

Trying For a Better Society: A Look at British Socialism Post World War II

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In the years between 1939 and 1945, Great Britain was left near economic turmoil and the population of the country desired a better system to live under. It is from this experience that the Labour Party was able to install social reforms during the postwar years of 1945 to 1951, guided in part by the Beveridge Report that laid out reform for Britain's health insurance sectors. When World War II was over the Labour Party, under the leadership of Clement Attlee, was able to implement some of the social reforms that could not have been done during the war years or prior. Author George Orwell believed the Beveridge Report neither contained enough socialist ideology nor empowered the government. Orwell's writing about the dangers of a corrupted communist political system was considered to be on the fringes of the Left within Britain. With the political shifts happening within Europe during the first half of the twentieth century, the years of 1939 to 1945 and 1945 to 1951 were important for the culmination of policies bringing socialist policies to Britain. Since the Labour Party government of 1945-51 was unable to keep popular support in the years to come, they were unable to implement what some hoped would be a fully socialist agenda. Without the high level of nationalism that Britain experienced due to the victory of World War II, the Labour Party would not have been able to take Britain from being a predominately capitalist to a socialist society.

The early twentieth century was a time of political shifts all across the globe and this includes Britain's shift to socialism. This was due to many issues but mostly revolved around Britain's part in World War II and how the nation was brought together as a result of the war. During the early twentieth century in Britain there were those who supported socialist social policies, but due to the conservative party in power and Britain's capitalist economy it was hard for these social policies to be implemented. In order for socialist reforms to be put into place something was needed to act as a catalyst to bring popular support for socialist reforms to the forefront. This catalyst would be World War II. The war effort would require better accountability of how the government would be able to take care of the suffering population. Part of this would be laid out by Sir William Beveridge in the Beveridge Report, which was aimed primarily at health insurance, but also addressed other reforms that Beveridge viewed as necessary. The end of the war brought with it the elections of 1945 in which the Labour Party won a surprising victory. The Labour Party had only held a majority in Parliament for three out of the previous forty-five years and conservative Winston Churchill, who was viewed as being the Prime Minister who rallied the British and won the war, was expected to carry on in rebuilding Britain after the war. Nationalism was a powerful factor in this election in that it acted as a binding agent in which the country was united by the desire for a new direction for how the country was operated. Having won the election, the Labour Party went to work implementing social reforms and its socialist agenda of nationalization. Clement Attlee was to be the leader who tried to find the balance between those within the Labour party who wanted a fully socialist agenda and those who wanted a minimum of socialist policies. As men returned from service and women returned home from the wartime industries jobs, now was the time for the socialist system to work. However, due to the economic

restraints put on the system it is evident that this was a system that was not yet strong enough to support itself.

While not being a member of the Labour Party, the writer George Orwell was a politically charged writer who often wrote about the dangers of corrupt capitalist *and* communist political systems. His writings are often misunderstood as being *against* socialism, but Orwell was a staunch socialist who truly believed that socialism was the best of systems. During the war Orwell wrote about patriotism and how England was a great country but it could be better through implementing socialism. Beveridge, Attlee, and Orwell all three played a part in bringing socialism, at least partially, to Britain, but it was the war that gave socialism the support from the British population it needed to be implemented. The type of control that the war time coalition government had was one geared towards controlling the population and in this way it supported the population in ways as never before. Moreover, it was this type of control that the Labour Party would continue to use after the war in implementing the social reform and socialist policies.

The Labour Party and the Implementation of Socialist Policy

As with the rest of Europe, Britain lay in economic turmoil at the end of the Second World War. Even in victory the British political future was a toss-up, as evident by the then surprising victory of the Labour Party in the election of 1945. Throughout the war a coalition government ran the country under the wartime mentality of control, in which the government was geared towards the war effort and civilian social welfare. The Labour Party would, through popular support, continue this type of control during the postwar period in an attempt to implement social reforms aimed towards the goal of making Britain a socialist state. Under this type of governance the Labour Party was able to continue policies such as free meals in schools¹ but also expand other policies like those geared towards health care. The Labour Party also used this time to implement policies towards nationalization of private industry. These two together would form the basis of the socialist reforms from which the socialist push would come. Starting with the Bank of England in 1946, industries were starting to be put under government control in order to implement austerity measures or to enforce the ones already in place². Twenty percent of productive industry would end up being nationalized and these included mining and railways as well as the health care industry which under governmental control would be reorganized as the National Health Service (NHS). This system was to be the tool in which any British citizen would receive health care at no charge to the patient with the doctor to be reimbursed by the government³. In *The Future That Doesn't Work* (1977) several authors put forth their ideas regarding British socialism. As far as British medicine the author points to issues that have come to plague the NHS since its creation⁴.

