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Blair's Social Reforms and the Third Way

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents who have taught me to work hard for the things I aspire to achieve. It is also dedicated to my teachers and class-mates who have been a source of support and encouragement.

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In first place, I would like to thank my supervisor Mr Seddiki whose encouragement and guidance enabled me to develop a clear understanding of the subject.

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Abstract

This thesis highlights the New Labour's social policy between 1997-2007. After its remarkable victory in the 1997 general elections, the New Labour under the leadership of Tony Blair has seen the modernisation of the welfare state to be its major task. Blair launched a set of social reforms that would improve ordinary people's life. To achieve his goal he adopted the Third Way, a concept which tries reconcile the New Right and the Old Left principles. What motivated us to do this research is to find out what pushed the Labour Party break away with its old policy, what made Blair's reforms revolutionary and most importantly what impact these reforms had on the British Society. Some reports consider that Blair succeeded in improving people's living conditions; however other think that this success was temporary and many issues needed to be dressed.

List of abbreviations

CH Commission for Health improvement

DWP Department for Work and Pensions

EMA Education Maintenance Allowance

GP General Practitioner

HMR Housing Market Renewal

IAP Intensive Activity Period

JSA Jobseeker's Allowance

LVT Land Value Tax

ND25+ New Deal for 25 plus

ND50+ New deal for 50 plus

NDDP: New Deal for Disabled People

NDLP New Deal for Lone Parents

NDYP New Deal for Young People

NHS National Health Service

NICE National Institute of Clinical Excellence

NVT New Value Tax

ONS Office for National Statistics

PCGs Primary Care Groups

PCT Primary Care Trusts

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General Introduction

The Labour Party (LP) was founded in Britain in the 20th century as an outgrowth of the Trade Unions Movement. Its major aim was to improve the working-class life conditions and reduce social inequalities by reconsidering wealth distribution. After years of struggle, the LP became the principal party of the left and the promoter of social Democracy.

The creation of the Welfare State and the establishment of the National Health Service after the World War II (WWII), were some of its most important objectives. Attlee's government played a crucial role in tackling the social issues that emerged in Britain after WWII.

However, at the end of the 70^s the Labourists experienced one of the toughest moments of their history because of internal divisions and the strikes held by the Unionists against their policy. From 1979 till 1997, the Labour Party had been out of power and this made its leaders reconsider their traditional methods and question the relevance of their policy. They understood that the only way to drag their party back to the political centre was to abandon their out-dated ideas and adopt policies. In this vein, and during his campaigns Tony Blair, the New Labour leader, promised to modernise the welfare state and launch social programmes that would improve public services. The New Labour's reforms were based on the third way, a concept described as an alternative to the New-Right and the Center-Left principles.

The aim of this study to explore the changes and reforms that Blair introduced in the welfare state between the year 1997-2007 and to find out whether he took the right decision when he decided to adopt the third way.

Although he was the youngest British Prime Minister, Blair was able to carry his party from the bottom of desperation to the top of success by leading it to three successive victories. He was brave enough to bring radical changes to the Labour Party's principles and values and this motivated us to make our research about his social policies. But the most important point in this research is the lesson that Blair gave to politicians and party leaders; he taught them that a party's traditional policies and principles should be flexible and innovative; they have to change according to the world's new requirements.

Many politicians and scholars wrote about the Labour Party's social policies and the role of the welfare state in improving the citizens' standard of living. However, this study focuses mainly on Blair's social policy and his attempt to modernise the welfare state so that it would fit the 21st century.

‘The welfare state did not come into existence for reasons of theory; it was developed as a response to decades of fear, wars and totalitarian states that had grown out of injustices and insecurity of the previous hundred years’. (John O' Brown 10).

The welfare state is a program that assured minimum standard of living. The government agrees to underwrite certain levels of employment, income, education, medical aid, social security and housing. (Michael Churchill).

It's somehow clear from the definitions cited above that the welfare state came out of the need to protect people from horrors of wars and the social injustice that emerged after the war. It is a system where the government plays a key role in providing social services and guaranteeing a minimum standard of living for all citizens. These includes basic education, health services, employment and housing.

In Britain, the creation of the welfare state has been the subject of many discussions among politicians and economists. The British journalist Robert Crowcroft wrote about the creation of the welfare state and said, 'the years 1945-1951 saw nothing less than the birth of modern Britain. The universal state that we now take for granted was created by the Labour Party under Clement Attlee.' (Attlee's Britain). He added that Attlee's government made great efforts to provide education and free health care all and accord benefits for those who could not avail themselves. According to Nigel Ashford (1998) the Labour Party under Attlee introduced the NHS providing free medical treatment for all, a compulsory contributory state insurance system, and income support and universal family allowances.

However in the 70s, the Labour government had difficulties in financing the NHS and insurance benefits were not paid at high level enough to prevent pensioners from becoming poor. (Frank field).

The economic crisis that the Labour Party faced in the 70s pushed the New Labour party under Tony Blair to reconsider its out-dated ideas. By adopting the third way, the New Labour rejected the old principles of Attlee's welfare state that he considered as incompatible with the modernization project that it envisaged for Britain.

(Nigel Ashford).

Blair decided to modernise the welfare state so that it would fit the new era. The reform of our welfare state is not to betray our core principles, our social justice and solidarity .It is to make them live, breathe, and work again for the modern age. (Tony Blair's speech). Blair improved the welfare system by encouraging people to enter the labour market rather than entering a paid work only. He launched the New Deal for workless classes which gave hope to the poorest. (Donald Harsh and Jane miller).

It is obvious that Blair broke away from the Old Labour traditional socialist values and replaced the "from cradle to grave" policy with the" welfare to work''. Blair wanted to ensure good education, good training and security for all .He believes that work and responsibility are the best ways to fight poverty.

It has been said that the Labour party won the elections because they knew what the British people really needed, but critics of Blair's policy said that the New Labour has merely continued Margaret Thatcher's policies and did not create a New Britain as he pretended. (Laura Romero).

This review of literature shows that most of the scholars and journalists who wrote about Blair's social policy focused more on Blair's new vision of the welfare state and the reasons that pushed him to modernise it, but they did not say how Blair used the third way in his reforms and the effects these reforms had on the British society.

So this study tends to answer three main questions: How did Blair use the third way to modernise and improve the welfare system in Britain between 1997-2007? What made his new policies different and revolutionary? Was his new politics successful? In

an effort to answer these questions, this paper is divided into three chapters. The first deals with the historical background of the Labour Party, its main achievements from 1945 to 1951 and finally the causes of its decline in the 70s. Through the second chapter, we shed light on Blair's third way and his vision of a modernised welfare state. We talk about the New Labour's social policies and reforms between 1997 to 2007 focusing on education, work, housing and healthcare. The last chapter is devoted to the assessment of Blair's plans to modernise and reform the welfare state. As for the methods, this research paper is written in a descriptive-analytical method. We used the data and records that were already given about Blair's social policies in the period between 1997-2007 then; we collected different opinions about Blair's legacy in order to make a critical evaluation of the material.

Concerning the sources, we used books written by specialists in politics and other online sources such as newspapers, magazines and master thesis.

Chapter One

The History of the Labour Party and the Welfare State

Introduction

By the end of the nineteenth century many political parties representing the working class interests began to emerge in Britain. The need for such representation led to the creation of the Independent Labour Party. In 1900 all the Socialist groups united in order to create the Labour Representation Committee which was called Labour Party in 1906.

