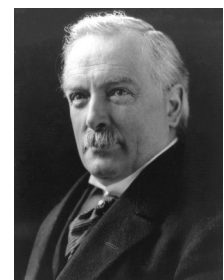


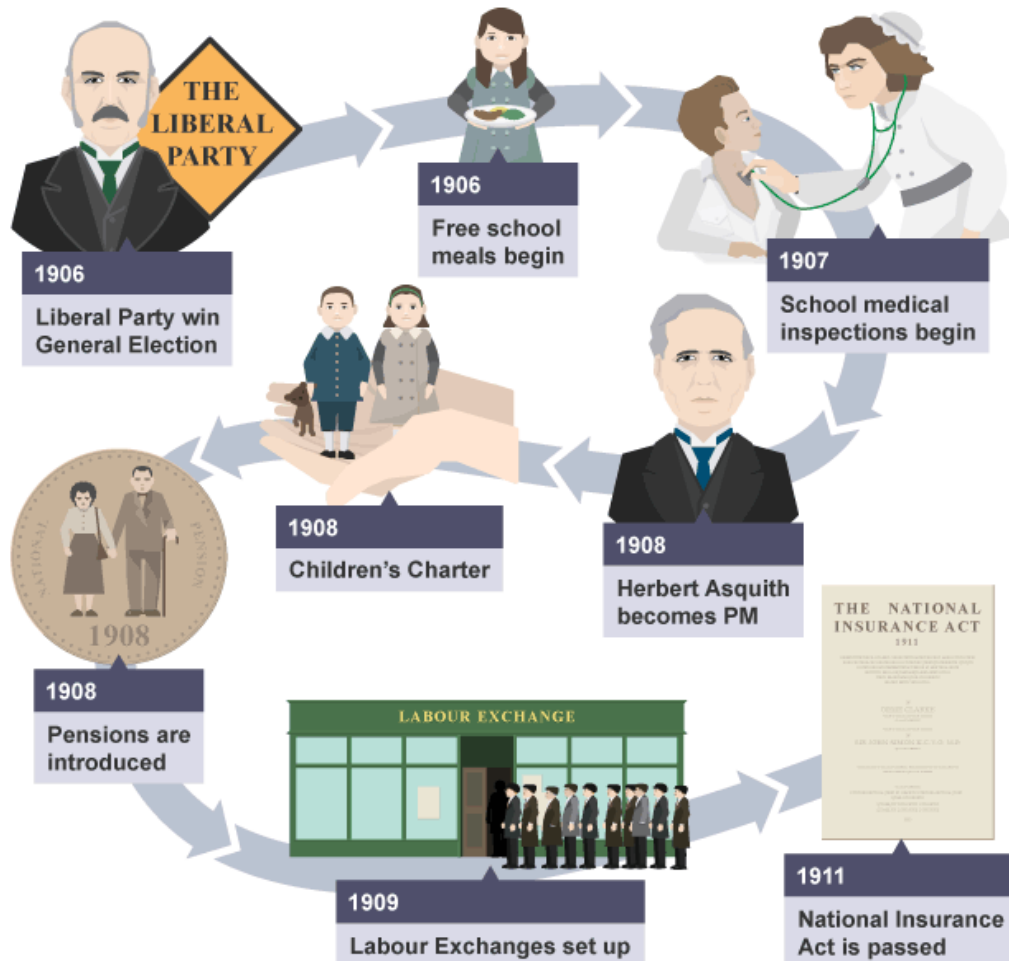
# The Reforms of the Liberal Government, 1906-1912



Between 1890-1905 much had begun to change for the poor people of England. Many houses in slum areas were connected to sewerage systems in major cities, children were schooled for free until age 11, average wages had risen towards the end of the 19th century and all men were now able to vote democratically, whereas previously this had been decided by their wealth.

What do I NEED to know for this topic?

- ◆ Life for the poor at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century
- ◆ Work of Social reformers (Booth, Booth and Rowntree)
- ◆ Why did poverty become a political issue? (6 reasons)
- ◆ 4 reforms for children (date/description/+ve/-ve)
- ◆ 3 reforms for sick and unemployed (date/description/+ve/-ve)
- ◆ 1 reform for elderly (date/description/+ve/-ve)
- ◆ How effective were the reforms
- ◆ opposition to the reforms (inc. People's budget)



# 1. What was life like for the poor living in Britain before the Liberal Reforms?

Before the introduction of the Liberal Reforms in 1906 the Government (Conservative) had a **Laissez-Faire** approach to poverty and believed that people should be able to work their way to success and charities were left to pick up the pieces and put support in place. For many ordinary poor people this meant that they were trapped in a way of living that we would find disturbing today.

