An Assessment of the Attlee Government.

General introduction

The Attlee government changed the face of Britain. Legislation reached the statute book confirming the establishment of both a national health service and a new system of social security, designed to provide protection for all "from the cradle to the grave". Few would deny that the Attlee government was amongst the most formative in modern British history. According to Kenneth Morgan, the Attlee government was "amongst the most effective of any British government since the passage of the 1832 Reform Act".

Historians are agreed upon the importance of the post-war Labour government in shaping modern Britain. After a landslide election victory in 1945, the administration led by Clement Attlee presided over a series of far-reaching changes, including the introduction of the Welfare State. Within eighteen months Attlee's Cabinet had done more than any previous twentieth-century government to improve the lot of ordinary working people. For the majority of the population welfare reform after 1945 offered family allowances, free medical treatment, subsidised housing and educational opportunities on a scale not known before. Kevin Jeffreys

Between 1945 and 1951, the Labour Government kept the promises they had made in their election manifesto, the most important being the creation of the "Welfare State". What Labour did between 1945 and 1948 was to use the proposals of the Beveridge Report to take the various limited inter-war "welfare" measures and make them universal. The "Welfare State" which it created provided benefits "from the cradle to the grave" for all its citizens by combating the five “giant evils”- want, disease, ignorance, squalor and idleness.

Labour did try to deliver its manifesto promises despite serious problems from the start. As a result of the war Britain was bankrupt and in no position to embark on a social welfare programme. It has been argued that first efforts should have been to build up and re equip industry before spending money we did not have. Instead the Labour government focused on the creation of a fair society, where help was available to all. Some historians argue that while most countries in Western Europe increased their social spending after 1945, these other countries targeted social spending on their labour force, with the aim of increasing industrial efficiency. In Britain spending was more generous towards the old, the sick and the poor, which had no direct bearing on the economy. Thus Labour could be seen to have dropped the Liberal idea of social reform to increase the country's international competitiveness (National Efficiency).

Most of the party faithful were certainly satisfied with what had been achieved when Labour left office in 1951. For the young, free secondary education became a right for the first time; for the elderly, pensions approximated as never before to the level of a living income altogether over a million houses were built in the six years after the war, and with the establishment of the National Health Service, for the first time free treatment to hospital and general practitioner services were introduced.
However, some people argued that the government did too much for people leading towards 'the nanny state', while others claim that the Beveridge report was not followed closely enough missing a great chance for a better, fairer Britain.

But these critics miss the point. The Beveridge report provided a beacon of hope to a war weary people who wanted a New Britain that would be fairer and worth fighting for, and the Labour reforms did much to provide this. There was to be no return to the 'normalcy' after World War One where the sacrifice of the ordinary man was forgotten and conditions remained as bad as before the war. The living standards of the poor were raised and the people looked forward to a time of increasing opportunity and prosperity. In the 1950's the Conservative Prime Minister Harold Macmillan told the British people they 'had never had it so good'. The prosperity and feel-good factor of the 50's had its roots in the improvements and reforms put into practice by Labour. By 1951 the Labour government had achieved a transformation of British society in a way that improved the lives of millions of people male and female, young and old. For the first time the financial uncertainties of unemployment and serious illness were banished by the welfare state, and a start was made in providing decent housing and education for everyone.

Hostile viewpoints

It is important to remember that there was still much to do in post war Britain. Labour had not ushered in the socialist utopia many had expected. Deprivation and poverty had been reduced but not eliminated. The capitalist system, with all its inequalities continued much as before despite the nationalisation of the 'commanding heights' of the economy. The Welfare state, it was argued was applying a bandage instead of carrying out radical surgery needed to treat the problem. At best, some have said that 'Labour's achievement was more one of modernising, improving and extending an existing structure rather than creating a new one'.