Slowly but surely, the Labour Party began to gain ground mainly after WW2; it surpassed the Liberals and became the first prevalent Party in British politics. In this chapter we will try to answer the following questions: what helped the workers create their own party? What were its ideals and achievements? Which factors led to its decline?

1. The Birth of a New Party 1900-1929

The Labour Party was founded in the early 20s at a conference held at London's Memorial Hall by Keir Hardy, a Scottish miner and trade unionist, its creation was the result of years of struggle by working trade unionists, socialists and middle class intellectuals who united with the goal of giving the working -class a real representation in the British parliament and a push for a radical change. In 1900, Keir Hardy and his colleagues held the Trade Union Congress cooperated with the Independent Labour Party to establish a labour 'Representation Committee'; it called itself Labour Party after having won 26 seats in the 1906 general elections. (Keith Laybroun).

The Labour Party had been a promoter of social democracy a form of socialism whose principal objective was the reduction of social inequalities and the promotion of social justice. Labourists assumed that social democracy was the most suitable way to improve the standard of life of workers. The Old Labour Party principles and value can be seen in the old Clause IV, a part of the constitution of the Party which supported greater intervention of the State, social justice, equal distribution of wealth and strengthening workers' rights. Many scholars such as Miliband (1972) and Panitch (1976) claimed that the Labour's ideological movement was a response to the structural power of the capitalist interest whose core values are based on private ownership free market. (Keith Laybroun).

In its early stages, the new-born party couldn't gain mass following and its leaders had to work with the Liberal government. However, after the WWI, many factors permitted the Labour Party to gain ground in the British political system. First, the war time demand for labour enhanced its economic and political strength; the Trade Unionism was getting stronger and this put the party in a better position in the labour market. (Keith Laybroun).

Secondly, the public recognised the failure of the Liberals under Asquith; the Liberals almost disintegrated as a party and lost much of the Unionists support. Because of the divisions in the Liberal party as well as the internal conflicts, the Labour Party succeeded in assuming the position of chief opposition party in many constituencies and began preparing programmes which would give workers and ordinary people a chance to improve their life and working conditions.

Thirdly, the changes made in the electoral system provided the Labour Party with sufficient support to launch an electoral challenge because the Representation of the People Act of 1918 granted vote to women over 30 and all men over 21; the number of voters doubled from eight millions to sixteen millions and paved the way to future reforms notably concerning women's role in politics because the act also stated that women have the right to sit in the House of Commons. (Keith Laybroun).

The Labour Party won 142 seats in the 1922 general election and 191 seats. On December 1923, the Labour Party won 191 seats and formed a coalition government with the Liberals with Ramsay MacDonald as the first labour Prime Minister, ending two centuries of Conservative domination. During that year ,the Labour Party held office for 10 months only and failed to get re-elected in 1924 general elections partly because of the '**Zinoviev Letter**' that was published in the Daily Mail days before the elections .The letter was written by Grigori Zinoviev Lenin's close friend and the chief of the Communist party in which he gave advice on how to organize and prepare revolutions .The British electorate was very sceptic towards the Labour Party tendencies and brought the Conservative to power because they considered the Labour Party to be communist .In 1929 elections , the party rebounded again; it won seats in the House of Commons but failed to get an overall majority. (Keith Laybroun).

2. The 1945 General Elections.

Many historians considered the 1945 General Elections as a real surprise because during the 2nd World War ,Winston Churchill was seen as the most appreciated and popular British Prime Minister and many politicians predicted that he

would make the Conservatives win the forthcoming general elections , instead he led them to their greatest defeat. Winston Churchill was certainly a war time hero who had gained the most heroic stature, but he failed to run the country in peace .After the war, Churchill found himself without a clear sense of purpose and many people doubted about his ability to deal with the post-war issues especially, those of the working -class .After the war ,people were more interested in their social problems rather than victories. Although Churchill was disappointed the day of the results, he declared that he did not feel down at all. He added that he was not sure Conservative Party could have dealt with the labour troubles that were coming.

After the WW2, the Labourists focused mostly on the working class interests and well-being to gain the support of a wider electorate. Their manifesto ‘Let us face the future’ was a message that led **Clement Attlee** to an unexpected landslide victory with 393 seats to the Conservatives 197 and the Liberals wiped out.

Attlee’s period as Prime Minister was one of the best in the party's history .He carried out extensive nationalisation and instituted many reforms such as introducing social security and bringing key industries back into public ownership .Attlee declared after his remarkable victory ‘We of the Labour Party reject policies and measures which failed the nation .We want to lay the foundations of a new and better Britain worthy of our great people’.(Message to Labour candidates, the Times 29 June 1945).

3. The Party's chief concern: the creation of the Welfare State 1945-1951

The Welfare State is a concept of government in which the State plays a key role in the protection and promotion of the economic and social well-being of citizens.

The government has the responsibility to guarantee equitable distribution of wealth and to provide social and economic security, free education and free healthcare for those unable to avail themselves of the minimal provision for a good life. ('Welfare State')

Before the Second World War, Britain welfare was provided mostly by private or volunteer institutions ,but on December 1942 a committee chaired by Sir **William Beveridge** , a liberal economist, was created to look into ways of improving the lives of people and transforming the British society .The government published a report entitled 'Social Insurance and Allied Services' .The Beveridge report made a number of suggestions such as the 'From Cradle to Grave' a programme which proposed that all workers should pay a weekly contribution to the state and in return ,benefits would be paid to the unemployed ,the sick ,the retired and the widowed.(Margaret Holborn).

Beveridge Report quickly became a reference and the blue print for the modern British Welfare State .In fact, many politicians believed that the introduction of the welfare state rested largely on the work of William Beveridge. After the Second World War, the campaigning of the Labours brought them into power; they gained the electorate confidence partly because they had promised to tackle the five giants 'Poverty, Disease Idleness, Ignorance and Squalor'. What the voters wanted was to end wartime austerity and no return to pre-war economic depression. Attlee launched a set of social reforms that could improve people's lives.

4. Attlee's Social Reforms

Clement Attlee, who was seen as one of the greatest reformist of the 20th century, announced that it was time to introduce a welfare state .The Labour

government suggested many ideas to fight the 'Five Evils' described in the Beveridge Report and increase the standard of living of ordinary people and the working class. A series of acts were passed; these included:

The 1944 Education Act also called Butler Act was an attempt to create the structure for the post-war British education system; it made a complete reshaping of the educational system by introducing significant changes. Its main objective was to remove inequalities which remained in the British educational system after the war and guarantee free secondary education for all. 'It proposed that the differentiation between elementary and secondary education should be abolished instead there should be three stages of education primary; secondary and further' (Dereck Gillard).

According to the 1944 act the state has the responsibility to provide meals and free medical cares for schools. It also introduced the concept of at 11+ examinations to enter secondary schools, and raised the leaving-age to 15. According to Rhodes James, the Butler Act was the single most important piece of legislation during the war (1986). Thanks to this act, the proportions of free places at grammar schools augmented from third to half. By 1947 there were 55 million children in maintained schools, 'The fact that we continue to work towards his educational goals reflects the high quality of his forward thinking and the debt we owe him for stimulating and guiding great steps forward in educational provision in this country'. (David Bell).

In Northern Ireland the 1947 Education Act introduced far-reaching changes in education. Children over 11 received free secondary education, free medical treatment, transport and books were provided in all schools by local authorities. In addition to

these Irish students were offered grants for university education. As a result of this act the number of people attending secondary schools increased.

