idea; as a result, the parent company at Detroit transferred its plan to Spain in March 1988. Norman Willies' attempts for reconciliation failed. In September 1988, the Electricians were sanctioned by expulsion from the congress, for they disagreed to take part in the Wapping dispute; they were

²⁶Henry Pelling , op. cit., p. 296.

obliged to pay their dues for the year, so that Eric Hammond, the secretary, could defend them in his speech at the Bournemouth Congress.²⁷

Those troubles, mentioned above, were not helpful for the unionists to organize recruitment in Manchester and the London docklands. In February 1988, the National Union of Seamen went on strike; the High Court declared this strike illegal as it imposed three heavy costs on the Union in addition to the sequestration of its assets.

Thus, the Union was obliged to sell some regional offices to solve the financial problem. Nonetheless, the T. U. C. Leaders thought of improving their activities, they invited Vasso Papandreou, the European Commissioner for Social Affairs, to participate in a conference addressed to women on their feast in March 1989. Conversely, the political system abolished the National Dock Labour Scheme which was set up in 1947 and decasualized the dockers in the most important ports. This measure provoked a strike organised by the Transport Workers in July. Unfortunately, this industrial action was effectual only in London and Liverpool, while it was ignored elsewhere. By the coming of August, they were defeated for being unsupported by their fellow workers who feared Thatcher's sanctions. Such interruptions affected highly the economic progress as this study revealed:

In a capitalist economy... businessmen will be dynamic only in so far as this is rational by the criterion of the individual firm, which is to maximize its gains, minimize its losses, or possibly merely to maintain what it regards as a satisfactory long- term rate o profit. But since the rationality of the individual firm is inadequate, this may not work to the best advantage of the economy of the whole, or even of the individual firm.²⁸

²⁷Henry Pelling, *ibid.*

²⁸Quoted in J. Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit 1850-1980*, p.168.

Contrasting these ideas, Mrs. Thatcher motivated the firms' owners for a better improvement as she invited foreigners to invest in Britain alike. Nonetheless, inflation was the major problem that characterised the period of 1989-90. Accordingly, the government thought of other arrangements, 8.5 million workers had their hours reduced to 37 hours or less by November 1990.²⁹

In the private sector, the government promoted macro-management in printing and shipping industries in which the Unions were not recognised. Kenneth O. Morgan stated further examples on this progress:

*Certainly, the technological wonders of oil, electronics, and aerospace, of Concorde, the Humber Bridge, the High-Speed Train, and the computerized microchip age suggested that the native reserves of innovation and scientific ingenuity had not run dry.*³⁰

3.2.2 Revolts in Social Services against the Thatcherian Rule

Mrs. Thatcher's political ideologies were not only to flourish private companies as formerly seen nor to smash the Unions and exploit workers with low wages, but it was also to regulate the cost of social services that she saw too exaggerated. However, Peter Bromhead persuaded that it was still cheaper than that in the foreign states, he claimed:

*. . . Whatever some people may say about the cost of the welfare state, it remains true that real expenditure on welfare services in general is not remarkably high in comparison with other European countries.*³¹

²⁹Henry Pelling, op. cit., p. 297.

³⁰Kenneth O. Morgan, op. cit., p. 186.

³¹Peter Bromhead, *Life in Modern Britain*, p.141.

Schools, hospitals, and homes were all, and still are, necessary for everyman's life; yet their existence in society seemed to be highly significant for some observers and too costly for the others. David March talked about the real value of social services that some Conservative politicians neglected, he said:

In recent years, there has been a tendency to concentrate discussions about these services on finance and all too rarely on the nature, the aims, and the value of them... Those who deplore the growing burden of the social services appear to be interested only in their cost in terms of money and in relation to the total of state expenditure, and they rarely assess their value to the community.³²

David March argument dominated greatly the Conservative thought during the twentieth century. Social services were fiercely attacked in the Thatcherian era specifically. In education, the outlooks varied widely among the Conservatives themselves. Winston Churchill, for example, believed that the doors for learning must be opened everywhere even for prisoners, on this subject, he said:

I did my utmost, consistent with public policy, to introduce some sort of variety and indulgence into the life of their inmates, to give to educated minds books to feed on, to give to all periodical entertainments of some sort to look forward to and to look back upon, and to mitigate as far as is reasonable the hard lot if they have deserved, they must nonetheless endure.³³

According to Winston Churchill, education was the most powerful device that could civilise society and develop economy. By contrast, Mrs. Thatcher pictured the earlier educational policies as being old-fashioned and ineffectual,

³²David March, op. cit., p. 10.

³³Earl SchenckMiers, *Winston Churchill*, p. 26.

though she worked with men in leading positions in banks, insurance, high finance, some industries, the army and the church who were basically formed in public schools that she criticized.³⁴

The Prime Minister perceived that Britain had to cope with the world's high technology and advanced sciences; to achieve this goal, she launched a set of reforms. The first legislation, which reversed the former educational system, was the Education Act of 1980; it put both schools and universities under a strict control. Teachers became, no more than, executors of instructions coming from above, they no longer enjoyed their liberties in selecting their curricular and organizing their classes as they did earlier.

The head of government, then, had absolute powers to control all institutions of education; in the meantime, this intervention in teaching matters produced a wide resentment among the headmasters and instructors. Being informed of this disapproval, Mrs Thatcher decided to destroy the local education authorities (LEAs) which she despised for being corrupt; therefore, she reduced their powers to the lowest extent.

Furthermore, distinct publications emerged by 1980, the aim was to introduce modern teaching approaches that the British institutions had to follow. *A Framework for the School Curriculum* for instance explained how to deal with the latest teaching methods. A further innovation in Thatcher's educational scheme was that the parents were given legal rights to control the process of their children's education.

Then, it became ambiguous whether these reforms were re-constructive or destructive , since the immense reduction of public spending was extremely harmful, it occurred in a time when financial support was enormously needed.

³⁴Peter Bromhead, op. cit., p. 145.

Moreover, the powers of local educational authorities were effectively decreased to a lower degree. No motivating signs were visible, people in Berkshire, Wiltshire, Redbridge and Solihull could bear no more; they went out in streets to express their disillusionment.

However, the Conservative Government disregarded these revolts and carried on its work. A large number of secondary schools were built, letting the choice for parents to select the suitable ones for educating their kids. Attending private schools was a tremendous trouble for the poor children³⁵. Fortunately, the assisted places schemes enabled 30.000 child to access³⁶; the purpose was not of course to help the poor, but it was rather to foster privatization in the educational sector.