While universal benefits were good for everyone, in theory, the middle classes were better at claiming their rights than the poor. Equality of opportunity favoured the middle classes more than the working class. Grammar school fees were abolished and government spending on Grammar schools raced ahead of expenditure on secondary moderns and junior secondaries. Although the NHS has been seen as the most effective expression of the Labour ideal, it has been said that Bevan made too many compromises in order to meet the demands of the BMA. The NHS did not eliminate private health care. Bevan allowed private patients in 'pay beds' in NHS hospitals.

From another point of view, Labour's contributions can be challenged if we look at the development of the Welfare State over the long term from its origins in the 1870's to 1948. During much of the time Conservative and Liberal governments were in power. Therefore it can be argued that that Labour merely completed the Welfare state developed by others. As a result of the war there was a consensus between the parties and if Labour had not won it is likely that the Conservatives programme would have been similar, so social reform was a discussable subject where Labour did not have to fight too hard to get their Acts through. Again the criticism can be made that the first priority should have been to create an efficient economy to finance a social programme.
Friendly viewpoints

Labour’s social security legislation and the creation of the NHS went a long way to completing the move from 'laissez faire'. By 1948 the five giants of 'want', 'disease', 'idleness', 'ignorance', and 'squalor' were under attack. Labour was attempting to attack the root causes of poverty rather than waiting for the results to show themselves and then help. The state was now providing a 'safety net' which protected people of all classes from 'the cradle to the grave'. When Rowntree investigated conditions in York in 1950, he found that primary poverty had gone down to 2% compared to 36% in 1936.

Allowing for Britain’s poverty as a result of World War Two, linked to her industrial decline in the 1930’s, Labour can be congratulated for passing so much social legislation and founding the basis of the modern Welfare State despite such problems. Although Beveridge produced a far reaching report, it was far from a blueprint of how to tackle poverty. A new Labour government, with no peace time experience of power, had to set up their legislation virtually from scratch.

Apart from a disappointing record on housing, Labour carried out its manifesto promises. By 1951, Britain had a comprehensive system of social security, unified health and education services and full employment. Above all Labour was firmly identified with the Welfare State.

While Atlee’s reforms have been criticised for not being radical enough, they could be seen as being pragmatic. He wanted his government’s reforms to last, and not to be swept away by the next Conservative government. In this he was successful, for the Conservatives largely accepted the Welfare State brought in by Labour.
How successful were the social reforms introduced by the Labour Government 1945-51?

When Labour came to power in 1945 it was clear that poverty still plagued the British public. The main causes of poverty were highlighted in the Beveridge report of 1942 (a document created to show what was required to create a healthy post war nation) In his official report William Beveridge stated that '5 Giants' caused poverty in Britain. These were:

- Want (poverty)
- Disease (bad health)
- Squalor (housing)
- Idleness (unemployment)
- Ignorance (lack of education)

Labour promised the British public that they would tackle the '5 Giants'. However, was the Labour Government 1945-51 successful in dealing with the '5 Giants'?

What do I do first?

What is the first thing you have to do before you can agree or disagree with this statement? You must say what the social problems 1945-51 were. You have plenty of evidence of this, for example, the Beveridge Report. Once you have identified the main causes of poverty from the Beveridge Report, you can go on to consider the policies past by the Labour Government 1945-51 to tackle these issues and how successful they were.

Remember this type of essay asks you to give the positive and negative aspects of the Labour reforms to tackle Beveridge's "5 giants." At the end of each reform covered give your opinion on whether the reforms past were successful or not, or partially successful and back it up with evidence.

Introduction: In your introduction state what the main areas of social reform were. Mention Beveridge's report. What did he pin point as the main causes of poverty? Remember to put the question into your introduction.

Labour won a surprising election victory in 1945 defeating the great Conservative wartime leader Winston Churchill. The British public felt that the Labour party was the party to deliver revolutionary social reforms and to create a better post-war Britain free from poverty. Labour, being the party of the working man, set out to target the main areas were social reform was required. The areas of social reform required in Britain were highlighted in the Beveridge report of 1942 which stated that 5 'giant evils' were the cause of much poverty and misery for so many. These 5 giants were Want (poverty), Disease (bad health), Squalor (housing), Idleness (unemployment) and Ignorance (lack of education). During their time in power from 1945 to 1951,
the Labour party set out on an ambitious course of social reform to tackle these '5 giant evils'. However, how successful were the Labour social reforms 1945-51 in tackling the '5 Giant Evils'.