¹ James Hinton, *Labour and Socialism*. (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1983), p171.

² Hinton, *Labour and Socialism*, p171.

³ Harry Schwartz, "The Infirmity of British Medicine" in *The Future That Doesn't Work*, ed. R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr. (New York: Doubleday 1977), p34.

⁴ Ibid.

One of the problems presented is that of the compensation of the general practitioners. Due to protest from within the medical field, compromises were made to be able to both work under the NHS as well as to continue seeing private patients, which could be viewed as one of the first socialist ideological failures of the NHS. Under the 9/11 agreement, reached between interests in the Labour Party and the Tories, a medical consultant would be allowed to receive 9/11th of a full-time consultant's pay in order to be able to see private patients. Other evidence of ideological failure of the system came in 1951 when the NHS started charging for eyeglasses and false teeth with the goal of saving an estimated £23 million⁵. This act also caused the resignation of Aneurin Bevan who ideologically was a socialist and who was the MP who helped guild NHS legislation through Parliament as well as helped organize and operate it until his resignation. In true socialist form Aneurin Bevan said "we ought to take pride in the fact that despite our financial and economic anxieties, we are still able to do the most civilized thing in the world—put the welfare of the sick in front of every other consideration."⁶

A 1942 government report titled "Social Insurance and Allied Services," later known after its author Sir William Beveridge, put forth an idea on the reforming of the insurance system within Britain in which the old system was deemed ineffective and a new system should take its place. This report was meant as an informative guide for the government. What the report called for is a system of state-run compulsory insurance schemes. According to Beveridge, as one of the "Three Guiding Principles of Recommendations" in the report, that the future proposals should learn from the past system by these "sectional interests" should not have any bearings on those future proposals⁷. It is his second guiding principle that shows more of the ideological nature of what Beveridge is trying to accomplish. In it he writes about the "five giants on the road to reconstruction."⁸ These five giants are "disease, ignorance, squalor, idleness, and want."⁹ It is these five things that he believes will be attacked by not only his new organization of social insurance but other areas of social reform for this report is only, or should be only, but one step in an overall policy of "social progress," which has the noblest of aspirations. And it is clear by the third of the Guiding Principles that what Beveridge intends to include is the idea that while the system is between the individual and the state there should be room for the individual to better his standing economically and doing so voluntary. At the same time, Beveridge states that "the state should offer security for service and contribution, addressing how the state should not "stifle incentive, opportunity, responsibility."¹⁰ Ideologically, it seems as this system is a socialist system aimed at relieving society's ills. The issue of want is the biggest "ill" in Beveridge's idea of the then current system. This want stems from "an interruption or loss of earning power."¹¹ In his

⁵ Ibid, p 27.

⁶ Schwartz, "The Infirmity of British Medicine" in *The Future That Doesn't Work*, ed. by R. Emmett Tyrell, Jr., p24-5.

⁷ Sir William Beveridge, *Social Insurance and Allied Services*, (New York: Macmillan company, 1942).

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Beveridge, *Social Insurance and Allied Services*.

¹¹ Ibid.

explanation of such he describes this as being derived from the inequalities of the flawed system of capitalism. That is why he reasons that to prevent this interruption or loss from occurring three things must happen:

1. A widening of current coverings.
2. To cover those presently (1942) excluded.
3. Raising the rates of the benefits.¹²

But relieving the interruption or loss situation is only the first issue in the abolition of want. The second widens the scope a bit to accept “family needs” in this “interruption and loss” period. It sets forth to accept the idea of income adjustments based on the needs in the form of children’s allowances but these are to be given not only in times of unemployment but in times of employment as well. The reason is that without fulltime allowances the lower paid workers with large families will still have that “want” during times of employment, and secondly in a time of employment the foresaid large family’s income will be larger than in time of unemployment.