Despite the fact that these reforms provided goodservices, they were limited to a little number of learners who were evidently rich. Thus, equal learning opportunities on which the welfare system was basically founded became absolutely impossible during Thatcher's governorship.

After the step of privatisation, the Prime Minister shifted towards the teaching job; she established the Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (C. A. T. E.) in 1983 to give training courses for teachers, so as to prepare them to face the new requirements of the age of challenges.

This measure was followed by the abolition of the Schools' Council and the foundation of both of the School Examinations Councils (S. E. C.) whose members were appointed by the State Secretary and the School Curriculum Development Councils (S. C. D.) which worked under strict governmental instructions.

³⁵Peter Bromhead, *ibid.*

³⁶*Ibid.*

If these reforms were disparaging according to those who worked in the domain of education, some politicians considered them as remarkable. Keith Joseph, the Secretary of State for education who admired Thatcher's political arguments, proposed a large list of regulations that would measure the schooling outcomes; he presumed that the autonomy of schools with a minimum state interference would be beneficial. Therefore, the Right-Wing Centre for Policy Studies was set up.

Not only elementary and secondary educations were submitted to a severe statutory control but even universities were. Such expressions as "trimming the fat and cutting out the deadwood", "barrels of apples which could be picked over and the rotten ones rejected" mentioned by Richard Gombrich, a lecturer at Oxford University, in a conference entitled reflected obviously Mrs Thatcher's attitude towards higher education.

Indeed, she started by making stern cuts in universities funding, then she selected the professors personally to appoint them. Hence, the university outcome degraded because of the poor means it had, this particular assumption was revealed in Sir Joseph Keith's speech to scientists at Oxford 'too many of our University laboratories are full of equipment that belongs in museums of industrial archaeology'.³⁷

Being certain that Thatcher's reforms would bring no advantages to the segment, Professor Don Price, the Harvard Dean, in one of his visits to Balliol College told his colleagues who were members in the Kennedy Administration on Science Policy 'if you want to do research , my advice to you is to emigrate'³⁸

It was more upsetting when the Secretary of State announced a huge cut in the equipment grant. Expenditure on books and periodicals for university

³⁷Richard F.Gombrich, "British Higher Education Policy in the last Twenty Years",Tokyo, January, 2000

³⁸Ibid.

libraries were cut to the bone. Accordingly, buying some documents in foreign languages remained a hard task. As a result, the British scholars in certain fields were obliged to refer to foreign libraries to get the references they needed.³⁹ On this same point, James O' Driscoll reported:

*...pilgrimages to Germany from British educationalists, education ministers, and business people had become so common that the British embassy in Bonn employed a full-time official to look after these visitors and put them in touch with the right educational experts.*⁴⁰

In fact, the higher education system, which was much developed in the 1960s, suffered from a constant stagnation in the 1980s. Furthermore, the government support was weaker than that of the earlier decades. The students' grants dwindled and the open universities were subjected to a cut of 1.7 billion pound.⁴¹ As a result, both learners and teachers felt discouraged and the level of education downgraded; James O' Driscoll referred this reluctance to 'Britain's general loss of confidence in itself. This change of mood has probably had a greater influence on education than on any other aspect of public life'.⁴² Driscoll's interpretation proved that the reforms of the eighties were detrimental, for they pushed people to seek for better occasions of learning abroad, as already displayed, rather than improving the situation at home.

Restrictions included also the domain of arts. The Prime Minister limited the expenditure of Arts Council, for she believed, unlike her predecessors, that science valued more than art in industrial development.⁴³ The same thought was prevailing all over the Thatcherian era as the subsequent statements revealed:

³⁹Richard F.Gombrich, *ibid.*

⁴⁰ James O' Driscoll, *Britain*, p. 131.

⁴¹ "Thatcher –not just a milk Snatcher", in [http://www. timeshighereducation.co.uk](http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk)

⁴²James O' Driscoll, *ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

*A consequence of the traditional British approach to education had been the habit of giving a relatively large amount of attention to the arts and humanities (which develop the well-rounded human being), and relatively little to science and technology (which develop the ability to do specific jobs)... Britain needs more scientists and technicians.*⁴⁴

In addition to education reforms, the head of government thought of housing policies as well. In 1979, only 12% of all rental property in England was rented privately, while owner occupation and local authority housing together compromised about 86% of the housing stock.⁴⁵

The Right to Buy Act of 1980 made the tenants of council houses legally authorised to buy their homes from the local authority. At the social level, the workers, who were deprived of having properties for long centuries, greeted warmly this procedure, while politically it sustained Mrs. Thatcher to widen her popularity and gain more support for her coming electoral campaign.

Although, the Act enabled some people to possess their homes, it drove others to homelessness and despair. From a critical point of view, the former Conservative politician Lain Duncan Smith stated that ‘Margaret Thatcher’s flagship policy of selling off council homes led to swathes of the population being left behind in ghetto estates’.⁴⁶ On the other hand, the state’s reduction of building public houses was bounded to financial reasons that John Kenneth Galbraith explained, here:

*The modern urban household is an extremely expensive thing. We have not yet taken the measure of the resources that must be allocated to its public tasks And first among the symptoms of an insufficient allocation is the teeming discontent of the modern ghetto.*⁴⁷

⁴⁴James O’ Driscoll, *ibid.*

⁴⁵“Housing Policy in England under Thatcher” , in <http://www.lotsofessays.com>

⁴⁶“Thatcher’s housing sell off was flawed says Lain Duncan Smith”, *Daily Mail*, 21 March, 2009

⁴⁷ John Kenneth Galbraith, *op.cit.*, p. 266.

Moreover, it became the task of individuals to build their own houses or repair them if necessary. Overall, the decline in building public houses did not prevent the successful sale of council houses.

Conversely, the whole housing business was under debates in the eighties, particularly the Housing Act of 1980 that stirred different opinions. For example, Ingmar Elander, the Swedish author, assumed that the aim of this private ownership was to reinforce the support to the market that would provide sufficiently the housing requirements.⁴⁸

Meanwhile, Anne Ferguson disagreed with the politics of the Downing Street ; he depicted the council houses as being substandard , poorly maintained, deteriorating , and flawed; he revealed concurrently that the sale was profitable only for the government and not for buyers as he argued, here:

*The urban high- rise blocks of flats were not particularly amenable to conversion into US Style Condominiums or cooperatives because of poor managements systems and a distinct probability that only a small handful of such units would actually be purchased by renters.*⁴⁹

As far as social welfare was concerned, the latest laws in housing seemed to be unworkable. Homelessness made thousands of persons live in streets. A vast number of families failed to find rooms in hostels in order to spend their nights; fortunately, some of them were helped via the charitable organisations. However, the situation remained so painful in London and elsewhere, as it was pictured here ‘large numbers of homeless people camped out, protected from the weather only by cardboard boxes’.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ “Housing Policy in England under Thatcher” , in <http://www.lotsofessays.com>

⁴⁹ *Daily Mail*, *ibid*.