<p><b>Charities</b></p>	<p><b>Charities were the main means of support for poor</b> people before the Liberal Reforms. They provided some shelter, food, training, unofficial job exchanges and much more. However, the problem of poverty was far too big for charities to handle, and this is why something needed to be done.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>London had approximately 800 charities by 1905</b></li> <li>• Dr Thomas Barnardo set up a network of children's homes all over England from 1867 onwards under the charity name '<b>Dr Barnardo</b>'. They had rescued <b>60,000</b> children from destitution (homelessness) and helped an estimated <b>500,000</b> to improve their situations/lives.</li> <li>• <b>The Salvation Army (see next page) had over 45 branches operating in London by 1870.</b> Their structure with majors, captains and a recognisable military uniform meant that they were organised enough to help bring relief to the poor rather than the other way around, as many poor did not know where to go.</li> </ul>
<p><b>The Poor Law (it's a trap!)</b></p>	<p>This was the main way that the Government 'helped' the poor. They had an agreement with workhouses and companies that did basic outdoor work on roads, farms etc. which meant that the poorest of the poor would work in return for a small wage packet and some basic accommodation which was paid for by the government. The conditions were horrendous and abuse of people was common. The government expected that people would save their wages to buy their way out of poverty, however, this was simply a plan which could not work and many people who ended up receiving government payments through this arrangement ended up trapped in it. As people approached old age they were worried because when they were retired (too old to work) they would have NOTHING unless family were willing to provide for them. Millions faced an early and grim death.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Summary: Poorest of poor worked bad jobs for basic accommodation and little pay, funded by the government. Trapped in poverty.</b></li> <li>• Receiving relief through the poor law was frowned upon and <b>seen as shameful to rely on the government.</b> People tried to avoid it, but for many unfortunate people there wasn't another option.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Reasons rich people and many in the government thought people were poor</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Alcoholism</b> meant they spent their money and weren't thinking straight</li> <li>• <b>Laziness</b></li> <li>• <b>Lack of intelligence</b></li> </ul> <p>(essentially they believed that it was poor people's fault that they were poor! Remember this by using the acronym <b>ALL</b>)</p>
<p><b>Barriers to poor people getting out of poverty</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Education:</b> Although education was compulsory to age 11, many schools in poorer areas were not as successful as schools for rich people. Also, rich people were educated further after age 11.</li> <li>• <b>Wages:</b> Even though wages improved in the early 20th century, the wages paid to poor people meant they couldn't save. <b>Many couldn't afford the basics.</b></li> <li>• <b>Poor health:</b> Many poor suffered from regular illness due to lack of good food and some had diseases like rickets which prevented them from being brilliant workers</li> <li>• <b>Large families</b> meant that poor people had to spend all of their money on providing the basics for their families rather than saving for the future.</li> <li>• The Government's <b>Laissez-Faire</b> attitude to dealing with the problem of poverty. No pay for the sick and unemployed only made this problem worse.</li> <li>• <b>Poor Law</b></li> </ul>

They must never spend a penny on a railway fare or a bus. They must never go into the country unless they walk. They must never purchase a halfpenny newspaper or spend a penny to buy a ticket for a popular concert. They must write no letters to absent children, for they cannot afford to pay the postage. They must never contribute anything to their church or chapel, or give help to a neighbour which costs them money.



They cannot save, nor can they join sick club or Trade Union, because they cannot afford the contributions. The children must have no pocket money for dolls, marbles or sweets. The father must smoke no tobacco, and must buy no beer. The mother must never buy any pretty clothes for herself or her children. The wage-earner must never be absent from work for a single day.

## 2. What were Social Reformers doing to try and change support for the poor?

MANY BELIEVED THAT POOR PEOPLE WERE POOR BECAUSE THEY WERE LAZY, ALCOHOLIC OR LACKED THE INTELLIGENCE TO BECOME SUCCESSFUL. SOCIAL REFORMERS CHALLENGED THIS IDEA AND PROVED THAT PEOPLE WERE ACTUALLY TRAPPED IN POVERTY FROM BIRTH—THEY WANTED TO CHANGE THIS!