Throughout the report, Beveridge states that the aim of the report is reform of the insurance system. However, he also dives off into issues affected by the system as well as society’s influence on the system. Throughout the report Beveridge lays out the reforms needed as well as those needing it. He states that the plan as being “all-embracing” but it is still “classified in application.”¹³ This is in relation to the different make up of an individuals, i.e. recipients, position, be it the gainfully employed, the housewife, or those below or above the working age. This is how he makes a system that recognizes a person’s position within that society. In the plan itself he details how these groups would be covered by the various social reforms implemented, such as unemployment benefits, pensions, and medical treatment. At the same time, he addresses the need to fund a society as such, and that it is society which should fund it no matter what the individuals draw from it. This is where the plan comes to insurance, and a compulsory power of the state over society. In doing so the report lays out the need for the individual to participate, but the report makes a statement in recognizing the British citizen’s desire in not wanting “free allowances,” but “benefits in return for contributions.”¹⁴ The significance of this statement is that Beveridge already noted that the reason for giving full allowances even in times of employment is to keep the larger families income larger than that during unemployment and to keep the “want” out. The Beveridge Report laid the ideological groundwork for the then future of the British state. It would set up a system of social reforms in which the state would take over the different areas in which it felt were beneficial to ease society’s ills, desire, and wants, in essence becoming the modern welfare state.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Beveridge, *Social Insurance and Allied Services*.

¹⁴ Ibid.

While never having been put into practice, the Beveridge Report did act as a guide in forming postwar Labour Party doctrine in which the state of Britain was to become, some could argue, a socialist state. The report had a good deal of support from the British people when it was released in 1942. One reason was that in times of a raging war Britons were taking care of Britons, thereby bonding a country's population into a cohesive society fixed on similar goals amidst the times of tragedy and eventual victory. As stated in the Beveridge report, during this time of war a "revolutionary moment in the world's history is a time for revolutions, not for patching"¹⁵ in referring to the need of a new system.

Sir William Beveridge's Other Works

The Beveridge Report is often linked to socialist reforms of post-World War II. Beveridge, being a socialist, strove to bring about other socialist reforms. Having been educated at Oxford University in the early years of the twentieth century he gained interest in social reform.¹⁶ It is shortly thereafter that Beveridge came to work in the East End of London for several years seeing firsthand the issues of the poor and, more important to his work, the issue of unemployment. During the First World War Beveridge worked within the government and shortly after the war was knighted. Because Beveridge had what some might call an inflated sense of self he often times rubbed people the wrong way and therefore alienated himself from having more support from within the government. The issue of the nature of the so-called committee set up to examine the state of insurance in Britain can be looked at as a prime example. In the section on Beveridge in the book *Fifty Key Figures in Twentieth-Century British Politics* the author explains how due to his nature it was only in 1940 that Beveridge was asked to join the government but even then in a "relatively insignificant Ministry of Labour manpower survey."¹⁷ From here he was then permitted to become chairman of the inquiry. It was only that due to the controversial nature of the report that it was decided between the powers that be, Arthur Greenwood namely, that Beveridge would sign the report himself and that the others, being civil servants, would be regarded as his advisers."¹⁸ For a person like Beveridge, the popular support shown to the report could only bolster his desire for the social reforms.

Beveridge's past political writing revolved around the issue of unemployment, and he would continue to write about the need for those type of reforms after his report's publication, even tying them together in his report *Full Employment in a Free Society*. Published in 1944, the report lays out that its aim is at "freedom from idleness and sets out a policy for full employment to achieve that aim".¹⁹ While the idea of 100% employment may seem ambitious, Beveridge

¹⁵ Beveridge, *Social Insurance and Allied Services*.

¹⁶ Keith Laybourn, *Fifty Key Figures in Twentieth-Century British Politics*, (London: Routledge, 2002).

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Laybourn, *Fifty Key Figures in Twentieth-Century British Politics*, p 34.