⁵⁰ James O’ Driscoll, *ibid*.

This disappointment, expressed above, may lead to say that the housing reforms, which attracted the world's attention in the eighties, were inadequate to solve the problem; they hurt people more than they did well for them. Thus, if the political system was incapable of providing homes, would it be able to ensure a good medical care for citizens?

In truth, it was too hard for Thatcher's Government to deal with this vital issue. It took long years of reflection before she could ultimately announce her health's scheme. Throughout the White Paper of January 1989, she proposed the appointment of competent general practitioners in hospitals, more support for private medicine and insurance, and a low public spending in health services. Yet, David Marsh opposed the whole restrictive policies of the Conservative authority in public services, he argued:

*In contemporary Britain we value more highly those who serve in the forces than those who tend the sick and injured. Is expenditure on nuclear and conventional armaments deemed to be of more social worth than the prevention and cure of sickness? Is the ever-increasing cost of educational and health services to be deplored whereas the ever-increasing cost of armaments may be ignored?*⁵¹

Moreover, the lack of modern medical devices made it difficult to treat a great number of patients at once, therefore Mrs. Thatcher promised to get rid of the weaknesses which were produced by the preceding system. The waiting lists for hospital admission and long queues would be equally avoided.

Nonetheless, Thatcher's reforms in public national health services (N.H.S) had awful effects on the health sector. A British statistical study reported that £758 per person per year was not enough if compared with American expenditure

⁵¹David March, op. cit. , p. 10.

on health: £1, 483 in Canada and £2,051 in the United States of America. ⁵²

The feeble spending on the British individuals' fitness led actually to a serious drop of Mrs. Thatcher's popularity. Peter Bromhead had a similar outlook 'the cost is really not very high; expenditure on the treatment of sickness is much less per head of population, even as a percentage of national income, than in the United State'. ⁵³

Furthermore, the statistics of 1983 demonstrated that 52% of the public were satisfied with the N. H. S management while the number jumped down to 35% in 1987. However, dissatisfaction rose from 25% to 39% and 88% of nurses expressed their total disagreement with Thatcher's health policies. ⁵⁴

The resentment towards the government's regulations expanded more and more, 81% of individuals lost their confidence in their political leader; they argued that the sector needed more public money than reorganization. Moreover, 60% of them believed that if these cuts would continue for the ten coming years, the conditions inside the N. H. S. would be drastic. ⁵⁵

The trouble was not only in the cuttings, the Prime Minister failed to overcome the ill services of the N. H. S that she already criticised. In February 1989, 700,000 of the British were on waiting lists for surgical procedures, while 33% waited more than 7 months in order to be admitted in hospitals(see p. 117). Added to all these obstacles, there was a shortage of 70% of doctors and 75% of nurses inside the national health services. ⁵⁶

⁵² Robert J. Blendon and Karen Donlan, "British Public Opinion on National Health Service Reform", in <http://www.content.healthaffairs.org>. Accessed on 19 May, 2010.

⁵³ Peter Bromhead, op. cit. p.141.

⁵⁴ Robert J. Blendon and Karen Donlan, *ibid*.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*.

⁵⁶ "Thatcher N. H. S Policy, " in <http://www.publicopinion,binleys,comproduct-NHS>. Accessed on 20 May, 2010.

Consequently, the poor encountered a tremendous hardship in paying their medical fees, whereas managers and administrators worked difficultly in such impulses. This gloomy atmosphere in national health services diverted the public opinion against the Prime Minister's reforms. By contrast, John Kenneth Galbraith, believed that social services could lead to a great economic prosperity if they were well exploited. In this context, he said:

The restraints that confine people to the ghetto are those that result from insufficient investment in the public sector. And the means to escape from constrains and to break their hold on subsequent generations - better nutrition and health ,better education, more and better housing, better mass transport, an environment more conducive to effective social participation, all...call for massively greater investment in the public sector.⁵⁷

In contrast, the iron-lady was convinced that investing in public sector required huge amounts that Britain had not, yet her rivals considered this idea to be an illusion. According to Jeremy Black, the strategies of Mrs.Thatcher disturbed correspondingly the church to a large extent 'one in seven Britons was an active member of a Christian Church in 1990'.⁵⁸

People became more interested in business than in faith;fortunately, the wisdom of some of them awakened their vigilance to prevent the opening of shops in Sabbath.⁵⁹ Once more, the Prime Minister could bring the campaign of 'Keep Sunday Special' to an end.But would herfirmnesscoupled with social discontent serve the iron-lady to maintain power longer?

3.5. The Downfall of Thatcher's Government

Certainly, the rigorous constrictions imposed on social services, as mentioned earlier, were not the only marks which indicated that the government

⁵⁷John Kenneth Galbraith, op. cit.,p. 266.

⁵⁸Jeremy Black, "Britain from 1945 onwards", in <http://www.bbc.co.uk>.Accessed on 29 April 2009.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

was on the way to dissolution. It was obvious through the precedent examples that her words contrasted her deeds as Anthony Wright pointed ‘it is not the least of the paradoxes...that the project of diminishing government has often led to an actual increase in the range of government intervention’.⁶⁰ Moreover, the autocracy of Mrs. Thatcher broadened the gap between her and her people; Francis Pym analysed the reasons behind this attitude in the following:

*I think that public tone of the government has often sounded unattractive and unsympathetic... Conviction, determination, and forceful logic can easily turn into dogmatism, inflexibility, and insensitivity, as a result, people feel that the government neither understands nor cares about them. This causes immense harm.*⁶¹

The despair that Pym talked about was intensified by the application of the poll- tax policy. In the previous eras taxation was imposed on the wealthy as Earl SchnckMiers explained in *Winston Churchill* ‘new taxes and particularly against the rich became Lloyd George’s solution’⁶² while Christopher Brook in his work *From Alfred to Henry III* noted that ‘a large and frequent expense on charity to the poor, the sick, and the friars was expected of every rich man’.⁶³ However, in the twentieth century under the Thatcherian rule, more precisely, even the indigents had to pay taxes, unlike the prior system in which the relief of those in need was absolutely a political and a social duty as David March demonstrated here:

*Relief of the poor and welfare became therefore synonymous, so that when the state extended its functions... so as to provide services for the relief of a variety of forms of poverty these were deemed to be welfare functions.*⁶⁴

⁶⁰Quoted in Anthony Wright, *Citizens and Subjects*, p. 32.