Historiography

Paragraph 1: A small paragraph with a historiography. Give both sides of the historical debate. State what you are going to do in your essay. Again mention the question here. For various historians' views on the achievement of the Labour government read Wood p 129 and 130.

Historical debate has flourished as to how successful, if at all the post war Labour government’s social reforms were in tackling Beveridge’s 5 giants. On one side of the historical debate there are those historians such as Bruce and Gregg who regard the creation of the welfare state as a great triumph and helped the country greatly by creating the welfare state that we have today, and thought that the Labour party was successful considering the economic restraints they were under in post-war Britain. However, on the there are those historians such as Pat Thane who followed in later decades as the flaws of the welfare state became clear. Also too Robert Pearce believes that the welfare states did not eliminate poverty or alter the nature of British society. These historians hold the view that the Labour reforms 1945-51 were not revolutionary enough and therefore were not successful in tackling Beveridge’s 5 giants. The following essay will unearth whether the social reforms passed by Labour 1945-51 were successful in tackling Beveridge’s giants.

Details of the Five Giants
For each of the five giants Labour had tried to provide a pro active solution to stop poverty before it happened.

Paragraph 2: Here deal with the social reforms passed to tackle Want. State what these reforms involved. Were the reforms successful? State if they were or weren’t. Back it up with evidence. Answer the question being asked.

One of the main problems facing Britain after World War 2 was 'Want'. The poverty of Britain was still as prominent a concern as it had been 50 years earlier when the scale of poverty was unearthed by Booth and Rowntree. Labour wanted to create a society where those who had suffered so much in the war would never have to fear poverty again and eradicate it once and for all. Labour’s first priority after returning to power was to ensure the passage into law of the 1946 National Insurance Act, piloted through the Commons by Welshman James Griffiths. Labour extended the original Liberal 1911 National Insurance Act to cover all adults. The new measure was based on the principle of universality, in place of pre-war selectivity, and brought together for the first time a comprehensive range of benefits to provide insurance against sickness, unemployment and old age. Griffiths presented the reform as the "beginning of the establishment of the principle of a National Minimum Standard".
James Griffiths National Insurance Act was passed in 1946. The act created a compulsory contributory scheme for every worker in return for the weekly contribution from workers, employers and government administered from a new Ministry of National Insurance based in Newcastle, with local offices throughout the country. Sickness and unemployment benefit, old age pensions for women 60 and men 65, widows and orphans pensions and maternity and death grants. This gave all those contributing to the scheme immediate increases to 26 shillings a week in both sickness and unemployment benefits, while extending the period over which such payments were made. Maternity benefits and widows' benefits were also introduced.

Labour also tackled household poverty by passing the Family Allowance Act. The family allowance act was set up in 1945 it gave all families five shillings a week for each child born after the first, up to the age of sixteen. Money was paid to the mothers from the post office; this was to stop fathers frittering the money away. However, although Labour was clearly trying to rid British society of Want pensions were still not enough to live on as they were not in line with inflation. Another weakness with the act was that married women and self employed workers were not included in the scheme. However, the family allowance was a great help to those with large families. Also, sickness benefits could only be claimed after one 156 contributions and unemployment benefit could only be given for a period of between 180 and 492 days.

The government also went further to make sure even those who were not covered by the National Insurance Act got cover with the National Assistance Act 1948. This provided provision for those who could not pay contributions (for example disabled people, the homeless, unmarried mothers) and as a result were not covered by the National Insurance Act. It also aimed to help those such as the elderly who needed supplementary benefits to make a subsistence living. However, the National Assistance Act was 'means tested and many people, especially the elderly were too embarrassed to apply for it. Therefore, it could be argued that the stigma attached to means testing resulted in some benefits not targeting those who required it and not eradicating poverty. Also, the amount paid was often inadequate.