¹⁹ Sir William Beveridge, *Full Employment in a Free Society*, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1960).

actually sets his standard for full employment around 97%²⁰, pointing out that there would always be someone who could not work at some point. It is through a certain passage titled “Preservation of Essential Liberties” that the liberation side of Beveridge appears when he talks about how civil liberties such as “freedom of worship, speech, writing, study and teaching”, and even “free assembly” whose goal could be “peaceful change of governing authority” and included in the idea around this work of unemployment in a “free society.”²¹ For without this freedom Beveridge realized the system would be one of totalitarianism, as Orwell probably would agree, and therefore unequal in this sense. However, Beveridge states that these “essential liberties... do not include liberty of a private citizen to own means of production and to employ other citizens in operating them at a wage.”²² He states that while the goal is full employment not through the abolition of property, i.e. the means of production, but if it is required then “abolition would have to be undertaken.”²³ This attitude seemed to be prevalent throughout Britain not only during the war but after the war and it seems this reasoning could be what leads the Labour Party to implementing some of its policies on nationalization.

Ideal Socialism and Reality

The socialist attitude held by Beveridge, and set forth by his report, and those held by others such as Attlee, A. Bevan, and Orwell, while being of a pure socialist ideology, could be the downfall for the Labour Party in Britain. Or it could be the very reason that it thrived while it did because Britain was more united in the few years after the war than before. Due to the war, Britain had reformed its society to that of a wartime society in which the economy was controlled heavily by the central government and revolved around the manufacture of wartime goods. By 1945, Britain had only one-third of its prewar export industry of 1939. Along with the loss of lend-lease aid from the United States, that same year Britain was in a tough economic spot. Austerity was a necessity for Britain during the war and it would help in the postwar wartime governmental controlled plan of implementing the Labour Party’s socialism. It would only be through another loan from America that would allow the country, under the new socialist policies, to continue to run. But even still it was under these conditions that the Labour Party moved forward with its social reforms in 1946.²⁴ Under certain political ideology, like communism and according to Karl Marx, in order to be able to reach ideal socialism the capitalist system must not only come first but must flourish in order to show the injustices that the bourgeois class causes the proletarian class²⁵. It is this capitalist system, with its massive infrastructure of industries that will provide the means to be able to create an equal society through the evolution of the working classes moving their way

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Hinton, *Labour and Socialism*, p169.

²⁵ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*. (London: Penguin Classics, 2002).

to an area where they actually control the power, or what is equated with power, and that being the means of production. When the need for capital ceases due to the circle of production then the socialist system can flourish. This is the way, the road if you will, to socialism but the desire for the equality that comes from deep within the lower classes may stem from being within a system that promotes the idea of liberalism. This is shown in the theory put forth in the *Three Instances of Hegemony in the History of the Capitalist World Economy*. The author states that Britain having been one of the three Hegemonic powers, 1815-73, “tended to be advocates of Global Liberalism.”²⁶ It was this sense of liberalism focusing on not only the betterment of self but also betterment of fellow men that can lead to the whole range of what are civil liberties. Under this hegemonic time is when more freedoms, per se, were given not only in the area of not only civil liberties but also to the area of “flow of the factors of production,”²⁷ the “Free market.” Where this idea may differ from socialism could be better explained by Sir Winston Churchill: “Liberalism has its own history and its own tradition. Socialism has its formulas and aims. Socialism seeks to pull down the wealth; Liberalism seeks to raise up poverty.... Socialism exalts the rule; Liberalism exalts the man. Socialism attacks capital; Liberalism attacks monopoly.”²⁸ While being a political opponent of socialism through his conservative politics, these words do sum up some of Churchill’s feelings and ideas about socialism. Since the Labour Party government of 1945-51 was unable to keep popular support in the years to come they were unable to implement what some hoped would be a fully socialist agenda. The NHS continues today but due to the liberal ideas even within the conservative party it was an ideological and political win when first introduced with even Churchill saying the Beveridge Report was an ideal plan.²⁹ But due to the conservative party’s restraints on politics during the war, the Beveridge Report and the Labour Party’s resolution to support and implement the report was defeated in February of 1943.³⁰ But this was also a time of unity in which all Britons were suffering the effects of war, which has its ways of connecting a population. This might be the reason that the Labour Party had a more decisive, as well as surprising, victory in the General Election of 1945. It was during the war in which there was a replacement of the old school meal system as a means to free up time to allow the housewives and mothers to enter the work force. The Blitz created and fed the need for emergency housing and health care³¹ and all to be provided by the government. Both of these last two issues are ones that would continue past the war within the socialist agenda of the Labour Party. But government was unable to fulfill the housing needs appropriately due to not only the economics of rebuilding a country after a war but also providing for the new wartime families and the baby boom that accompanied it.