⁶¹Dennis Kavanagh, *Thatcherism and British Politics*, p. 284.

⁶²Earl SchnckMiers, op. cit., p. 26.

⁶³Christopher Brook, *From Alfred to Henry III*, p. 123.

⁶⁴David March, op.cit., p. 2.

Yet, the iron-lady disagreed with David March analysis, her argument was that welfare had to be produced by the citizens themselves who must be industrious and independent. Therefore, she minimised the state's interference in social affairs to its lowest degree. Consequently, the poor became poorer than they were already.

Thereafter, the accumulation of different troubles related to privation and hopelessness created an unprecedented feedback in society. A huge wave of people's anger appeared mainly in Scotland. The Scottish Socialist Tommy Sheridan played a leading part in campaigning against Thatcher's poll tax policy which 'made each voter bear a full share of the costs incurred by prodigal spending'.⁶⁵ The occurrence of these tensions attracted the attention of many observers; Phillips Mike, for instance, persuaded that 'her poll tax provoked riots and united the country against her in the way nothing else did for a long time'.⁶⁶

The remarks that Phillips Mike did above demonstrated how deep was the gap between the people, whose misery grew unbearable, and the leading power, whose carelessness exceeded alienation and inequality. People became too individualistic and intolerant, as John Kenneth Galbraith pointed out in this short passage:

*...we share with all societies at all times the capacity for not seeing what we do not wish to see. Anciently, this has enabled the nobleman to enjoy his dinner while remaining oblivious to the beggars around his door. In our own day, it enables us to travel in comfort by Harlem and into the lush precincts of midtown Manhattan.*⁶⁷

⁶⁵"England in the 20 Century", in www.britannia.com/history/nar20history.html. Accessed on 5 May, 2010.

⁶⁶Mike Phillips, *Windrush: The Irresistible Rise of Multi-Racial*, p. 379.

⁶⁷John Kenneth Galbraith, op. cit., p.267.

Galbraith's reflection was not a myth, but it was rather a classical thinking. That is, the continual rise of consciousness among people in modern communities would not permit misery to prevail again. For instance, in the U.S.A indigence was ill-regarded, 'poverty...is not disgrace but it is damned annoying. In the contemporary United States, it is not annoying but it is a disgrace'.⁶⁸

In Britain, however, poverty which the welfare state fought for long years, as explained earlier, returned back vigorously, in the Thatcherian years; it was greatly intensified by a high rate of unemployment particularly after the transformation of the key industries from Scotland to London. As a result, the south became more prosperous than the other areas.

William Keegan, in his article "Britain Without oil", remarked that the British economy remained powerless despite the high profits of the North Sea oil. For example, in the first quarter of 1981 Britain's Gross Domestic Product (G. D. P) fell by 3.7 per cent, whereas the industrial production decreased to 9 per cent and unemployment nearly doubled to 2.5 million.⁶⁹

Besides that, the manufacturing output stepped down to £2.5 billion during the year of 1983⁷⁰. This regression proved that a low public expenditure would not elaborate economy. This specific idea was discussed in several economic writings. A. B. Atkinson, the author of *Incomes and the Welfare State*, noticed that there was no relation between economic performance and welfare expenditure in developed countries.

Robert. E. Goodin who agreed with Atkinson's theories illustrated, in *The Real Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, that economic progress and social growth did not influence each other. When comparing America to the Netherlands, he discovered that some economic activities were still weak in the United States

⁶⁸John Kenneth Galbraith, *ibid.*

⁶⁹Dennis Kavanagh, *op.cit.*, p.15

⁷⁰*Ibid.*

whose monitory budget for social improvement was lower than that of some European communities in which expenditure was higher and economy much developed. Nicholas Barr's assumptions, in his book entitled *Economics of the Welfare State*, were similar to those of Atkinson and Goodin. The following table gives more details about this topic:

Yet, the Conservative politician Keith Joseph mentioned in one of his former speeches that Conservative leaders whose policies were unsuccessful took also part in the decay of the seventies. This sharp critique demonstrated that the source of decline lied in the weak planning and wrong decisions and not in the rate of expenditure or political membership. T. Lupton had a similar vision, he reported:

*Economic explanation of Britain's inability to maintain even a moderate rate of economic growth are nowadays frequently accompanied by reference to lack of moral fibre, absence of positive leadership, false ideologies, petty sectional interests.*⁷¹

The failure was not only economic. The social reforms were also unsatisfactory to the ambitions of the great majority of the British society. Kenneth O. Morgan depicted a part of these disparaging conditions , here:

*...the quality of life was impoverished by declining investment in health and educational services (including the universities) and by reduced expenditure on art and the environment.*⁷²

Those impulses, described above, frustrated people as much as they stimulated a rash of uprisings in distinct areas. Wales and Scotland were all scenes for nationalism, whereas Northern Ireland was torn by a perpetual racial

⁷¹Kenneth O. Morgan, "The Culture is Wrong", op. cit., p.490.

⁷²T. Lupton, "The Culture is Wrong", op.cit., p. 181.

and religious antagonism between Protestants and Roman Catholics.⁷³

The case in Ireland was the worst of all; the direct rule from London was the policy that provoked serious tensions in the area. Accordingly, the relation grew hostile between the Prime Minister and the Irish Republican Army (I.R. A.). The latter assassinated Lord Mountbatten who was the uncle of Prince Phillip and one of the heroes of World War II in 1981.

In the same year, some prisoners, who belonged to the I. R. A, made hunger strikes to request a decent treatment; they considered themselves political prisoners and not criminals. The bomb at the Brighton Hotel, which was supposed to receive the Prime Minister at the end of the annual conference of the Conservative Party in 1985, was a clear warning from the I. R. A to Mrs. Thatcher that her interference in local affairs of Ireland would never be admitted.⁷⁴

In addition to the Irish question, the iron-lady thought of withdrawing from the European Economic Community (E. E. C.) which her country joined in 1973 for economic reasons. The continuous disagreement over this issue worsened her relationships inside the Conservative Party. As a result, her colleagues lost confidence in her politics and refused to back her in any future electoral process. Moreover, the endless protests of the large masses against her policies revealed that her powers were over. Ultimately, she resigned on 28 November 1990.

Nevertheless, Mrs. Thatcher's success in defeating the Soviet Union and ending up the cold war as well as her victory in the Falklands War made her the most admired political figure in the world during the twentieth century. But, in local affairs despite pressure and constraints that she imposed on economy,

⁷³Kenneth O. Morgan, *ibid.*

⁷⁴For further detailson the Irish violence, see Kenneth O. Morgan, *History of Britain*, p. 182.

mainly the public sector, and social services, her policy failed to satisfy the needs of a large number of individuals, as already explained.