Overall, the 1946 National Insurance Act, and National Assistance Act 1948 although inadequate in the amount paid, were successful as it went further than any previous legislation in tackling the problems highlighted by Seborn Rowntree 50 years earlier of old age, sickness, injury at work and unemployment and prevented people falling into a poverty trap. As the historian Rodney Low says, 'The national insurance act allowed society to become more egalitarian and humane through the involvement of everyone in the programme of mutual insurance which, for the first time in history, freed everyone from the threat of absolute poverty'

Other acts such as the National Insurance Industrial injuries Act, 1946 which provided those injured or disabled at work with compensation paid helped to ease the burden of poverty as did the National Assistance Act 1948.

These policies it was hoped would create 'a national minimum standard' supporting from cradle to grave however they required a certain level of contributions.
However the national insurance act of 1946 did not free everyone from absolute poverty, in fact it did not help the people in absolute poverty at all, due to the minimum contributions. The minimum contributions made the scheme unfit for its purpose as it was the people that were unable to pay the contributions that really needed it most. So two years later the national assistance board was set up in a bid to remedy the major flaw of the national insurance act. However in 1949, 48% of the national assistance was going to pensioners, which simply highlighted that those in the worst poverty were pensioners, so the pension scheme was a major flaw in the well fare state. The family allowance, looked specifically at children. The money given benefited most those of the middle classes as it had the ability to only help with child maintenance costs and could not cover them. Again those family's in the worst poverty must rely on the national assistance board to prevent them slipping into poverty. So the National assistance board was used to prop up other ailing schemes and the fact that, help from the national assistance board was only given after a means test made it far from perfect; When they set up this scheme, should they not have instead looked at pensions and families in poverty instead, of patching up the other ailing schemes with another. The schemes are said to have created the corner stone of social policies, as the Labour government tried to create ‘a national minimum standard’, however the schemes that they used were badly done.

Paragraph 3: Here deal with the social reforms passed to tackle Disease. Tell me about what these reforms involved. What problems did they come across? Were the reforms successful? Tell me if they were or weren’t. Back it up with evidence. Answer the question being asked.

Disease was one of the 5 giants of poverty in post war Britain as people could not afford to pay a Doctor or for the medicine required to cure them. This resulted in large sections of the population putting up with poor health. Labour set out in 1945 to end the problem of disease by creating a National Health Service (NHS). The dream of the NHS was to create universal access – meaning that the NHS was for everyone, comprehensive health care, meeting all demands and treating all medical problems and most importantly it was all to be free. This scheme was revolutionary as it had no limits and needed no insurance. As Labour’s Minister of Health from 1945, Aneurin Bevan drew up plans for a comprehensive health service virtually from scratch. Bevan decided to keep the basis of the old system, in that each general practitioner would have a “panel” of patients, but the payment of the doctors would change. Doctors would be paid a capitation fee for each patient on their panels, but now they would have a small annual salary as well-vital, Bevan thought, for young GPs trying to build up their practices. Members of the public could choose which GP they signed on with, and the doctors too would have a choice. GP’s were not forced to work for the NHS: they could confine themselves to private patients or retain private in addition to NHS patients. Dental and ophthalmic services would also come under the system.

Perhaps Bevan’s most creative decision was that all hospitals should be nationalised. Bevan reasoned that only a unified system of hospitals could hope to produce common standards of health care. As with the GP’s the hospital consultants could not be forced to work in NHS hospitals, and indeed there seemed a danger that they might set up private nursing homes of
their own. To reduce the possibility of this, Bevan agreed that NHS consultants could also treat private patients and that they might do so in “pay beds” in the state’s hospitals.