The birth of the **National Health Service (NHS)** in July 1948. The creation of this service was seen as the Labour's greatest achievement. Clement Attlee named Aneurin Bevan as a Minister of health. In 1946 the parliament passed the National Insurance Act which instituted a comprehensive health service for England and Wales. The act became effective only in 1948

The NHS meant a lot to the poor and the working class because it gave them for the first time free access to general practitioner services and specialist medicine. The Act stated that all people are eligible for care even those who come to the country for a visit. It also stated that the services shall be free of charge. Thanks to the NHS, hospitals were better organized, people had free consultations, free prescriptions and dental and eye treatments were introduced. Health improved greatly and diseases such as polio and tuberculosis disappeared.

Industrial Injuries Act 1946, it was compulsory for all employees. The act provided financial aid for employees who were temporarily absent from work due to injury. It provided pensions for those who were absent for a long term.

The New Town Act 1946. After the Second World War the government gave much attention to the reconstruction of Britain's towns. In 1946, the government committee chaired by Lord Reith met to discuss the possibility to build new towns to reduce overcrowding. The suggestion had been accepted. Lord Reith recommended that the new town development should have a population of 60,000 inhabitants and houses

should be organized in neighbourhood around a school and a nursery schools. The houses should not be built near Greenfield places .The New Town Act gave the government the right to appoint areas of land for new town development. Lancashire, Basildon, Hatfield and Hampstead are fruits of this act.

The Housing Act 1949: The Housing Act enabled the local authorities to acquire homes for improvement with 75%state treasury grant. It also gave local authorities a range of useful powers for example; to provide restaurants or canteens or laundry facilities for tenants of municipal flats or housing estates and to sell furniture to them. The aim of this act was to allow local authorities to develop mixed estates of houses of more varied types and sizes. Householders could apply for assistance to make improvements.

In order to address Idleness, the Labour government nationalised industries such as: iron, electricity and railways. The Labour government aimed to create and maintain job levels. It also continued the 'From cradle to grave' policy previously proposed in Beveridge Report.

Thanks to these social reforms, Attlee succeeded in fighting the five evils which emerged after the WW2.He introduced social security ,created the NHS and gave the chance to all British children the right to education.

These acts played in an important role in achieving the goals of of the Labour party social policy.

5. The Party's Failure in the 70s.

5.1 Winter of Discontent.

During the 50s the Labour Party lost the elections because of the internal conflicts and divisions in their ranks; the Bevanists supported a more socialist economic policy while the revisionists wished to drop the commitment to the nationalization of industry. In 1964, the Party regained power under Harold Wilson who tried to solve the economic problems by using a method of technocratic reform and a system of indicative economic planning. (Tara Martin).

In 1974 to 1979 the Labourists held power again under Wilson and then James Callaghan, but from 1978 -79 Britain faced one of the worst moment of its history; it experienced a wave of strikes on a scale that had not been seen since the General Strike of 1926; that period was called 'the winter of discontent'. The phrase refers to the strikes led by trade unions who revolted against the Labour government's attempts to curtail wage increases. Callaghan's government imposed the greatest attacks on the working class living standard through its attempt to control inflation by limiting public sector wage increases. (Tara Martin).

On 22 January 1979 ,public sector workers staged for one-day strike calling for a a pay rise and for a shorter working week ;the strikes caused a severe disruption to public services .In London 80.000 workers from the NHS, schools and local authorities marched to parliament to ask Callaghan to change its policy of pay restraint. The period was also marked by food shortage, electricity cuts and unemployment. Callaghan promised in a press conference held in Heathrow airport that he would do his best to control the situation. Despite his efforts, Callaghan failed to find suitable solutions to

calm the Unionists. The strikes as well as the poor economic indicators released before the elections expelled the Labour Party from office and marked the beginning of a new era 'the Thatcherist counter-revolution'.(Tara Martin).

The post-war consensus was also considered by the Conservatives as one of the causes of the Labour Party's decline. The post-war consensus is a term given by historians; it began with the election of Clement Attlee in 1945 and ended in 1979 after the Election of Margaret Thatcher as a Prime Minister. The term got its name from the alignment of both Labourists and Conservatives despite their opposed principles and ideologies. All the parties agreed upon it but it was the Labour Party which suggested the ideas. The Consensus was based on principles such as mixed economies, the welfare state, the nationalisation and the acceptance of the Trade Unions. (Dennis Cavanagh).

The 1973 oil crisis, the industrial instability, inflation and the sterling crisis put great pressure on the Post-War consensus in the 70s; it was seen by those of the Right as a curse and the major cause of the UK's economic problems. When the Conservatives won the 1979 elections they implemented new ideas and ended the post-war consensus.

Historians Alan Sked and Chris Cook have summarized the failure of Labour in power as follows:

... Labour, it seemed, was incapable of positive achievements. It was unable to control inflation, unable to control the unions, unable to solve the Irish problem, unable to solve the Rhodesian question, unable to secure its proposals for Welsh and Scottish devolution, unable to reach a popular modus vivendi with the Common Market, unable even to maintain itself in power until it could go to the country and the date of its own choosing. It was little wonder, therefore, that Mrs Thatcher resoundingly defeated it in 1979...

(Post-war Britain)

Conclusion

The Conservatives enjoyed 18 years of government while the Labourists remained in out of power .Even Labour's supporters were not satisfied with their party's records and people began to detach from the Social Democratic Party in the 80s.

In brief, the Labour Party was created out of the frustration of the working-class which demanded a real representation in the British Parliament. The poor decisions and the internal conflicts within the Liberal Party helped the Labourists eclipse the Liberals and emerge to become the most Left powerful party in Britain after the WWI. The greatest achievement of the Party was the creation of the new welfare state by Clement Attlee's government in 1945.

However the overfunding and other factors led to a serious economic crisis in the 60s and the 70s which obliged James Callaghan to abandon some of the reforms mentioned in the welfare system .Callaghan's decisions angried the Trade Unions which called for general strikes .The 70s marked the discontent towards the Labour's policies and then began the wilderness years of opposition.

Chapter Two

Blair's Social Welfare Reforms

Introduction

The fall of the Soviet Union, the socio-economic troubles that the Labour Party encountered in the 70s as well as the dominance of the Conservative Party with its New Right policies made it difficult for the British Labour Party to find a place in the governing of the country. The party was seen as 'spent force' with old ideas and tired policies. It was considered unelectable as long as it retained close relation with trade union movement and adopted the traditional form of socialism.

In order to appeal a wider types of voters and relaunch the party after 18 years spent in opposition, the Labour party decided to change its traditional socialist ideas to more liberal economic oriented policies ;it moved towards a centrist "third way" policy ,creating the New Labour. This chapter tends to find out what is Blair's third way and how did he use it in the welfare reforms.

1. Blair's Third Way

In its recent use, the Third Way is a term coined by the British philosopher and socialist **Anthony Giddens**¹ who defined it as an alternative to social democracy and to Thatcher's Neo Liberalism that emphasizes the value of free market competition and **laissez faire**² economics. The third way combines the Left-wing and Right-wing values

¹ Anthony Giddens: is a British sociologist who is known for his Theory Structuration and Third Way. He is considered to be the most prominent modern sociologists and author of 34 books.

² Laissez faire: is the policy which is based on the idea that the government should not interfere with business and finance.

and principles but in significant new ways ; which means that it rejects the Neo liberal belief where everything is left to the market, but also consider the traditional Left principles based on state intervention in the economy as out-dated. (Colin Hay).