Consequently, inflation was most of the time unstable and higher than the OECD⁷⁵ though it fell to 2.6 percent in 1986, it escalated to 6 percent in the last two years⁷⁶ while redundancy increased to a post-war high of 13 percent⁷⁷; this rate, however, overcame that recorded in times of her predecessors whom she criticised. Frederic A. Youngs portrayed these awkward economic conditions in which the United Kingdom found itself, he reported:

*British manufacturing industry (nationalised and private) declined, and the British economy became increasingly dominated by service industries. Fortunately for Britain, the financial cushion provided by North Sea oil enabled the government to maintain unemployment benefits.*⁷⁸

The debate over this decay extended and its reasons were differently interpreted. T. Lupton, for example, observed, from a sociological point of view, that the problem was purely cultural, he noted:

*We seem, in short to be suffering from severe cultural 'lag'. Our social structure and institutions and their values on the one hand, and our economic goals on the other, are strangely but perhaps understandably incongruent. We have no social regulators to prevent cultural hangovers.*⁷⁹

⁷⁵OECD: means the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development which includes rich countries that work together for a common purpose which is trade and economic development.

Source: *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, p. 1136.

⁷⁶R. Layard and S. Nickell, "The Thatcher Miracle?" , in www.justor.org/stable/1827759. Accessed on 22 November, 2008. P. 216.

⁷⁷Frederic A. Young, op.cit., p. 437.

⁷⁸Frederic A. Young, ibid.

⁷⁹T. Lupton, "The Culture is Wrong", op.cit., p. 495.

Yet, the politician Sir Oswald Mosley, who had the opportunity to work with Conservative and Labour Governments during his political career, argued that the root of decline was primarily political ‘both the main parties had already proved themselves impotent to deal with unemployment question, and indeed equally unconscious of the fundamental situation’.⁸⁰

This investigation of political, economic, and social transformations in the eighties demonstrated that Thatcher’s achievements were fewer than it was expected; her restrictive policies, though it brought sometimes a provisional progression to economy, as previously seen, led to a high criticism of the whole political Conservative ideology.

Thatcherism, though successful militarily, was weak in social development. Yet the issue of unemployment in particular remained hard to tackle during her three terms of office. Mrs. Thatcher, herself, said in her speech of 11 January 1996 that her leadership, in the 1980s, was not ideal and that every chief of government had errors and regrets; she recognised, at the end, her mismanagement of the economic sector and the failure of social policies.

Nonetheless, being out of office did not change her prior attitudes, she was still emphasising a reduced role for the government, a limited spending, a low taxation and a more liberated economy. Furthermore, she kept regarding the welfare state as a danger for freedoms and a major source of evils.

The iron-lady remarked that rethinking Conservatism to defeat Labour’s ideology thinking the unthinkable would be certainly efficient for the success of future Conservative Governments. However, Oswald Mosley’s ideas about Conservatism in the sixties were dominant in the eighties after the failure of the Thatcherian politics. The Conservatives were seen incompetent, selfish, and indifferent to mass suffering.

⁸⁰ Sir Oswald Mosley, *My Life*, p. 272.

Thus, the perpetual attack to Conservatism and the steady opposition to Labourism and Socialism gave the impression that economy would not progress in such environment in which the political stability was itself threatened. Therefore, Anthony Wright, a British political writer and a Labour Party member, proposed political reforms including arrangements in the electoral system so that economy might recover; for him the persistence of the same system with the same performance would impede the success of all sorts of reforms. This meant that the welfare state, which was heavily criticised, was not responsible for the decline.

General conclusion

The welfare state was highly developed in distinct parts of the world throughout the twentieth century. In Britain, it started with the early Liberal reforms of Lloyd George who was influenced by Bismarck's experience in Germany; he fought ironically to make the British old men benefit from the pensions and insurance system. This triumph motivated Winston Churchill, the leader of the coalition government, to extend these reforms, during the Second World War, to include kids and women likewise.

On the other hand, this war was a good lesson that revealed a true picture on solidarity and patriotism. Both the rich and the poor determined to fight the enemy together till the end; they devoted their times as well as their lives for the sake of being free and powerful. These strong passions were reinforced by a political consensus which united the thinking of the parties over the major issues.

As beautiful as this image of cooperation was the dream of Sir William Beveridge who thought of building up a strong egalitarian society after the end of the war; his purposes were diverse but the most basic one was to defend human rights that were violated by the cruel rules of the past and set up democracy instead. Actually, Beveridge could spread out his ideals which influenced mainly the Labours' theories. Most importantly was that his own philosophy was paramount in founding the welfare state.

In the aftermath of 1945, Clement Atlee developed Churchill's social reforms particularly when the post-war government was established. Consequently, a great evolution of services was noticeable in housing, education, and health. Youngsters and elders alike found all what they needed.

Conversely, the industrial growth was one of the most complicated tasks for the British government in the twentieth century. Yet, it is worth to mention here that the unpredicted depression of the seventies, due to the crisis of the Gulf oil, influenced tremendously the British economy, as it was widely debated through the chapters of the current dissertation.

The disaster was greater when inflation and unemployment paralysed the attempts of finding adequate solutions at the right moment. Added to this crisis was the perpetual rise of population from one year to another. The outcome was that the demand was higher than the supply. The conflict with the Trade Union was another factor that led to a further degradation as it was largely displayed all over this research work.

On the other side, the ideological clashes between the two major parties did not produce a suitable environment for economic prosperity. Since, the new elected power's policies interrupted the former economic procedures and restarted with a different programme. For example, the Labour leaders approached usually nationalisation as a basic key for growth, whereas the Conservatives favoured constantly privatisation with a minimum control from the state.

Furthermore, religious struggles particularly in Ireland between Catholics and Protestants complicated the work for preserving stability in the United Kingdom. This situation made the government think seriously on how to protect people and end violence there. All these were concrete facts that Mrs. Thatcher ignored in her speeches but were really obstacles for development. The same impediments affected both Conservative and Labour leaderships.

Nevertheless, the welfare state's abolition of the poor-law system, which lasted three and a half centuries, remained the greatest achievement in the history of humanity, as it was an important step for democracy. Sustaining those in want, being single or married, young or old, educated or illiterate was a spectacular event ever known in the United Kingdom.

However, the welfare state, which distributed the incomes in a way that made the dispossessed benefited extensively, disturbed the capitalists' interests. Therefore, an unprecedented antagonism against the left wing ideologies rose in Britain. The Conservatives led several campaigns in which they warned people to vote for Labours whose policies were characterised, from a Conservative point of view, by high taxes, elevated public expenditure, and wastefulness.