Bevan’s scheme met tremendously stubborn resistance from the British Medical Association, the professional body of GPs Association with 90% boycotting the ideas of an NHS as there were fears that Bevan would interfere with clinical freedom and that doctors were being transformed into civil servants. GPs voted by large majorities against the minister’s main provisions. The NHS bill became law in November 1946 but the service was not due to come into operation until July 1948, and for a long time it looked likely to be stillborn. Bevan showed a constructive ability to compromise and to assuage the fears of the doctors. In particular he insisted that if, after three years, the GP’s were not satisfied with their payment of capitation fees plus salary, they could be paid by fees alone. Soon the GP’s rejected the implacable opposition of the leaders of the BMA and joined the new service.

There was an immediate demand for free treatment, which highlighted the extent of untreated medical problems in the country. For the British public the promise of free health care at the point of need had come true as every citizen from dustman to Duke was entitled to medical care from GP’s, specialists, dentists, to spectacles and false teeth and to maternity and child welfare services. No longer had the British public to be concerned with hill health. However, such privileges came at a cost.

The enormous expense of the NHS came as a shock. Politicians were not aware that the population was in such bad health which resulted in the NHS being flooded with people. As Bevan said, “I shudder to think of the ceaseless cascade of medicines which is pouring down British throats at the current time.” This resulted in the costs of the NHS rising dramatically. Before the introduction of the National Health Service the cost of prescriptions had been 7 million but within three months this amount had double and continued to rise. It was difficult to provide the full service at first due to lack of facilities. The NHS budget grew from £134 million in 1948 to £228 million in 1949 and £356 million in 1950. This was a huge increase for an economy still recovering from the onslaught of war. Such costs could not be maintained and this resulted in adults being charged for spectacles and dental treatment. Some Labour politicians including Bevan himself, resigned in protest at this breaking of the key principle of ‘free at point of use.’ Overall, Labour did successfully deal with the problem of disease considering the constraints of a post war economy.

Another major problem of the NHS was that there was not enough modern hospitals capable of dealing with the problems of the population. The government inherited many out of date hospitals, costs were high and, to keep doctors happy, the NHS operated alongside private medicine. Also, there was not enough money to update the facilities of old hospitals or build new hospitals. New hospitals were built but this was a slow process and many were not really started until the 1960’s. Therefore, it could be argued that some areas where hospitals may not have been prevalent did not benefit as much as other parts of the country to the ‘universal care’ as it took a long time for the benefits of the NHS to filter through the country. By 1950, the idea the idea of ‘free for all treatment’ was undermined when charges were introduced for spectacles
and dental treatment. Bevan said: ‘The abandonment of a free and comprehensive health service would be a shock to their supporters.’ However this was done at a cost because it back tracked on the key ‘free at the point of use’ principle, it caused major protests, however completely free medical care could never had lasted without the country going in to economic collapse.

The NHS had unexpected levels of demand, as people took full advantage of the service on offer, improving the lives of ordinary people. People in the worst poverty for the first time in their lives were able to cure all there ailments, improving the health of the nation greatly. Although some of the NHS in the early years, was only available in the major cities where hospitals were available and took a long time to filter through the country. The principle of ‘free at the point of contact’ was over ambitious most the start and completely miscalculated. It is not surprising how quickly it collapsed. The Labour government created something that was revolutionary, where as other of the schemes were building on the liberal governments schemes nothing like the NHS had been seen before. . Unlike many of the schemes introduced during this period there were very few problems with the NHS, if it can be a flaw only simply the over ambitiousness of the scheme was one, so it must go down as the greatest achievement of the welfare state. Although there were problems with regard the NHS in cost and the provision of up to date faculties it still provided the British people with free health care which is still available to this day. But overall the NHS was welcomed and did provide medical help ‘from the cradle to the grave’. Therefore this attack on poverty through illness could be considered a success. Overall, Labour did successfully deal with the problem of disease considering the constraints of a post war economy. The national health was the one of the governments outstanding triumphs, admired through out the world. As the historian RC Birch said: ‘The greatest single achievement in the story of the welfare state.’ The National Health Service was inaugurated on 5th July 1948 and it was the finest achievement in social legislation in the history of Britain. The historian Peter Calvocoressi has claimed the NHS Act was “perhaps the most beneficial reform ever enacted in England”.

