

## Poverty Timeline: Revision

### 1) Britain in 1830 and the nature of the problem of poverty

- Proletariat
- **Henry Mayhew** – divided poor into categories:
  - \* Those who will work
  - \* Those who cannot work
  - \* Those who will not work
- Overseers of the poor – usually churchwardens or landowners, administered poor relief
- **William Booth** (founder of the Salvation Army – poverty not just a moral failing) – circles of poverty (*unemployed* in middle – characterised by crime and vice; then *unskilled* – dragged into poverty due to temporary unemployment, old age, illness etc, then *skilled* personal crisis or trade depression could force into unemployment)
- **Charles Booth** – carried out quantitative and scientific surveys into poor: 30% of Londoners living below '**Poverty Line**'
- **Benjamin Rowntree** – carried out surveys into poverty in York – *primary poverty* and *secondary poverty*
- Relative Poverty
- Pauper
- Relief
- Some examples of what it was like living in poverty – diet etc

### 2) How effective was the old poor law?

- Medieval – vagrancy, punished – whips and stocks
- Early Tudors – able bodied poor v impotent poor  
1536 – parishes authorised to collect money for impotent poor  
Able-bodied poor treated as vagrants and punished.
- **1601 – Elizabethan Poor Law:**
  - \* Impotent Poor – poor houses
  - \* Able-bodied Poor – workhouses (workhouse test)
  - \* Refused to work – house of correction
- Parish – formed basis of poor relief
- Poor Rate (tax)
- Settlement
- **Settlement Law of 1662**
- **Gilbert's Act, 1782** (allowed parishes to join together for the purpose of supporting a poorhouse)
- **Outdoor Relief:**
  - \* **Speenhamland System, 1795** – linked relief to the price of bread and/ or number of children in family
  - \* **Labour Rate** – could be paid in cash or wages by employers
  - \* **Roundsmen System** – pauper labourers employed by ratepayers who paid part of their wage – parish paid the rest

### 3) Pressures for Change

- **Thomas Malthus** and **David Ricardo** – favoured abolition of the poor law
- **Thomas Paine** – property tax on rich, able-bodied poor should go into workhouses
- **Robert Owen** – blamed capitalist system for poverty – ‘co-operative communities’
- **Jeremy Bentham** – Utilitarianism
- **Edwin Chadwick** - most fervent of Bentham’s disciples – workhouses and central authority
- Napoleonic Wars (1793, 1815)
- Corn Laws (1815)
- Suspension of Habeus Corpus, 1817
- Six Acts, 1817
- The Swing Riots, late 1820s early 1830s
- Report of the Select Committee on the Poor Laws, 1817 – condemned evils of poor law
- General Election, 1831 – Whig victory
- **Commission of Enquiry, 1832** – Nassau Senior, Edwin Chadwick:  
Recommended:
  - \* Separate Workhouses
  - \* Parishes to group into unions
  - \* Outside Relief to end
  - \* Intro of central authority
- Poor Law Amendment Bill – reflected arguments of commission
- Traditional; Marxist and Revisionist views of the Poor Law Amendment Act

#### **4) Implementation of Poor Law Amendment Act, 1834-47**

- Main terms of act was per recommendations of the commission
- **Poor Law Commission** established – separate from parliament, 3 head commissioners ( Chadwick not one), pressures and difficulties they faced, but by 1840 12,000 parishes had been incorporated into Poor Law Unions
- **Programme of Workhouse Construction** – principle of ‘**less eligibility**’:
  - \* Late 1830s – orders issued to end outdoor relief
  - \* 1842 – Outdoor Labour Test Order
  - \* 1844 – General Outdoor Relief Prohibitory Order
- **Settlement Laws:**
  - \* 1840 – 40, 000 paupers removed from parishes living in and sent back to parishes of their settlement – problems associated with this.
- **Opposition to the 1834 Poor Law:**
  - \* Rumour and Propaganda, e.g. *The Book of Murder*
  - \* Rural South – riot and disorder, e.g. the case of the Amersham Union in Buckinghamshire, 1835  
Kent, 1835  
East Anglia, 1844
  - \* Northern Factory Towns, e.g. Lancashire and West Yorkshire, – worst Resistance.  
**Ten Hour Movement**, campaign throughout 1830s for reduction in hours factory workers expected to work  
**Bradford, 1837 and Dewsbury, 1838** – violent protests  
**Todmorden** – in between Leeds and Manchester – campaign led by John Fielden, violent protests, 1838, Refused to build workhouse till 1877
  - \* Opposition = widespread in north, limited elsewhere, became absorbed into Chartism

#### **5) Workhouses**

- **Sampson Kempthorne – architect in London, appointed architect to Poor Law Commission, 1835**
- Y Shape and Cross (Cruciform) shape – importance of design
- Regime – designed to demoralise:
  - \* Routine, regulations, rules
  - \* Work
  - \* Diet
  - \* Discipline
- Staff – appointed to intimidate:
  - \* Master and Matron – 1238 masters and matrons in 600 Poor Law Unions
  - \* Clerk
  - \* Medical Officer
  - \* Teacher
  - \* Chaplain
- **Andover Scandal, 1846** – master Mr M'Dougal

## 6) How did Poor Law Develop 1847-1875?

- **1847 = watershed year** – turning point after Andover Scandal
- **Poor Law Board replaces Poor Law Commission, 1847:**
  - \* President of board to be MP
  - \* More Parliament involvement
  - \* But many commissioners stayed on
  - \* Inspectors do not have time to visit unions more than once or twice a year
- **Attempts to improve financial situation:**
  - \* **Union Chargeability Act, 1865** – shifts cost of poor relief from individual parishes to unions as a whole. Each parish to contribute to the common union fund on basis of its rateable value, *not* on how many paupers it had (as before).
  - \* **Poor Law Loans Act, 1869**  
Extended time given to parishes to repay loans taken out for poor relief building works – extended from 20-30 years making repayments lower.
    - \* Cost of poor relief continues to rise steadily from 1844-70
- **Indoor v Outdoor Relief:**
  - \* **1847 – clear that abolishing outdoor relief is impossible**
  - \* **1852 – failed attempt to put all on outdoor relief in workhouses**
  - \* **Outdoor relief continues to be cheaper than indoor**
  - \* **1863 – Public Works Act:** allowed local authorities to borrow money to set up work schemes.
- **The Reform Act of 1867**
  - \* Extends voting rights to more working class men – doubled franchise from c. 1 million to c. 2 million voters. Changes political climate – government becomes increasingly aware of and concerned with the welfare of the people....
- **The establishment of the Local Government Board, 1871**
  - \* New legislation in housing and public health (for example) was to be implemented by local government. Did not make sense to keep Poverty separate from this – so it is taken over by Local Government Board in 1871.
  - \* Local Government Board can be seen as reflection of **shift in attitudes towards health and welfare by the 1870s.**
  - \* President of the Board remained a cabinet minister – so some central oversight remains
  - \* Board tried to reduce numbers of paupers receiving relief by:
    - issuing circulars condemning outdoor relief
    - supported local authorities who took a harsh line with able-bodied poor trying to claim relief
    - authorised boards of guardians to take place in emigration schemes
    - introduced paid schemes, e.g. street cleaning for those who were not suitable for the workhouse
- Number of paupers falls from 4.6% of population in 1870, to 2.5% of population in 1900
- Greatest number of paupers were always relieved *outside* the workhouse – remained constant fact, 1834-75