²⁶ Immanuel Wallerstein “Hegemonic Power and Stability” in *Theoretical Evolution of International Political Economy*, ed. George T. Crane and Abla Amawi (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Viscount Simon, “Churchill as a Liberal” in *Churchill: By His Contemporaries*, ed. By Charles Eade (London: Morrison and Gibb, 1955), P60.

²⁹ Schwartz, “The Infirmity of British Medicine” in *The Future That Doesn’t Work*, ed. by R. Emmett Tyrell, jr.

³⁰ Laybourn, *Fifty Key Figures in Twentieth-Century British Politics*.

³¹ Schwartz, “The Infirmity of British Medicine” in *The Future That Doesn’t Work*, ed. by R. Emmett Tyrell, Jr.

The Labour Party would not be able to fully implement a socialist system because the Labour Party lost its majority hold on Parliament during the elections of 1951. The attitudes had changed between 1945 and 1951. No longer was everyone an equal in Britain, the hard times were over, or were supposed to be at least. As men returned from service and women returned home from the wartime industries jobs, now was the time for the socialist system to work. But due to the economic restraints put on the system it is evident that this was a system that was not yet strong enough to support itself. In a book titled *Government Failure and Over Government* and in the section titled “Beveridge’s Error” the author states that “It is that the main services of what became ‘the welfare state’ suffered from three crucial defects in disregarding the changing conditions of the people:

1. They were introduced too soon by false argument and before the private mechanisms could show their superiority.
2. They were maintained too large in forms that did not respond to or reflect individual private wishes.
3. And they were continued far too long when they had become superfluous because the people could provide them privately with better regard for individual preferences.”³²

It was a return to the normalcy of prewar capitalist desire almost, if there could be a normalcy at this point that doomed the Labour Party in the 1951 elections. But in 1945 it was the desire for a better society that allowed the Labour Party to come to power. Even in 1947 the Labour Party was having political problems within its ranks, primarily focusing around the argument of the steel industry and whether it should be nationalized. Part of the theory of nationalizing Britain at the time was that the government would only target loss-making industries as a means to redirect private capital into other, still private, sectors.³³ Also problems arose over coal shortages, the value of borrowed dollars, and the government’s “repression of socialist possibilities in liberated Europe.”³⁴ These situations led to political turmoil in Britain early in the phase of the implementing socialist reforms during the Labour Party’s rule, and in part ensuring the downfall of the Labour Party which guaranteed that a full socialist program would not be able to be put into effect. The policies that were put into place, however, were carried out under the guidance of Clement Attlee. It was Attlee who acted as the balance within the Labour Party between those who wanted a full socialist agenda and those who wanted a more selective set of socialist social reforms.

³² Arthur Seldon, *The Collected Works of Arthur Seldon: Government Failure and Over-Government*, ed. Colin Robinson (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2005), p169.

³³ Hinton, *Labor and Socialism*, p172.

³⁴ *Ibid*, p173.

Clement Attlee

The question could quite often be asked if it is the man who makes the moment or is it the moment that makes the man. In the case of Clement Attlee the two-sided question posed carries weight on both sides. Born in 1883, Attlee was a member of parliament from 1922-55 representing the Labour Party. It was Attlee who led the Labour Party not only as a part of the wartime coalition government but also as Prime Minister of Parliament following the war in the years of 1945-51. It was under his guidance and leadership that the social reforms of Britain were put into place in the post war era. Throughout his life Attlee saw the need for social reforms. From the time he was a social worker in London's East End in 1908³⁵ to the wartime coalition government, Attlee would work towards a goal of a socialist Britain. After having control of Parliament for a short period of time in 1924 and then again from 1929-31,³⁶ within the Labour Party there seemed to be in the early 1930s a need for a new leader. The so-called old guard could not keep up with policies and demand for the type of socialism that was coming about. This is why along with his input in policy-making of the Labour Party, Attlee became party leader in 1935 after having made a somewhat surprising rise to power in the Labour Party.³⁷ When the subject of socialism came up, however, in modern conversations one must be careful to keep a neutral bias to a post-Cold War idea of what socialism is and must try to envision it as in the political realm of the charged political climate of early twentieth century European context. "Attlee's fundamental political concept was that socialism should be achieved through democratic means. Attlee's socialism was not doctrinaire; rather, it was his response to the human circumstances and contemporary conditions which he knew in London's East End and during the depression."³⁸ It seems that while the point of socialism is that the governmental control is for the good of the public, the protection of the collective; Attlee knew that the need for the betterment of the people needed to be the driving force behind socialism. Some of Attlee's early political policy writings had more to do with political reform, i.e. cabinet reform, and nationalization than society's ills. This could be that Attlee knew that the public need was there already but now the governmental system needed to catch up to that public need. His chance would not come in a time of peace but instead in a time of war. In 1940, after the election of the conservative Sir Winston Churchill as Prime Minister, Churchill offered to form a coalition government with the Labour Party. This set the stage for a Labour Party influence on British political policy that they had not had before. In 1942 Attlee was Deputy Prime Minister under Churchill and throughout the war remained in the war cabinet.³⁹ While the two did not always see eye to eye on political issues they were able to act as a check and balance system upon each other's political views as was demonstrated, for example, during their discussion over the