Then, opinions about the paternalistic state, as it was called by opponents, varied widely; some people said that its large range of services lacked quality, while others saw that they were insufficient and needed more support from the independent organisations.

James Bartholomew shared the same standpoint; he remarked that the Labour politics drove whole generations to deprivation, bad education, and laziness. Meanwhile, T. Lupton, in his article "The Culture is Wrong", contended that the political failure was bounded to the gap which existed already between the social structure, institutions, values, and the economic plans.

Accordingly, it was extremely hard to avoid collapse despite some good achievements in various spheres. Sir Oswald Mosley, an ex-politician, argued in his autobiography *My Life* that there were other reasons behind the corrosion; he claimed that the miscalculation of the budget going to the social services produced a serious economic retardation.

On the other hand, T. Burkard's outlook was that the welfare leaders created a kind of administrations that were more interested in demanding handouts and reluctant in presenting good services for citizens. More deploring was the prevailing of fraud and corruption that fuelled a continual resentment against the Socialist planning.

Sharing the views of T. Burkard, Mrs. Thatcher who came to power in the late

seventies maintained that the economic deterioration was due to the evil rule of the Labours. Therefore, she led a whole revolution against the former political, economic, and social policies; she denounced the state's monopolisation which minimized personal freedom in trade and business. This of course, permitted the capitalists to be more prosperous than ever before.

Beside the perpetual ideological clash between the Conservatives and Labours, the increasing powers of the mass media in recent years influenced the political life of Great Britain. Both parties used audio-visual means as well as the press in their propaganda to gain a massive number of supporters and defeat the adversary.

Henceforth, it became easier for the party that manipulated perfectly these devices, mentioned above, to win elections or even to overthrow a government which disregarded the people's wishes. Nevertheless, the decline remained a tremendous trouble that faced all governments.

Moreover, the iron-lady's disbelief in the theory of an egalitarian society splited people into two blocs. The first division supported equal opportunities of work, learning, insurance, and health and the second one did not. Furthermore, Thatcherism encouraged individualism and broke consolidation; as a result, poverty re-emerged in most areas of the United Kingdom.

More than that, it seemed that history repeated itself, all failures, conflicts and upheavals that occurred in the seventies reoccurred in the eighties without being solved efficiently. This meant that the Labour decisions were not falsified all the time. On the other hand, the heavy cuts that she made in social services' spending were thought to be a good measure to flourish economy, but the outcome, already clarified, proved the wrongness of this reflection. Several studies displayed that the increased costs of the social services were never been a cause for regression.

If the majority of Conservatives, including Mrs. Thatcher, persuaded that the

decline was economic, Tony Wright, a member in parliament, argued that it was rather political. In his work *Citizens and Subjects* published in 1994, Tony Wright conveyed that the absence of a written constitution in Britain gave powers to the Prime Minister Mrs. Thatcher to demolish the strength of the Trade Union easily. Therefore, no concrete improvement would be realized under such too- centralised governments and autocratic rulers, without a true and efficient thinking of reforming the constitution.

Tony Wright who described democracy in British politics as a new wine in old bottles demonstrated that social justice would remain a nice dream which would be hard to realise in a capitalist society. This may lead to conclude that people would not enjoy their rights fully out of a welfare system.

Accordingly, all attempts of dismantling this state were ineffective . For example, a strong resistance from the working- class in the early years of the seventies interrupted the reforms of the Conservative Government headed by Edward Heat, aiming at reducing welfare schemes. Mrs. Thatcher encountered similar impediments when she intended to overturn the Socialist policies at the beginning of her office; this pressure, however, compelled her to introduce choice in her second term.

Nicholas Deakin studied the secret of the welfare state's strength; he discovered, then, that it enjoyed a public legitimacy and a structural position among modern democracies that prevented its collapse easily. Deakin's conception emphasised the fact that flexibility is a fundamental element for the success of the government, as it is a way to social satisfaction and prosperity.

What happened recently in the Arab World mainly Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and in other territories transmitted a vivid image on how humiliation coupled with corruption, anguish and alienation produced resentment, among the great majority of people, which ended up with bloody revolutions leading ultimately to overthrowing these governments.

Thus, these unprecedented Arabic upheavals, admired universally, were a symptom for some political analysts to assume that the age of dictatorship is over. Furthermore, they represented a new start towards a genuine democracy not only in slogans and speeches but also as authentic practice in everyday life.

It might be concluded out of these noticeable changes, earlier explained, that in contemporary societies welfare becomes an overwhelming demand for men as well as a paramount instrument for leaders who have to attract more and more popular support to avoid all sources of quarrel.

It is worth to mention here, that the political authorities are aware that people of nowadays are conscious, powerful and confident, therefore a concrete promotion of social plans become a top preoccupation for politicians who believe in democracy.

Appendix

Table 2: Inflation in the U.K. from 1978 to 1984

	UK (% change from previous half year, annualized)	OECD	Difference (UK less OECD)
1978 I	7.8	7.8	0.0
II	8.1	8.4	-0.3
1979 I	12.1	9.2	2.9
II	21.3	12.3	9.0
1980 I	19.4	14.4	5.0
II	12.4	10.6	1.8
1981 I	12.0	10.8	1.2
II	11.2	9.8	1.4
1982 I	9.3	7.4	1.9
II	4.9	6.7	-1.8
1983 I	3.9	4.5	-0.6
II	5.9	5.6	0.3
1984 I	4.6	5.5	-0.9
II	5.0	5.0	0.0
1961-70 average	4.1	3.3	0.8
1971-80 average	13.7	9.0	4.7

Source: Dennis Kavanagh, *Thatcherism and British Politics*, P. 226.

Appendix

Table 3: Privatisation in Britain from 1979 to 1984

Company	Business	Date of Sale
British Petroleum	Oil	Oct. 79
		Jun. 81
		Sep. 83
British Aerospace	Aerospace	Feb. 81
British Sugar Corporation	Sugar refiner	Jul. 81
Cable & Wireless	Telecommunications	Oct. 81
		Dec. 83
Amersham International	Radio-chemicals	Feb. 82
National Freight Co.	Road Haulage	Feb. 82
Britoil	Oil	Nov. 82
Associated	Seaports	Feb. 83
British Ports		Apr. 84
International Aeradio	Aviation communications	Mar. 83
British Rail Hotels	Hotels	Mar. 83
British Gas onshore Oil Assets (Wytch Farm)	Oil	May. 84
Enterprise Oil	Oil	Jun. 84
Sealink	Harbour and ferry	Jul. 84
Jaguar	Cars	Jul. 84
British Telecom	Telecommunications	Nov. 84
British Technology Groups and other sales	miscellaneous	—

Source: Dennis Kavanagh, op.cit. P.222.