The term 'Third Way' is mutually associated with the British Prime Minister Tony Blair who took over the term in order to mark a new centre-left approach and update the social democrats traditions .In his 1997 manifesto, Blair said, 'A new approach needed to be given to all area of each policy which would be different from The Social Democratic and The New Right'. (Colin Hay).

Blair defended his New Labour values in his speech to the Labour Party Conference in Brighton saying that the world was on the move and the change in the early 21st century was faster than that of the late20th century; it was fundamental to modify the progressive politics so that the values they believed in became relevant to the time they lived in.

What was revolutionary in Blair's politics was that he advocated a new kind of socialism based on social justice, social inclusion, equal opportunity and mutual responsibility. Blair abandoned Clause Four of the Labour Party's constitution and accepted the central reform measures of Thatcher such as privatisation of key national industries, flexible labour market and centralising power from local authorities to central government. He said that his objective was to reshape the political scene by delivering the British people from all old values that had held them back for so long and prevented them from progressing. In his speech, New Politics for a New Century.

Blair said that the third way was sort of modernised social democracy,

passionate in its engagement to social justice and the objectives of the centre-left, but flexible and innovative. In short, the reforms introduced in the era of Blair were built on labour values hand in hand with modernised methods and tools.

Blair's new vision permitted the party to gain the support of electorate from different classes: blue collars, white collars journalists and even Academics .This support led the party to a landslide victory in the 1997 General Elections. The Labours won 419 seats, while the Torys obtained 165 seats only. In 1997, Blair became the youngest Prime Minister since 1812.

2. The New Labour and the Social reforms

Motivated by the desire to perform better than his predecessors, Blair began by reforming some key parts of the welfare state. Mandelson said that the New Labour wanted a welfare state that promised access for all to decent minimum quality of life and fair life chances, while permitting greater individual freedom of choice. (Pippa Norris).

Blair was determined to launch his reforms through renewing and updating the Welfare State. During his campaigns, he said that his reform was not to betray the core principles of their social justice and solidarity; it was to make them live, breathe and work again for the modern age. Actually, what the New Labour wanted was to move from a passive to an active welfare state which would prevent poverty by ensuring good education, good training and equal opportunity. They wanted to promote a vision of a State as a real partner and enabler, not just a provider of resources.

In his Speech on welfare reform at Toynbee Hall, Blair set out three challenges:

Firstly, giving the unemployed youth the skills to find a job, secondly, to give the single mothers the childcare they need to go out and work and thirdly giving the middle-aged man on disability the support and confidence to go back into the office.

He said that his objective was to rebuild the system around work and security; work for those who can and security for those who cannot. Blair replaced the expression "security for all", mentioned in the 1945 welfare state by 'security for those who cannot', because he did not want to offer too easy "security". He said, 'The modern welfare state is not built on a **paternalistic**³ government giving out more benefits but on enabling government that through work and education helps people to help themselves'. (Tony Blair's speech on welfare reform)

2.1 Educational Reforms

The Labour Party regained power with education at the top of its agenda. During his campaign Blair declared: 'Ask me about my three priorities for the government and I will tell: education, education, and education'. Once in power, Blair began to develop policies that would focus on raising standard, abolition of selection and work in partnership with teachers, parents and local authorities. Some of Blair's policies were based on Old Social Democratic principles which advocate equality and the help of the disadvantaged while others were inspired by Thatcher's policy such as: financial delegations to schools, marketization, competition between schools and league tables of exam results. Alan Smithers said 'Many of the education reforms which were bitterly attacked by the Labour opposition of the time now became the backbone of the Blair programme.' (Ed. Anthony Seldon.1).

The New Labour party changed the structure of schools and higher education systems. First, the Comprehensive system of the previous Labour was changed to focus on **shaping** education in a way that fits each child's ability. Moreover, the grant-maintained schools were replaced by the Foundation schools and this through the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. The Grammar schools were given also the choice to whether re-joining the local authority as a maintained community school, or becoming a Foundation school.

Blair introduced free market principles into education because he believed that it could encourage competition between schools and improve teaching quality. He also continued a policy that was started by the Conservatives by establishing more **specialists schools**. Blair's government rejected the Old Labour of the 'one size fits all Comprehensive Schools' and encouraged Specialists schools which offer more diversity and more choice for parents. ('Specialists schools').

This kind of secondary school teaches the national programme in addition to some special branches of learning such as, business studies. Specialist schools can choose 10% of their students who show an aptitude in the school specialist subjects. The number of these schools increased from 262 schools in 1997 to 1000 schools in August 2002. The goal of the government was to increase the number of schools to 2000 schools by 2006. (Sarah Cassidy 2002)

The 11 selective exams have been deleted, and children are no more obliged to take this exam. However, voluntary selection tests do still exist in certain places in the United Kingdom, and some of the original grammar schools have been retained. The

³ Paternalistic: the attitude or actions of person, organization that protects people and gives them what they need.

remaining grammar schools are still selective, usually taking the top between 10 to 25 % of those from the local area.

One of the main objectives of Blair was to reduce the number of children who are not able to read or write. Some of the tools were the introduction of tests for literacy and numeracy in both primary and secondary education, and the control of the teaching process. The issues that the secondary schools were facing were not related to the quality of teachers. Like the Conservatives, Blair mainly focused on a private/public partnership strategy.

Blair was in favour of independent schools, he also agreed to let parents paying the school fees, a thing that was previously hated by the Labours. Blair's goal was to improve the level of the comprehensive schools in order to reach the same level of the independent ones.

By achieving his aim, he could convince the middle class parents to transfer their children from private education to the state one.

Another educational reforms made by Blair was the establishment of the **Beacon Schools programme** in 1998 whose major goal was to identify high performance schools and help them serve as a good example of effective school for others. In August 2005, the programme was replaced by the Leading Edge Partnership programme for secondary schools and Primary Strategy Learning Networks for primary schools.

There was also the creation of a new grade named the Advanced Skills Teacher which consists on increasing the salary of highly skilled teachers if they agree to do

overextended duties plus their work in schools. The AST was introduced in 1998 to boost the teacher's confidence and sense of professional status.

City Academies were founded. They are independent schools with the aim to replace the failing schools. They were funded by both the state and private sponsor. The city academy wasn't under the control of the local education authority. The control of the curriculum was given to some private individuals in addition to the staffing, the land and the buildings. The city academies were considered as an essential part in Blair's reform programme.

Education Action Zones were introduced by Tony Blair's Labour government in 1998 to encourage local businesses to work with schools. The programme would improve educational achievement and promote social inclusion in disadvantaged areas.⁴ (tutor2u.net)

Another feature of Blair's approach to educational reform was to make **inclusion** which is closely related to competitiveness. The DfEE declared in November 1998 that its aim was "to give everyone the chance through education, training and work, to realize the full potential, and thus build an inclusive and fair society and a competitive economy". The government had three objectives: raising leaving-age to 16, lifelong learning, and work. (DfEE.1998)

The Labours have introduced Literacy and Numeracy hours into schools. The average number of pupils in the classroom should be 30 for 5-7 years old. They have

⁴ Education Action Zones followed on from a 1960s initiative, Education Priority Areas and brought together a group of schools with parents, community groups and businesses and aimed to attract sponsorship and investment from the private sector. As such they are sometimes listed, along with academies, as being policies that continued the

also introduced the **Education Maintenance Allowance**. The EMA is paid to the students between 16 and 19, and it serves as a means to remain in full-time education and get the A-level exam.⁵ (Trent et al. 2001)

In 2000, A Performance Threshold was introduced. It allowed teachers to have higher salary up to 10 per cent depending on a set of performance standards, as well a standard of pupil attainment.