³⁵Kenneth O. Morgan, *Labour in Power: 1945-1951*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), p45-51.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Robert Pearce, *Profiles in Power: Attlee*, (London: Longman, 1997).

³⁸ Jerry H Brookshire. "Attlee and Cabinet Reform, 1930-1945", *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (Mar., 1981) pp175-188. P 178.

³⁹ Pearce, *Profiles in Power: Attlee*, 95.

publication of the Beveridge Report. While the checks did not allow for passage of the Beveridge Report, there was some support from Churchill after the initial resistance; he saw the good that could come about by further bringing the county together. However, the issue of Attlee's involvement in the wartime coalition government allowed for the Labour Party policies to be put into place in certain situations. Policies of nationalization were used as means to help the war effort. Food rationing was first introduced in Britain at the beginning of the war, and it would not be the only thing rationed. Clothes and different forms of fuel were rationed as well.⁴⁰ Some issues that the wartime coalition government would have effect on are that of unemployment, health care, and housing. While all these issues were affected by the war it was under Attlee's leadership during the post-war that these policies continued.

The British people seemed to be at a tipping point in 1945, and this was Attlee's chance of putting forth socialism through democratic means. Attlee, as well as other Labour leaders, who have had the needed experience of what governmental control is capable of, continued this ideologically socialist agenda during the postwar period. The Labour controlled government pushed through no less than seventy-five measures in the "first year of socialist rule."⁴¹ While Attlee was a socialist, one could ask to what degree was he a socialist and to what degree was he a politician? Through the 1920s and 1930s, he wrote about nationalization of industry as well as governmental control, but once Prime Minister it seems that he acted as a center balance from within the Labour Party between the left and right factions of the party. Left-wingers, such as Aneurin Bevan, wanted full nationalization due to the principle idea that private ownership led to "exploitation of workers in the interests of the wealthy few."⁴² There were also influences in Britain that made the issue of nationalization moot. It would come once again to those in which the system serves. The very people who are being uplifted by the act of nationalization felt that the industries did not belong to them.⁴³ This is what was dangerous to Attlee the politician. He knew that to achieve the welfare state it had to be reached by conscience.⁴⁴ This conscience brought him to power in 1945 and the lack of it is what took him from power in 1951.

The Union Jack, British Nationalism

British nationalism had a great deal of input in implementing the postwar socialist social reforms. The issue of nationalism was somewhat new to the world through the world wars. Before the nineteenth and twentieth centuries most counties, nations, populations, cultures, or whatever political term given, were more tied to their monarch than to their actual nation-states. It was during the First World War when countries fought for the "preservation or restoration of their nation-

⁴⁰ Philip Warner, *World War Two: The Untold Story*, (London: Cassell & Co, 1988), p 59.

⁴¹ Morgan, *Labour in Power: 1945-1951*, p 99.

⁴² Pearce, *Profiles in Power: Attlee*, p 147.

⁴³ *Ibid*, p147.