Appendix

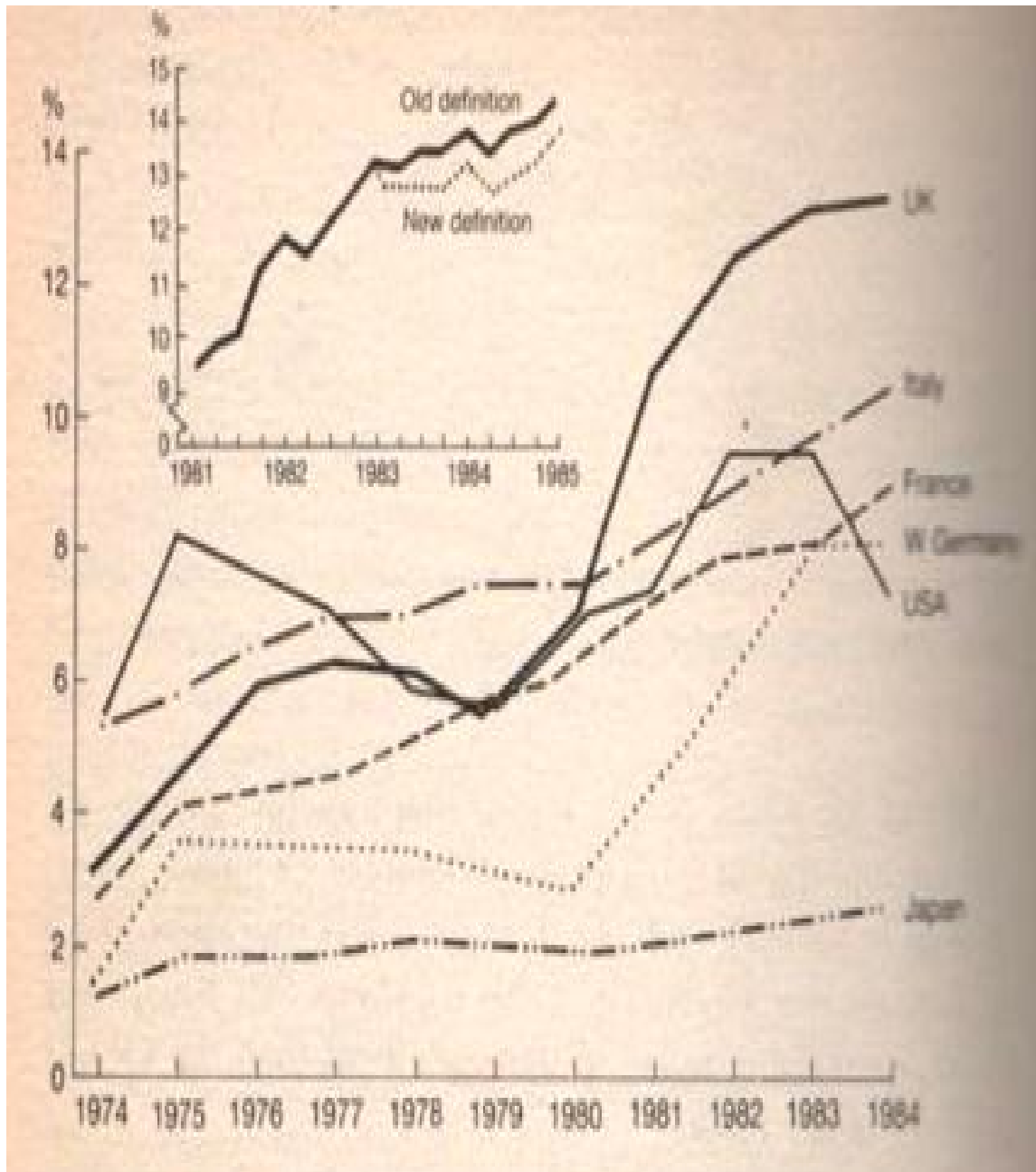
Table 1: The decrease of Poverty in Distinct Countries due to the Welfare State

	Post-tax/transfer relative poverty	Pre-tax/transfer relative poverty
Australia	6.4	21.3
Belgium	2.2	23.9
Canada	5.6	21.6
Denmark	3.5	23.9
Finland	2.3	9.8
France	4.8	27.5
Germany	2.4	14.1
Ireland	4.7	25.8
Italy	5.0	21.8
Netherlands	4.3	20.5
Norway	1.7	9.3
Sweden	3.8	20.6
Switzerland	4.3	12.8
United Kingdom	5.3	25.7
United States	11.7	21.0

Source: Lane Kenworthy, "Do Social- Welfare Policies Reduce Poverty?", Luxembourg Income Study Working Paper No.188.

Appendix

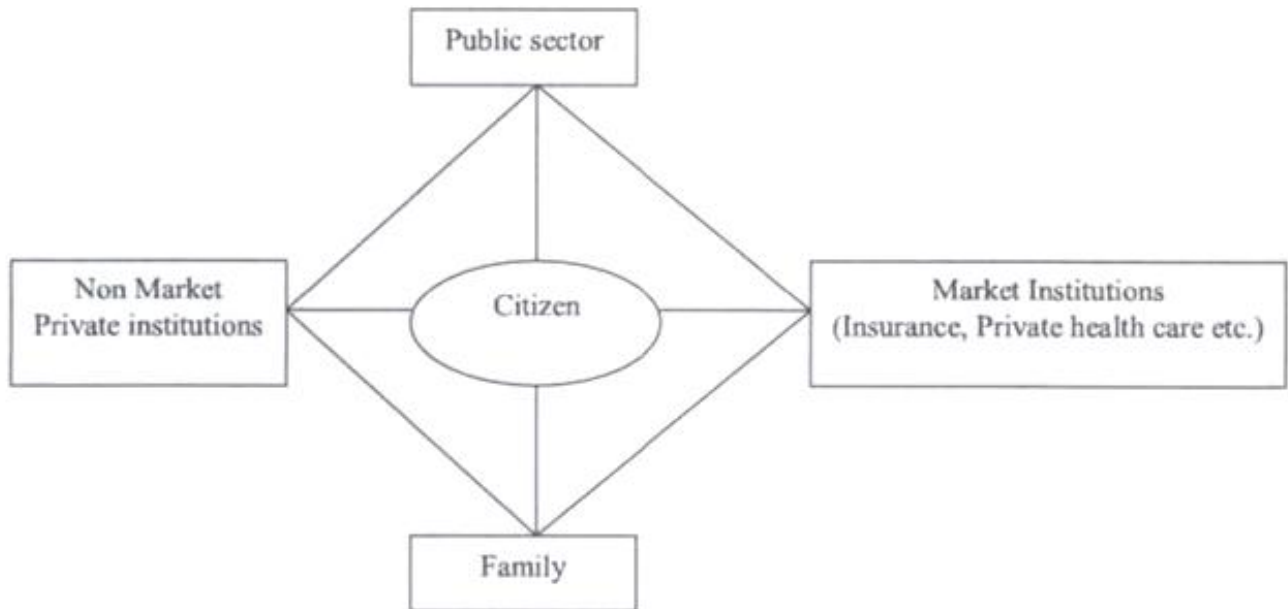
Figure 1: Unemployment in the U.K. from 1974 to 1984



Source: Dennis Kavanagh, op.cit. P.98.