In September 2000, a new curriculum was introduced. This was a modular curriculum that required nominees to take modules in the middle of the course, rather than being tested at the end of the course in one session only. Usually, students now can take their AS level at the age of 12, and after a year they can continue their A-level through taking the A2 examination. (UK Parliament 2003)

In 2003, **Every Child Matters** initiative was launched by the Labour government. It is a green paper that tends to improve the child care. This green paper which suggest policies to reduce the number of children who have suffer from learning troubles or those victims of anti-social behaviour. All these suggestions are essential for children's health and security.

marketization agenda of the 1980s although supporters point out that the action was targeted at areas with high levels of deprivation.

⁵ Education Maintenance Allowance is a means-tested allowance available to 16 to 19 year olds. It aims to encourage participation, retention and achievement among young people, particularly those from low-income families.

Sadly, nothing can ever absolutely guarantee that no child will ever be at risk again from abuse and violence from within their own family. But we all desperately want to see people, practices and policies in place to make sure that the risk is as small as is humanly possible. I believe that the proposals we are putting forward here constitute a significant step towards that goal.

(Tony Blair)

After this, the government published **Every Child Matters: Next Steps**, in November 2004, and introduced **Children Act 2004**. An Act that provides services to children and young people by local authorities and other persons. These services are related to family proceedings, child minding and day care, defending acceptable punishment, the adaptation of review panels, making grants as a respect of children and families, child safety orders.

In January 2007, Alan Johnson the England's Education Secretary of Blair's government proposed to rise the leaving age of pupils from sixteen to eighteen. This paved the way to the decline of unskilled jobs and the importance to equip the young people for modern day employment.

Blair tried to reform the educational system through applying his 'third way' policy and this can be seen through preserving the idea of the conservatives which consists of fair competition between schools and ensuring equality for all.

2.2 Blair's Work Policies

In order to create more opportunities of work, the new labour adopted the 'welfare to work programme' and replaced the passive support for employment and active measures to encourage people to get into paid work.

Blair said, 'Government has a responsibility to provide real opportunities for individuals to gain skills and to get into work that pays. But individuals also have a responsibility to grasp those opportunities'. It means that the government must deal with issues related to employment, but people in the other hand should take these opportunities and use them in their favour.

While in power, the New Labour made many reforms to solve the problem of unemployment in Britain. The centrepiece of the Blair's Government's welfare to work reforms in its first few years was the New Deal. The New Deals were divided into different groups on welfare, each one with different requirements and varied grades of coercion.

First, there was the New Deal for Young People which was concerned with the individuals under 25 who had been unemployed for six months. There was also, the New Deals for Lone Parents (NDLP). Unlike the first one, the NDPL are voluntary programmes that give some supports and advices without fines. NDYP sets some restrictions on the behaviour of young long-term unemployed and offering some additional supports.

2.2.1 New Deal for Young People (18-24)

The New Deal for Young People (NDYP) was introduced in January 1998 as one of the main parts of the Labour government's welfare to work programme. The NDYP aimed to help the young unemployed people in finding jobs and increase their employability. This New Deal is compulsory for people aged between 18 to 24 years old who have been looking for work by claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) for six months or more (including those who want to get National Insurance credits). It gives many opportunities to work, to develop new skills and to get work experience in the environmental or voluntary sectors of the economy.

NDYP proposed a period of time in order to find a job named the 'Gateway'. The participants are given four months to find unsubsidised job with the help and support of the NDYP. If the participants failed to get a job in the end of the Gateway period, the New Deal Young People would offer four options for them. New deal Options are: first, the employment option which offers subsidised jobs for six months, moreover the full-time education and training option (FTET) which lasts for one year, there is also the option of working in the voluntary sectors, and finally the working with the environment task force option. ETE offers a job for six months with a benefit of 15£ package.

All these options present training and formation programme and offer extra support for the unemployed in the period when they finish their option. At the end of 2001, more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of a million of unemployed young people adopted this programme.

2.2.2 New Deal for 25 plus

In June 1998, the New Deal for 25 plus programme was introduced. ND25+ is compulsory with long-term unemployed.

This programme helps the individuals who were claiming Jobseeker's allowance for 18 months. Like the NDYP, the programme offers the 'gateway' period which lasts for 4 months; it was replaced in April 2001 by an 'Intensive Activity Period' (IAP) and lasts for 26 weeks. IAP contains a flexible package of support that can connect work experience, work focused training and help as well as offering a motivation and soft skills. Since the New Deal 25+ was launched, 23,100 individuals in Scotland have got jobs in comparison to 204,500 around Great Britain. 78% from these people got sustained employment.

2.2.3 New Deal for Lone Parents

The New Deal for Lone Parents was introduced on 26 October 1998. NDLP targeted lone parents and served as a personal adviser and guided them about potential jobs and skill development options as well as giving them some advices for child-care support. The New Deal for Lone Parents helps and encourages lone parents by applying the Income Support to improve the living standards and increase their participation in paid work. The NDLP improve also the job readiness of lone parents on IS in order to increase the chances of employment.

The Labour government made significant changes that affected the lone parents' situation since the New Deal for lone parents has been launched:

2.2.4 New Deal for Disabled People

NDDP is another employment programme introduced by Blair's government. It is a programme that targets people who are unable to get incapacity-related benefits; this programme is considered as an important part of the welfare to work strategy. NDDP offers a national network of Job Brokers to help the disabled people with healthy issues to get sustained employment. It started as a small pilot programme, but it was extended nationally in July 2001.

2.2.5 New Deal 50+

New Deal 50+ was a voluntary programme that targeted people over fifteen years old who are looking or wanting a return to work. This type of policy is public and began in 2000. ND50+ offers for the participants of this programme the following: firstly, the access to one-one advice and guidance to get jobs through a New Deal Personal Adviser, secondly the increase in Working Tax Credits, thirdly providing financial help with the cost of training up to 1500 £ per person.

2.3 Health Reforms

On the Eve of the 1997 elections, Blair promised to improve health services by increasing spending on health, reducing waiting lists and time and eliminating inequalities. The New Labour described its reforms of the National Health Service (NHS) to be closely related to the third way because it had adopted an approach that combines central direction, local autonomy and planned competitions. According to

Martin Powell ‘ To large extent Labour's health policy is built on legacy of the Conservatives and is characterised by evolution’. **(International Journal of Health)**

In December 1997, the New Labour had started to create national standards of treatment and the National Health Service programme. In order to give the best possible healthcare, the New Labour founded a Commission for Health improvement (CH); its principal task was to assess the clinical performance of National Health Services hospitals in England, and advise the NHS on best practice .Blair's administration also established the National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) which provides guidance for the NHS and gives information about treatments required.

2.3.1 The modernization of the NHS

After seven months of ruling, the Labour government set out its plans for the reform of the NHS by publishing a White Paper (Secretary of State for Health 1997). The Updated NHS began with a clear presentation of the “third way” policy:

In paving the way for the new NHS the government is committed to building on what has worked but discarding what has failed. There will be no return to the old centralized command and control systems of the 1970s... But nor will there be a return to the divisive internal market system of the 1990s... Instead there will be a ‘Third Way’ of running the NHS- a system based on partnership and driven by performance.