### Charles Booth and the Poverty Line

He was born into a wealthy ship owning family from Liverpool and moved to London and refused accept the official statistics that said 25% of the population was living in poverty.

- Over a period of around 17 years he and his team investigated the living conditions, income and spending of over 4000 people. They published their findings between 1889 and 1903 in **17 volumes, called *Life and Labour of the People in London***.
- He found that nearly **31% of Londoners were living below the 'poverty line'**. He divided these people into **classes of poverty**, ranging from A-D, depending on their job, place where they lived and income.
- He also published a range of **colour coded maps** which were used for over 60 years to track poverty in different areas in London



### Seebohm Rowntree and Primary and Secondary Poverty

Rowntree belonged to the York-based chocolate manufactures. He was interested in Booth's findings and wanted to see if the same would be said about people in **York and discovered that 28% of people lived below Booth's poverty line**

- **He divided poverty into two kinds:**
  - Primary Poverty** = No matter how hard the family worked they would never earn enough to provide themselves with adequate food, shelter and clothing.
  - Secondary Poverty** = These families could just about feed, clothe and shelter themselves. They were living on the edge.
- He also **mapped out the life of a poor person** to demonstrate at what point in their lives they would fall into poverty. He concluded that people were most at risk when they were children, had children and when they grew old.

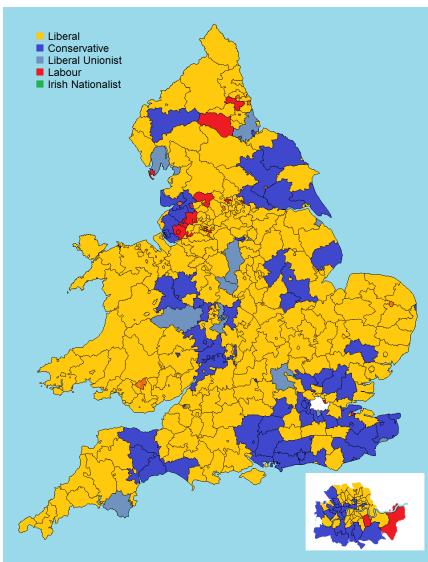


### William & Catherine Booth and Circles of Poverty

These two had a different approach to poverty. They took relief to the people suffering through creating the Salvation Army. This couple focused on those at the lower end of the poverty scale. Charles Booth's class A, or Rowntree's primary poverty.

- **By 1900 they had over 50 (was 45 in 1878) branches** all over London and ran some job exchanges before the Liberal Reforms were introduced.
- They drew a circular diagram containing 3 layers of poverty, including: **the starving and homeless, but honest poor, those who live by vice and those who live by crime.**





### 3. Why did poverty become a political issue by 1906?

By 1906, due to the reasons explained below, the 'New' Liberals dominated the party and were focused on Poverty. Many more traditional Liberals left the party to join the Conservatives. They won the 1906 election by a landslide;

**SEATS:** **The Liberals won 397** (up from 182 in 1902 election) seats in Parliament in comparison to the **Conservatives 156** (down from 402 in 1902 election)

**IMPORTANCE:** This showed the government and public that poverty was clearly a huge issue that everyone was worried about poverty.

#### Why did poverty become a political issue?

**Social Reformers = pressure on government**



The researchers Seebohm Rowntree's book *Poverty: A Study of Town Life*, was read by thousands of people and Charles Booth's books on the poor in London were consulted by hundreds more. Some of these people, like the young Winston Churchill, would soon be in a position to do something about this.

**Boer war (1899)**



The **Boer War in 1899**. Young men volunteered to fight and in thousands were rejected for being too unfit. As many as **2/3 (in some areas)** of the volunteers were turned down because they failed the army medical examinations. They were **too weak, small and some had diseases linked to poor nourishment, like Rickets.**

**Britain were lagging behind Germany and America with social reform**



The economies of countries such as **Germany and America** were highly successful because of the skills and hard work of their workforces. It looked as if the British workforce hadn't got the strength or the stamina to compete. Bismarck, the German Chancellor had introduced reforms which helped the poor in Germany, which meant they worked more efficiently and helped the German economy.