⁴⁴ Pearce, *Profiles in Power: Attlee*, p 152.

states.”⁴⁵ According to Michael Howard, it was an “enhanced sense of national pride and achievement” that stemmed from the Battle of Britain in 1940, as well as the victory at the battle of El Alamein that led to Britain thinking higher of its actual position as not only as a great nation-state but also a super power.⁴⁶ It could quite possibly be this thinking, along with other theories presented, that led to such a strong sense of self in which the British felt connected to each other in ways never before. By having this feeling, it opens up, along with other factors, the door for the Labour Party in winning its surprising victory in the General Election of 1945. It seems that at a time when nationalist sentiments were high, as in 1940, 1942, and 1945, the desire for a population to care for itself, i.e., as a collective through socialist measures, would follow and be just as high. Even though nationalism is usually an exclusive idea in that it keeps groups out of a certain classification, i.e. a country, sometimes nationalism presents an idea, or quite possibly an illusion that everybody is equal, being that all have suffered through the same tragic event.

The Idea of a Pure Idea

The author George Orwell may be considered one of the twentieth century’s greatest political writers. His views were in favor of a socialist system. His status as an ideologically pure socialist was sometimes debated, and he never wrote a complete socialist program. It would seem that such an ideologically driven man like Orwell would have done so, but Orwell decided to write instead against the injustices of a capitalist society in early writings and against totalitarianism in his later writings. Examples of such are his writing about the plight of the miners in Wigan in *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937)⁴⁷ as an early writing and later examples in *Animal Farm* (1945),⁴⁸ as well as *1984* (1934).⁴⁹ For the sake of this article the author will try to diverge from any literary critique but use the works more as a guide to who George Orwell was ideologically and politically. Orwell was born to a lower middle-class family who, due to class implications at the time, were somewhat obligated to serve as civil servants. This is what brought Orwell to India to serve as a police officer for several years and from which his work titled *Burmese Days* (1934) is based. It is this time in which Orwell sees that under an empirical system injustices can occur, whereas before in his early writing not only was he unaware but quite possibly he was unaware that he could be unaware. In Zwerdling’s *Orwell and the Left* he states that Orwell could have been a “writer who neither understands why things are as they are in his society nor can imagine the possibility of a really different world.”⁵⁰ But it seems that maybe Orwell found his imagination as he grew as a writer and a person. It seems that by following Orwell’s chronologically ordered works one could follow the evolution of Orwell’s forming ideology. From *Burmese Days* his eyes

⁴⁵ Michael Howard, “War and the Nation-State”, *Daedalus*, Vol. 108, No. 4, (Fall, 1979), pp. 101-110. p104.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p 101-110.

⁴⁷ J.R. Hammond, *A George Orwell Companion*, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1982). Publishing dates pulled from respective section from within Hammond’s book.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*.

⁵⁰ Alex Zwerdling, *Orwell and the left*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).

were opened to injustices. In *The Road to Wigan Pier*, he champions the working class, in the *Homage to Catalonia* (1938), based on his involvement during the Spanish Civil War, he established the socialist idea as a workable one, and in *Animal Farm* he warned against the corruption that is possible to the communist system. Having noted earlier that Orwell never penned a complete socialist program, he did at least once lay out a simplified program in the section of his work *The Lion and The Unicorn* (1941) in which he lays out his suggestion for what the people should want during this time of war and it is a six-point program, of which three points are focused on domestic issues while the other three are foreign policy related. In this program, he lays out what Britain needs at this time to become socialist.⁵¹ In doing this he has firmly stated, and with popular support at the time of publishing has shown, that the want for Britons to have a socialist society was present indeed.

Many of Orwell's published works promoted socialism. He believed in the system to which he belonged in England to be an outdated and corrupt one as demonstrated in the section of his work titled *The Lion and the Unicorn*. In this work, he makes reference to England being comprised of multiple nations when examined economically. The real issue of this writing, however, is that it is a piece of work that actually promotes patriotism. If this is the case then why attack the system while trying to raise it up? Several reasons for this could exist: Orwell saw the system as wrong in some areas but he also discusses how through the advancement of the middle, and especially the advancement of the working class the system, wages and general quality of life have risen over the previous 100 years. To analyze *The Lion and the Unicorn* further one must note the difference between nationalism and patriotism as laid out in Orwell's *Notes on Nationalism*.⁵² On the surface the two items at hand may seem similar but from Orwell's view they were on separate ends all together. Nationalism was seen by Orwell as a tool of corruption to rule over a population whereas patriotism was a population's tool to rule over its nation. *The Lion and the Unicorn* was written and released early in the war and was received well by most of the British population. This work could be categorized as being propaganda, and for its very nature it was. Within the first section Orwell lays out an idealistic idea of what England was, i.e. better beer be it "bitterer"⁵³ and the view of the "grass is greener" imagery. It seems that while the so-called nationalist movement was strong within Britain during the war, Orwell's idea of patriotism was a force behind that nationalism.