(Secretary of State for Health 1997:10)

The 1997 White Paper proposed several changes like: the cancellation of general practitioner (GP) fundholding, as well as the internal market which had been introduced into the NHS in 1991.⁶

In addition, the separation between the service providers and purchasers was retained, but collaboration replaced competition. All NHS bodies were put in a new statutory so they can work with each other and with other organizations. These changes will be applied through agreements, rather than annual contracts. There two groups which are responsible for commissioning: primary care groups (PCGs) and primary care trusts (PCTs). These two groups could bring together GPs, community health services and other local health providers in one organizational framework, and they could combine the budget's amount to $\frac{3}{4}$ of all NHS disbursement.

According to the White Paper, primary care groups and trusts contain 50 GPs, as well as 100,000 registered patients. The PCG/T are responsible for three major areas:

First, Primary care groups and trusts try in collaboration with local authorities and local partner organizations to improve health of local people. Second, they are responsible for developing community health services for local people. This can be realized through providing comprehensive and combined local services without the GP-based services. Third, authorizing hospital and community health services.

The White Paper of 1997 stated that there would be four levels of PCG/Ts:

Level.1: PCGs would only give advices for health authorities and commissioning services.

⁶. <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/77af/aec46607980be04d903b53f18ba0eae4d6c2.pdf>

Level.2: PCGs would be responsible for the budget and purchasing hospital community services for the patients.

Level.3: PCGs would become trusts- free- standing NHS bodies, responsible for both the budget and commissioning services.

Level.4: PCTs would offer some health services like, district nursing, specialist nursing services, and health visiting.

The most memorable thing in the ten years of Blair's government is the large spending on NHS comparing to the previous governments. From 1950 to 2000 the average of annual spending on NHS was 3,4%. However, from 2000 to 2008 the average increased to 7,8%.

2.4 Housing Reforms

In its early years, the New Labour government continued some of Thatcher's policies such as: 'The right to buy programme' introduced in 1980 and which stated that tenants were given the right to purchase their homes at a discount on its market value of at least 33%. It also promoted the role of the private rented market and the council home sell-offs.

Later, they introduced programmes to overcome the housing crisis. In 1998, Blair's administration introduced 'Decent homes programme' which aimed to guarantee a minimum standard of housing conditions for those who live in public sector.

The housing market renewal (HMR) programme of 2002 was intended to rebuild housing markets and communities in unpopular and deprived estates with the goal of making neighbourhoods more attractive to live and work in.

On March 2004, they published the "Barker Review Housing Supply ".Its overall objectives were: to achieve improvement in housing affordability in the market sector, a more stable housing market; it also suggested solutions to the government that would secure future housing needs.

In 2006, the government launched the" Sustainable Communities Plan whose goal was to provide extra 200k homes in London and SE by 2016.

Blair also promised that the government wouldn't return to the policy of "boom and bust" which decline the collapse of the housing market. He promised as well to provide mortgages to protect families from the job insecurity; to extend the Financial Services Act to stop the sale of disadvantageous mortgage packages. He stated that people who break their bargains are obliged to pay the costs inflicted on others. The local authorities will provide protection for tenants in houses in different occupations.

Blair announced that the rough sleeping would be treated as a crime and the police must clean the street from these rough sleepers. In 1999, the department of environment transport and the regions declared:

... rough sleepers themselves have a responsibility to come in. Once we are satisfied that realistic alternatives are readily available we – and the public at large – are entitled to expect those working on the streets to seek to persuade people to take advantage of them. This includes the police who sometimes have not been able to use their powers because of a lack of options to move rough sleepers on to.

(DETR, Rough Sleepers Unit.p10)

Social inclusion via work is the central element of Blair's housing policy and the housing Green Paper listed that the barriers to work would be reduced, especially those related to benefit and rent policy, this idea was considered as a key element of social policy. This policy was applied to adjust the regulations governing housing Benefit and to change the rules of the Income Support.

Blair also supported a 'new value tax' (NVT) .He proposed that the council tax and business rates on domestic property should be replaced by the new tax, which sees the value of underlying land taxed rather than property .Blair said it was fairer and more rational system of property taxation. The LVT would tax the value of the land itself and not the value of what is built on the land. The aim behind the LVT was to encourage landowners to sell unused lands and then there would be more land on which more houses could be built.

Conclusion

It is obvious that the catastrophic results of three successive general elections obliged the New Labour under Blair to change its traditional image and distanced itself from the old Left-wing principles. It called itself New Labour and positioned itself much more in the centre when it decided to abandon Clause IV of its constitution. The New Labour adopted the third way approach in his attempt to modernise the welfare state and improve the quality of the public services.

Once in office, Blair launched a series changes in the welfare system; it devoted billions of pounds to improve education, modernise the NHS, solve the housing crisis and reduce unemployment among young people. He brought in the national minimum wage, built schools and hospitals in more or less poor areas and introduced tuition fees for students. Some of his reforms were inspired by Thatcher's ones as Blair continued a Neoliberal agenda which included competitions between schools and hospitals, free market principles, privatisation and partnership.

Chapter Three

Assessing Blair's Social Reforms

Introduction

Inspired by Anthony Giddens, Blair adopted the third way concept in reforming the welfare state; his new policies were designed to enable Social Democracy to deal with the challenges of the world-wide market economy and help the citizens cope with the issues of the new era.

After his glorious victory in the 1997 elections, Blair introduced a range of reforms in education, work, health and housing. His objective was to reach both excellence and equality. In this chapter we will try to see whether Blair reached his objectives.

1. Assessing the Educational Reforms

At the Labour party conference speech of 1996, Tony Blair described education as the government's priority. He said that with education they would overcome years of neglect, make Britain a learning society and raise the ambitions of all young people. Did education really improve during Blair's era?

1.1 Performances in Tests

The Labour government made great progress in terms of improving the rates in national tests and examination for both primary and secondary pupils. However, some statistics showed that it wasn't the case in the independent set tests and exams, the results weren't so satisfactory. Some said that the main cause of these results was that teachers made the test harder in order to train their pupils so as to be ready for the

national examinations. International studies showed that England has good results in science, but it is not so in mathematics. **(Alan George Smithers)**

1.2 Standards (Quality)

Labour government stated that the assessed standards have considerably improved, because there was a combination of pressure and support. The patterns at primary schools are (Key Stage 2). The expected level at Key Stage 2 is now level 4 and this indicates a considerable improvement. **(Ruth Lupton and Polina Obolenskaya)**

The Green Paper of 2001 published a number of New Labour's achievements with regard to improved results and increased investment in primary schools: More children can read and write well after leaving primary school; 75% of children attained their age's standards in 2000 compared to only 54% in 1996. At the end of their primary school study, 72% of children reached level 4 compared to 54% in 1996. The number of children of parents whose occupation is 'unskilled or semi-skilled manual' achieving 5 higher grades at GCSE rose faster than the national average **(DfEE, 2001b, pp. 4-5).**

Concerning Secondary schools, the standards of academic attainment have also significantly improved during Labour's government period. At Key Stage 4 (GCSE) the main criteria of achievement is to get 'five good GCSE'. 49,2% of secondary school pupils got 5 or more grades like GCSE comparing to 46% in 1998. As for the standard measure, there was an increase in GCSE results at a rate between 1% to 2% each year until 2003/2004. From 2004/2005, the results improved more pointedly and at this average Blair's government achieved their goal.