**Political competition: Conservatives (Tories)**



Competition from the Conservative Party. **In 1905 the Conservatives introduced the Education Act.** This showed that the Conservatives were trying to help the poor (probably to gain their votes) a little, and the Liberals were worried about this preventing them from getting votes. **Despite this, the Conservatives did very little before 1906 to help the poor of Britain.**

**Political competition: Labour**



Competition from the Labour Party. In **1900 all the socialist groups in Britain came together and formed the Labour Party.** Keir Hardie (Leader of Labour from 1900-1915) pledged that they would push to introduce strong reforms to help the poor as well as a fairer distribution of Britain's wealth through high taxes and government spending. The Liberals were afraid the Labour Party would take votes away from them.

**The 'New' Liberals**



Many younger 'New Liberals' like David Lloyd George and Winston Churchill had a genuine humanitarian desire to help poor people. They were challenging traditional ideas that people should work out their own problems. **The New Liberals believed the State/government should provide a safety net or framework within which everyone could succeed and live in security and freedom.** They were careful to make their ideas fit somewhere between the Conservatives and Labour.

#### 4. How effective were the Liberal Government and how far did they improve the lives of children, working age adults and the elderly

Reform and year	What did it do to help people (positives)	Who was affected? P = Primary S = Secondary	Limitations (negatives)
<b>Free School Meals Act (1906)</b>	Free meals for the poorest pupils Paid for by council tax (tax paid to local government) By <b>1914 over 158,000 children had a free school meals</b>	P = Children S = Parents	Many councils didn't introduce these as they weren't compulsory
<b>School Medical Inspections (1907)</b>	Doctors and nurses went into schools to do compulsory medical checks.	P = Children S = Parents	<b>Parents still had to pay if any treatment was needed. Many couldn't afford</b>
<b>Children's Act (1908)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All children's homes &amp; workhouses with children were to be inspected to avoid abuse</li> <li>Children were given special status which made them more protected than adults. This meant abused children could be taken from parents legally.</li> <li>Separate prisons for children and Borstals for correctional behaviour</li> <li>Children under 14 not allowed in pubs and had to be 16 to buy cigarettes</li> </ul> P = Children S = Parents		
<b>School Clinics (1912)</b>	<b>Introduced free treatment for all children who attended school. This improved on the school medical inspections viewed in 1907.</b>	P = Children S = Parents	
<b>Labour Exchanges Act (1909)</b>	The government took over from charities like the Salvation army to connect employers with employees and provide poor people with training to give them the skills to work in certain jobs. This reduced the time and money needed to advertise jobs and far reduced the time for possible workers to find one	P = Adults S = Children  Possibly elderly if they lived with family.	
<b>National Insurance Act: Part 1 (1911)</b>  <b>SICK PAY</b>	All manual workers and low paid white collar workers had to pay into an insurance scheme in case they got ill. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Workers paid in 4d, employers 3d and the government 2d a week.</b></li> <li><b>If they were ill they got 10s a week for 13 weeks and then 5s a week for another 13 weeks (26 weeks).</b></li> <li>They got free medical treatment and maternity care.</li> <li><b>10m men and 4m women</b> were affected by this when it was first introduced. <b>Over 60% of the work force.</b></li> </ul>	P = Adults S = Children  Possibly elderly if they lived with family.	<b>Had to earn less than £160 per year.</b>  Didn't cover family for medical treatment
<b>National Insurance Act: Part 2 (1912)</b> <b>BENEFITS</b>	This Act introduced the first unemployment benefit and affected mostly workers in seasonal work like shipbuilding, construction and engineering (far less work in winter) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Workers, employer and government each paid in 2d a week.</b></li> <li><b>When unemployed they could claim 7s6d a week for up to 15 weeks a year.</b></li> </ul>	P = Adults S = Children  Possibly elderly if they lived with family.	<b>Only 2.25m workers covered (mostly men)</b>  Only for seasonal unemployment
<b>Pensions Act (1908)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Everyone over 70 could apply</li> <li><b>A single person got 5s a week</b></li> <li><b>Married people for 7s6d between them</b></li> </ul> P = Elderly S = Children, as the grandparents may contribute to their wellbeing if they lived with family.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Life expectancy was 46 for men and 50 for women in 1908</b></li> <li><b>Had to be on a VERY low income (£21-36 a year!)</b></li> <li>Lived in Britain for over 20 years AND not been in prison in the last 10</li> <li>Needed to have worked regularly in life to receive payments.</li> </ul>	

## 5. What opposition was there to the Liberal Reforms?

It is important to remember that the Liberal Reforms were designed to help poor people, but there was opposition to these reforms for multiple reasons discussed below. It is important to also remember that the government ignored 2 reports recommending that the Poor Law should be scrapped. It wasn't abolished until 1929!