The goal that Orwell was trying to accomplish was to appeal to every citizen in the attempt to be that they were the ones who controlled their destiny through their patriotism. Even though Orwell critiques certain groups with this work he still supports a strong idea of tying oneself to one's country and to one's countrymen, as exemplified by how the English would refuse to use a foreign language even overseas. One of the groups which Orwell attacked was the "left-wing

⁵¹ George Orwell, *The Lion and The Unicorn*. Last accessed April 24, 2012, through URL <http://orwell.ru/library/essays/lion/english/>

⁵² George Orwell *Notes on Socialism*. Last accessed April 24, 2012, through URL http://orwell.ru/library/essays/nationalism/english/e_nat

⁵³ Orwell, *The Lion and The Unicorn*.

intelligentsia.”⁵⁴ He viewed it not as the solution of the problem but a problem in their own right, stating that they “lack at all times ... any constructive suggestion”.⁵⁵ The point that Orwell seemed to be trying to make was that at that moment in time they should be Englishmen first and class members second. In building up to what is a nation, a population and its doings must be taken into account for this is where a liberation, socialist included, type of power is going to come from. In part three of *The Lion and the Unicorn*, which Orwell titled “The English Revolution,” he talks about some issues with the socialism of 1940. He stated that if the changes were to come, then initiatives were to come from below. He made it clear that since this never happened in England before, must happen now: “a Socialist movement that actually has the mass of the people behind it.”⁵⁶ This is the very thing that leads to the implementation of social reforms during and postwar, the mass of the people.

The Difference between 1945 and 1951

Britain was already in a hard spot in 1939 when the war started and what most of the British people had in common was the desire for a better life and a better system to give them that life. The early part of the twentieth century was an active time in the scope of world politics with old forms of government being replaced with untested, ideological types of rule. Britain has had its fair share of class distinction and class warfare but due to the hard times before and the war itself, the population was drawn together to declare that a better way was needed. This was to be shown through the 1945 election of Attlee. The bonding effect that the war had, be it Orwell’s idea of patriotism, the general nature of nationalization, or through military victories, would only be the means to implement socialist policy in Britain. The actual strength would come from the people who by 1951 no longer had the bonds they did just after the victory over Nazi Germany in 1945. The Labour Party’s ways of implementing socialism were ideologically socialist, but due to economic constraints on an already economically hurting country, could the system support itself? The Labour Party was to do this by becoming the Welfare State in which the government had a responsibility to care for its citizens. To accomplish this it would require the changing of an economic system that was geared to making wealth to one geared to redistributing that wealth. But in this system there was a sense that the almost broke nation of Britain had a better society in mind. In the short term it was harder on the country, which recovered more slowly than other countries during the postwar period. However, this was the burden that Britain decided to bear in its attempt to create that better society.

In conclusion, with nationalism at a high point, the Labour Party was able to win the 1945 election. With this win, the Labour Party was able to continue certain social reform policies that began during the war and to implement some socialist social policies during the postwar period that would have been impossible to do prior to the war due to the lack of nationalist sentiment.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

The Beveridge Report, while never gaining full support during the war, acted as a guide to the social reforms that would come postwar. There would need to be a leader who was able to act as a center point of the socialist social reforms. This leader was Clement Attlee who was able to be a voice for social reform within the coalition government during the war and the voice for a balanced socialist driven agenda after the war. The level of nationalism that Britain had in 1945 was driven by the victory during the war. But George Orwell saw the difference between nationalism and patriotism, and he believed the socialist system could work but would have to be backed by the right conditions. Orwell wanted a Britain that was ruled as a socialist system and he realized that the events of the war, the uniting of the country, could act as a way to bring Britain together as never before. Although in the early twentieth century, political shifts towards socialism were taking place within Britain, it was the Second World War that led to the implementation of socialist reforms in Britain, such as the creation of the NHS and the nationalization of different industries. Without the high level of nationalism that Britain experienced due to the victory of World War II, nationalism that was also brought about by tragedies and suffering, the Labour Party would not have been able to take Britain from being a predominately capitalist country to one of a socialist-type society.

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