1.3 Specialist schools

Concerning Specialist schools Holborn and Haralmbos think that Specialist Schools succeeded in raising standards because they selected disproportionate number of middle class pupils .This means that the middle class pupils were the one who really benefitted from these kinds of schools. (Micheal Haralmbos and Martin Holborn).

1.4 Every Child Matter

In March 2005 children were given the opportunity to have their own voice in government for the first time and this thanks to the ECM that was launched in 2003 ([everychildmatters/aims and outcomes](#)).

In the other hand, reports stated that Children's life wasn't improving despite applying this ECM: United Kingdom was ranked in the bottom third in a list of rich nations on five out six measures of child well-being (**UNICEF**). Despite all the efforts to eliminate this phenomenon, truancy continues to increase in England (**Paton**). Black boys have three times more risks to be excluded from schools than their counterparts white ones (**REACH**). The proportion of Childhood obesity in the UK is among the highest in the world (**Wilson and Reilly**). England is in the top of Europe in terms of incidence sexual transmitted infections among young people (**Reiss**).

1.5 City Academies

As for City Academies, a Price water house Cooper's survey pointed out that the number of pupils in city academies who obtained good GCSE results in 2004-05 increased by 8% four times the national average .It added that nine out of ten parents in city were happy with their children's education and results. This assessment impact of Academies was also confirmed by Stephen Machin's study which found that academies

had been open for 2 years counted 3% more students who achieved 5 GCEs at grades A-C. But critics said that the academies succeeded just because they took a limited number of pupils of special needs. (Stephen Machin and James Veroit).

1.6 Inequality in schools

Blair promised to tackle the barriers to educational opportunity created by the division of social class; the best way of achieving that was to ensure that every child could go to a good local school. According to Steve Sinnot, some barriers fell but Blair's administration was obsessed by privatisation and private sponsorship that's why he failed in reducing inequality of educational opportunity between middle-class and working-class pupils except for EMA and EAZ. (Steve Sinnott p33)

2. The Working Conditions and Blair's New Vision

Welfare-to-Work programme that the New Labour adopted had two major objectives: the first was the increase of the work force participation and the second was the reduction of the welfare reliance income support. Blair wished to replace a passive support for unemployment with more active measures to help people to get into a paid work.

He improved the "welfare to work" principle by encouraging people to enter the labour market rather than entering a paid work only .He promoted work among job seekers, lone parents and disabled people and succeeded in removing people from security benefits to work (John Hills Thatcherism, New Labour and the Welfare State). A Welfare-to-Work evaluation report conducted by Research Branch Department of Education, Employment and Work place Relations in 2008 has shown that the policy

was successful for a certain category of people concerned with the programmes .For example, during 2006-2007, the number of people leaving income support had been reduced and the number of parents in need of income support decreased to 30%. The report concluded" The results provide evidence that the first year of being introduced Welfare to Work did achieve its objectives of increasing workforce participation and reducing income support reliance for some groups"

Another study research indicated that the programmes had brought some positive changes for disadvantaged groups⁷, but the overall results were modest .They had not been able to change the lives of most people. (David Greenberg et al)

The impact of the New Deals for employment suggested by Tony Blair had been subject of many assessment programmes at the end of the first term of the Labour's government.

Dan Finn said that monthly reports about the New Deals programme have been published. Labour said that it had achieved its goal by helping 250.000 job seekers to find work through NDYP. **(DfEE;2000)**

‘The number of people claiming job seeker's Allowance is at its lowest for over 30years .The number of long-term claimants unemployed has fallen for more than half a million to 125.000; while for young people it has fallen for from 85.000to fewer than7.000'. (DWP, 2008)

The reports revealed that by 2001, half a million people were able to find a job and 53%of the NDYP leavers were getting in employment and most workers were

satisfied with the wages (New Deals and New Labour). ‘In combination with continuing employment growth, the New Deals succeeded in producing significant reduction in JSA employment especially amongst the younger long term unemployed’. The number of 18-24 year olds job seekers decreased from 87,800 to 39,800 between April 1997 and April 2000. This number represented a reduction of 55%. The best result was that of the number of people registered unemployed; it decreased from 90,700 to 5,100 a fall of about 90%. **(Mc Donald and Avesta, 2002).**

The National Institute for Economic and Social Research and the Institute for Fiscal Studies carried two studies about the NDYP impact. Both studies said that there was a positive impact with the IFS Findings. If we consider things 'economically and statistically we notice that the number of young from JSE to employment reduced (Blundell p34).

However, there were some less appreciative assessments of the employment impact of the New Deals. Reports indicated that the rate of unemployment decreased because the economy of the country was strong. They said that since 1997 the economy produced an additional 2.9 million jobs. They added that 30 per cent of those who had found a job returned to unemployment and about one in five of those who obtained a job failed to keep it for more than 13 weeks. This problem touched; mainly young people from ethnic minorities (Dan Finn, New Deals and New Labour. 2000).

According to Field and White (2007) the number of unemployed increased and those on NDYP and unemployed under six months augmented. In 2007, the number of jobless young people increased of 82,000.

⁷ Disadvantaged groups refer to the long term participants in Aid to families with dependent children (ADFC).

By adopting the Welfare to Work programme, Blair wanted to provide real employment opportunity for all, reduce poverty among particular groups and help job seekers enter the labour market.

3. Assessing Blair's health policy

From the Blair's 1997 manifesto, we can identify two high objectives, the first saving the NHS through a programme of modernisation and funding, the second improving overall population health and reducing health inequalities. Did Blair achieve his goal?

3.1 National Health Service

According to a survey conducted by Jo Maybin from the King's Fund Analysis of Department of Health, waiting times and lists improved in both England and Scotland .Labour's government succeeded in reducing maximum waits to 6 months; however in Wales the results were less impressive because this issue was not given priority. (10 years of Labour's Government)

Michael Traynor said that Blair really improved health services when he established programmes of modernisation and created Commission of the health improvement and the National Institute of Clinical Excellence .In fact, many reports say that these services permitted Blair's' administration to reduce the hospital waiting time and lists by 100.000 in England. Nick Triggle said that the government promised to reduce the waiting time and it duly achieved its objective (BBCNews 10May; 2007).

The Office for National Statistics analysis has shown an improvement in health care quality. According to the ONS cancer mortality fell to 22% during the period

between 1997-2010, life expectancy increased over the period 1997-2010 and infant mortality reduced.

Nigel Edwards, the Policy Director of the NHS, said that the real cause of the bad state of the NHS was the underfunding, that's why the government devoted huge sums of money to improve it. He considered that the NHS was in better position. In the other hand, the NHS staff and many reports said that the service was getting worse. **(healthcare-in-europe.com).**

Ton Brower wrote a book about Blair's Policy. The book revealed that Blair made great effort to improve the NHS but the results were disastrous .Blair thought that he could transform the NHS by throwing cash; he had never been interested in it and had no idea how to manage it. Blair entrusted the NHS to **Frank Dobson** but did not tell him how to guide it.

Dobson continued the Tory's policy by encouraging competitions between hospitals and using private hospitals to reduce waiting lists but made a horrible mistake when he decided to re-centralise control of the NHS .It was difficult to control and supervise 100 health authorities and 420 hospital trusts.

Tom Brower said that Dobson distributed cash to hospitals, but few months later newspapers reported that prematured death was increasing and great numbers of operations were cancelled. They described British hospitals to 'Third World' ones. **(Tony Blair the tragedy of power)**

3.2 Health Inequalities

In order to measure the success of their policies concerning the reduction of health inequality, the government fixed two indicators. The first was to count the number of working class babies dying in their first year of life. The second related to the differences in life expectancy between different regions of the country. Frank Dobson said : 'There are huge inequalities in our society. Poor people are ill more often and die sooner. That's the greatest inequality of them all'.