**Paragraph 4:** Here deal with the social reforms passed to tackle Squalor. Tell me about what these reforms involved. Were the reforms successful? Tell me if they were or weren’t. Back it up with evidence. Answer the question being asked.

Labours election propaganda in the 1945 campaign placed a great emphasise on housing. In the Post-war Britain there was a chronic housing shortage because of the destruction of 700,000 homes in World War Two and the shortages of builders and raw materials. There was also still the problem of slums that were barely cleared in the 1930’s. Bevan’s task was certainly enormous. About half a million houses had been destroyed or made uninhabitable during the war and as many as one third of all houses in Britain were in need of serious repair. Added to this, the immediate post-war years saw an unprecedented number of marriages and births. Never had more people been seeking houses, and never had there been greater competition for building materials that were in acutely short supply. Perhaps a separate Ministry of Housing should have been created. From the very beginning the Governments housing policy was hindered by the lack of building workers and the shortage and high costs of building material. Timber had to be imported from Sweden and America. However, by 1947, the housing programme had to be cut back on Treasury insistence because of the effects of Raw material imports on Britain’s balance of payments.
Labour aimed to help those from the working classes by building well over a million houses for the working class occupants. The burden of tackling the problem fell upon Bevan’s Ministry of Health. Although there was frustration with the initial pace of reform, this was partly due to the priority accorded to establishing a National Health Service.

The government used different methods such as the new towns act 1946 to ease the overcrowding in the older cities and repairing houses damage during the war. However quickly a leading civil servant saw that ‘The ministry of health ought to try and increase the number of houses started and reduce the time lag between authority to go to tender and beginning of construction.’

Many houses were built but Labour could not build as many as many as it promised. By 1951 there was still overcrowding and long waiting lists for council housing. Some new industries moved to the new town areas, but these towns often became places where workers lived while commuting to working the older towns. However, council estates were big improvements on the overcrowded tenements the new tenants had left behind. On the plus side, the houses had separate bedrooms, kitchens and a living room. There was gas and electric power, hot and cold water, indoor toilets in a bathroom and most houses in the 1950’s were two stories high, with a front and back garden. The down side was that the estates were built on the edge of the towns, isolated from work, former friends and entertainment. Overall, the new council estates were a saviour for people living in overcrowded tenements in Scotland’s cities. Not least amongst the advantages was the council’s role as a major landlord, which protected people from the unfair exploitation of the private landlords. In the 1950’s, council rent was a third of that of the private sector.

To achieve this the government continued the coalition policy of putting up temporary ‘pre-fabricated’ homes. This provided 157,000 houses. However, it was far too few to satisfy the country’s needs due to the fact that building supplies and skilled Labour were in short supply. Bevan’s policy was to help those most in need i.e. the working class. People, living in homes that were damaged during the war and needed extensive work done on them could receive help from the treasury. The government launched a huge program of council house building. Most of the scarce building materials were allocated to the local authorities to build council houses, and Bevan limited the numbers of private house building to one private house to every four council houses in order to direct limited resources to those most in need. These houses he insisted that they should be of a high standard., with an average floor space of 1,000 square feet compared with a pre-war average of 800.

However, not enough was done to help those in need as many began to squat in disused army bases out of sheer frustration as Labour never met their promise of building 240,000 houses a year to eradicate the problem of homelessness.

Other more successful attempts to create good quality spacious housing were implemented with the creation of the 1946 New Towns Act to deal with overcrowding in cites. healthy and pleasant places to live which people could move to from the crowded slums of Victorian cities allowing these slums to be demolished. A Town and Country Planning Act (1947) gave local authorities
greater responsibilities and powers to ensure that land was developed in the best interests of the community. The government also gave more protection to tenants in rented property from excessive rent rises.