Appendix

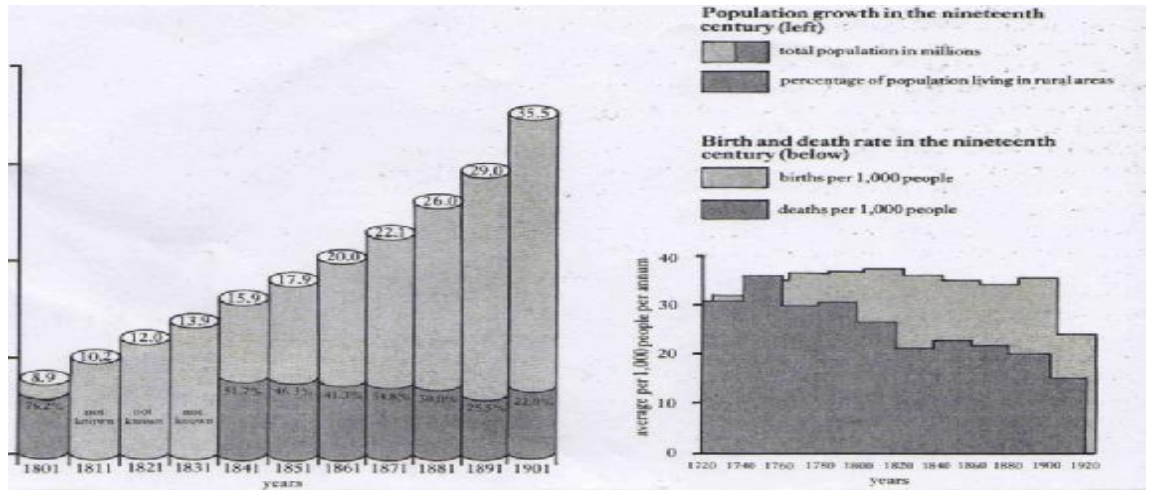
Figure 2: Welfare State's services



Source: Niels Kargard, "The Foundation for the Danish Welfare State", P. 3.

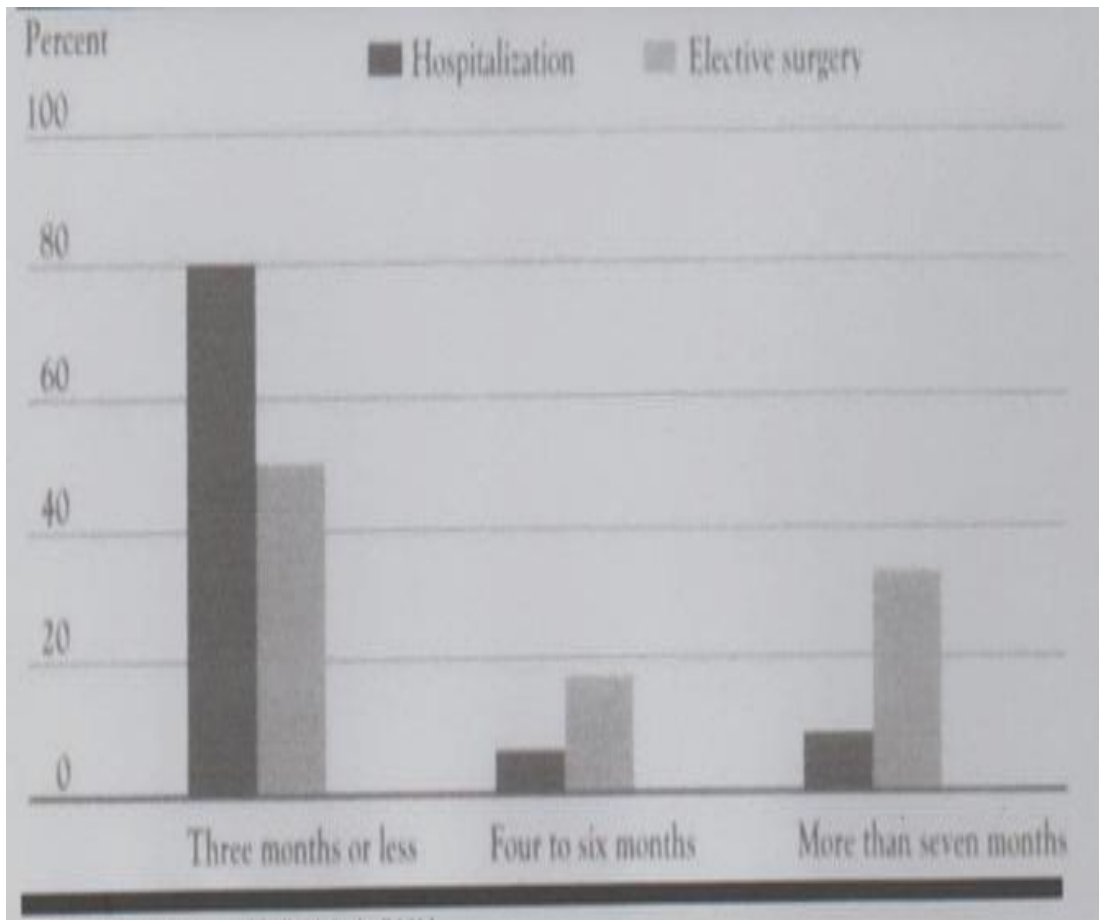
Appendix

Figure 3: The Growth of Population in the Nineteenth Century. Source: Asa Briggs, *A Social History of Britain*, p. 245.



Appendix

Figure 4: Length of Waiting Times for Medical Care in Great Britain, 1988-1989



Source: Robert J. Blendon and Karen Donclan, "British Public Opinion on National Health Service Reform", p.57.

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