Death rate among infants born to working class parents was higher than that among babies born to middle class parents and the gap between the two classes was due to the difference in the living standards. This means that infant mortality is closely related to the living condition of individuals. Another cause of infant mortality was the government decision to differentiate between non-working individuals with no children from those with children in the benefit and welfare system; mothers with no children had difficulties in looking after themselves during the period of pregnancy because they were not assisted by the government. **(Danny Dorling p8)**

Concerning life expectancy, in 2006, a Department of Health Report stated that life expectancy was increasing for both men and women, including in spearhead areas. But it is increasing more slowly there, so the gap continues to widen and it is widening more for women". **(Danny Dorling.p8)**

According to this report the Labour government partly succeeded in increasing life expectancy but not in all areas. The same report stated that life expectancy gap between the worst and the best off districts of UK exceeds 10 years.

These reports show that experts in health services do not share the same opinion concerning Blair's achievements. Some think he succeeded in improving the NHS by improving waiting lists and times, reducing cancer and infant mortality and increasing life expectancy; while others said that the NHS was getting worse; they even thought the Conservatives would have done better. They also think Blair's government failed in reducing health inequalities when he encouraged the idea of privatisation and market competition.

4. Assessing Housing Policy:

Labour government said "Everyone should have the opportunity of a decent house at the price can afford, in a place where they can live and work' 'as the proverb says: Actions speak louder than words, we will try to find out whether the New Labour's policy succeeded in solving the housing crisis.

The Financial Times said " since 1997 the average house price has risen by 197% .from 73.811 in May 1997 to 219.145 in April 2007. As a result homeowners have an average seen a 78% rise in their asset wealth'' (Tobby Liyod, Closer to Equality).The increase in prices was partly due to Blair's support for housing market. Many reports revealed that housing inequality had increased and the great part of the population could not afford a decent housing because the value of private housing in UK had risen 50 fold in the last 50 years.

The Barker Review programme was the most significant policy of the housing supply, but it failed to achieve its goal because the global financial crisis that followed

in the years afterward. Home Builder Federation (HFB) said that despite the efforts and the good intentions of the government, the 10 years since the Review had been a lost decade because the housing crisis of 2014 is far greater than that of 2004.

The Housing Market Renewal (HMR) had achieved some success in creating new housing supply in regions where developers had been hesitant to invest in .However, the HMR was incomplete because the resources available were not sufficient to engineer the wide-ranging changes to the housing offer .The Land Value Tax (LVT) led to a rising land prices .The Office for National Statistics (ONS) said that the land value grew much faster than houses and this encouraged owners to sell land.

Conclusion

Motivated by the desire to achieve better records than the previous government and improve the quality of the public services, Blair launched a range of social reforms in education, healthcare, housing and work programmes. In terms of numbers, statistics and reports show a big improvement in these fields. Blair's supporters said that Blair did not only improve public services but he succeeded in creating a better image of the Labour Party.

However, critics expressed a certain disappointment at the final achievements of the New Labour administration; they say that Blair's social policy which accepts free market principles and privatisation failed in reducing inequality between classes .They claim that his policies were just a continuation to Thatcher's Neoliberal agenda.

General Conclusion

The Labour Party was created in the early twenties of the 20th century out of the need to protect the interests of the working-class which need a real representation in the British Parliament. After the WWII, the Party made great strides under Attlee who had the merit to create the welfare state and the National Health Service. However, the strikes that were held by the Trade Unions against the Labour Party's policies expelled it from power for 18 years.

In the 1997 general elections, the Labour Party returned to power with a parliamentary landslide. Under Tony Blair, the party won its greatest number of seats ending 18 years of the Conservative rule. Once in office, Blair launched a range of reforms to tackle the social issues. He spent huge sums of money to improve education, modernise the NHS and reduce unemployment. By introducing these reforms, Blair wished to guarantee good education, good training, decent housing and excellent health care for all. In short, he promised Britain an era of equality and opportunity .To achieve his goals, Blair changed the out-dated and traditional policies of the party so that he could apply them in a modern world with its new requirements. Blair was determined to modify the core values of the welfare state and change the orientation of the state social system from a provider to an enabler .He brought radical changes in the way the welfare state was formed and distributed; his new policy was based on the Third Way ideology that he described as 'modernized social democracy' fit for the new era.

The assessment reports mentioned in chapter three show controversial opinions about Blair's social reforms. In one hand, Blair's supporters pointed to his achievements

in education; work and health and said he represented the positive face of Britain .The results obtained in both higher and further education show that the New Labour administration actually succeeded in improving education. As for work, Blair introduced the national minimum wage reduced youth unemployment thanks to the ‘Welfare to Work’ and the ‘New Deal’ programmes. Statistics and reports also show that he also improved the NHS since he succeeded in reducing the waiting time as well as cancer and infant mortality.

However, his critics think that Blair did not lay down a policy agenda with long term consequences because he perused incoherent short -term policies that led to temporary success. His reforms had modestly improved some services and sectors but compared to Attlee who had the merit to establish the NHS, Blair left no obvious institutional mark; much of the money spent was gone in smoke. Moreover, some Labourists claim that Blair betrayed the Left ideals by encouraging free market principles notably in education and health. He failed to reduce inequality because the gap between the poor and the rich remained the same.

In brief, Statistics and numbers show that Blair's policy was to a certain extent successful; during his premiership public services enjoyed golden age of performance and funding. Of course, the effects of Blair's social policies can be felt more by the less privileged that benefited from reducing child poverty, introducing the minimum wage and investing in schools and hospitals. But more importantly ,what Blair wanted was to change the conventional British conception of the welfare state that he considered incompatible with his project of modernization and adopt the idea of a new welfare state based on the enabling state ,self-help, mutual aid, social inclusion and equality of

opportunity. By adopting the third way, he aimed to create a sense of awareness and responsibility among citizens especially the less privileged and invest in human capital rather than the direct provision of economic support. This exactly what the Third world leaders need to learn. Blair's vision could help us get rid of the culture of dependency and be more mature and responsible.

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ملخص

نحاول من خلال هذه الدراسة لقاء الضوء على السياسة الاجتماعية التي انتهجها حزب العمال البريطاني خلال الفترة الممتدة من 1997-2007 و اثارها على المجتمع البريطاني. منذ نجاحه الباهر في الانتخابات التشريعية في سنة 1997 اعتبر حزب العمال ان اصلاح نظام الخدمات الاجتماعية من اكبر مهامه. و بغية الوصول الى الهدف المرجو اعتمد الحزب على مبدئ "الطريق الثالث" وهي مفهوم يمزج بين الفكر الاشتراكي و الرأسمالي بطريقة جديدة. الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو معرفة الاسباب الحقيقية التي دفعت حزب العمال البريطاني لتغيير سياسته القديمة وكذا الجديد الذي جاء به بلير في برنامجه الاصلاحى والاهم من كل ذلك هو معرفة مدى تأثير هذه الاصلاحات على المجتمع البريطاني. بعض التقارير تقول ان بلير نجح الى حد كبير في تغيير المجتمع البريطاني الى الاحسن غير ان تقارير اخرى ترى ان نجاح بلير مؤقت وان الكثير من المشاكل كانت تحتاج ايجاد الى حلول جذرية.