Represented by:



- Believed the Liberal Reforms had done too little to help the poor due to the limitations (see last page)
- Wanted to pull the vote from the Liberals in 1910, so made grand promises about what they would do if given power
- Keir Hardie (Labour leader) had done a lot in the North to campaign for the poor AND for women's rights.



David Lloyd George had to try and gain support from both sides of the political spectrum (Left and Right)

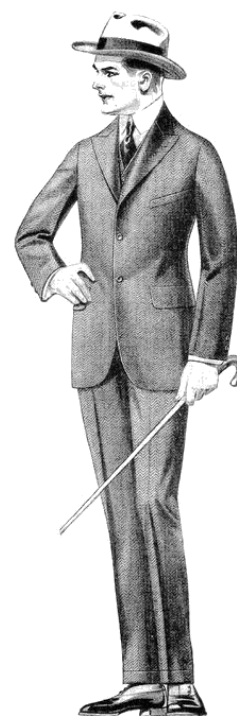
- The Liberal Reforms needed to be paid for and to do this DLG introduced a 'People's Budget' in 1909 to introduce taxes on the rich, their investments and their land.
- The House of Lords stopped this bill from passing which caused funding issues for the government.
- After much campaigning, another election and removal of some Lords, the People's Budget was finally passed in 1911.

David Lloyd George was careful to show that he was not against profit or people getting wealth, but was against the monopoly (control) of this by a tiny elite. He emphasised both the low ambitions of the working classes and the overly elaborate capitalist venture and business class. He once stated;



"The property which is improved by the labour of the community should contribute its share"

Meaning: The wealth made by the workers should benefit them!



Represented by:



Conservatives

- Believed that people should look after themselves and work their way out of poverty through hard work (similar to Hoover and rugged individualism—USA module)
- Looked after the interests of business class and wealthy in Britain and opposed the Liberal Reforms because it would cost a lot in taxes.
- Believed people would become soft and lazy if they knew they could rely on the state

# Liberal Reforms: TOP 20 QUIZ

1. What % of people in London did Charles Booth uncover lived below the poverty line

21%      31%      41%

2. Which two countries were Britain's main economic rivals?

USA & France      USA & Russia      USA & Germany

3. At what age were you eligible for state pension?

Over 60      Over 65      Over 70

4. When were School Clinics established?

1909      1910      1912

5. When was the National Insurance Act Part 1 passed?

1910      1911      1912

6. Who founded the Salvation Army?

Charles Booth      Seebohm Rowntree      William Booth

7. Who was the Liberal's Chancellor of the Exchequer?

David Lloyd George      David Asquith      Winston Churchill

8. When was the Pensions Act passed?

1908      1909      1910

9. What political party was formed in 1900?

Liberals      Conservatives      Labour

10. How many state Labour Exchanges were set up by 1914?

200      300      400

11. When was the Children's Act (sometimes called the Children's Charter)?

1908      1910      1912

12. When was the Boer War?

1899      1901      1911

# Liberal Reforms: TOP 20 QUIZ

13. When were local councils first given the power to provide free school meals?

1904      1906      1908

14. Seebohm Rowntree owned factories in which city?

Liverpool      York      Manchester

15. What was a dreaded type of help available for the poor?

Workhouse      Labourhouse      Torturehouse

16. When were medical checks introduced for children?

1904      1907      1908

17. Who did the National Insurance Act Part 2 help?

Children      The unemployed through illness      The unemployed through lack of work

18. When was the People's budget introduced?

1908      1909      1910

19. Who opposed the budget?

The elderly      The rich/landowners      David Lloyd George

20. What % of people in York did Rowntree uncover lived in poverty?

17%      28%      35%