Progress was slow to meet the ambitious plans. The new towns act planned twelve new towns; its aim was to ease pressure on existing cities such as Glasgow. These new towns were built away from large cities in the countryside providing people with modern housing. These new towns were very effective they were carefully planned and constructed. New communities were to be carefully built with government help and 12 were planned by 1950. This was relatively successful as 14 were created by 1951.

Bevan's task had been a difficult one from the outset, with vast numbers of people seeking houses and constant material shortages for building materials. By 1951 several hundred thousand dwellings had been repaired or converted and 160,000 prefabricated houses had been constructed. Most important of all, just over one million new houses had been built but by October 1951 storages were still chronic, highlighted in a 1952 census showing that there was a shortfall of .75million houses. This was not as many as were needed, and no doubt more could have been built if standards had been lower, but it was a significant achievement none the less.

The achievements of the labour government over their period in office were good. They had to deal with the intensity’s of the financial and physical constraints upon housing and it although there were still major housing problems after there period in office; they did what they could working within the tight constraints. The historian K.O Morgan shares this view ‘The labour government did extremely well as they re-housed millions of people in new or renovated houses, at a time of extreme social and economic dislocation’ However, the Labour government’s record on house building does not compare well with pre-war levels or with the achievements of the Conservatives in the 1950s. Homelessness, poor housing and overcrowding were still serious problems at the end of 1951. Therefore, the Labour party was not overly successful in dealing with the housing shortage facing Britain. Opinion polls showed that housing was the most important single priority for the electorate. Yet, the Labour government was up against meeting their targets from the very beginning by the economic restraints, lack of building workers and the shortage and high costs of building material.

Paragraph 5: Here deal with the social reforms passed to tackle Ignorance. State about what these reforms involved. Were the reforms successful? Tell me if they were or weren’t. Back it up with evidence. Answer the question being asked

The Labour government inherited the Butler Education Act of 1944 from the Coalition Government and had to put it into effect providing compulsory secondary education until 15, school meals, milk and medical services. An initial problem for implementing the Act was the shortage and poor conditions of schools. War damaged schools were re-built and over 900 primaries were built to cater for the ‘baby boom’. By 1950 only about 250 secondary schools were built.
Ellen Wilkinson, the Minister of Education, held the Cabinet to the agreed date of 1st April 1947 for the raising of the school leaving age to 15 by threat of resignation.

On the whole Labour devoted its energies more to the practicalities of providing schools and teachers than to broad educational philosophy. In spite of mounting concern about the costs of reform, increased Treasury funds were still made available for education, notably to update school buildings suffering from war damage and years of neglect. "Prefab" classrooms were hastily built and 928 new primary schools were built between 1945 and 1950. The Emergency Training Scheme, of one rather than the customary two years' duration, turned out an extra 25,000 teachers in 1945-51. The educational system thereby coped with the extra places demanded by the raising of the leaving age.

The 1944 Education Act made secondary education a reality for all. However it retained class divisions in education by preserving the mainly middle-class grammar schools and creating mainly working-class secondary moderns. The new eleven plus exam acted as an intelligence test the most able went on to grammar schools or while the rest went to secondary moderns. Mainly working class children went on to the secondary moderns. This scheme did little to enhance the opportunities of the working class children, most of whom left school at fifteen with few qualifications. Another aspect of education which was again targeted at the brighter pupils was the increase in opportunities in higher education, this was done with a system of grants, which allowed children from less wealthy family's go on to university. The advances in education were stifled by the shortage of school buildings and teachers. Schools had been with some damaged in the war and the dramatically increasing population of children; over 900 new primary schools must be built.

These reforms targeted at the education of children were effective because they set up better pathways into higher education for intelligent children. However the opportunity for the less able, generally working class pupils were separated and not allowed to excel because they were forced in to an inferior education due to the effects of one exam. The eleven plus meant that children of a young age who might not be working to there full perennial were trapped in inferior education. The schemes that were introduced benefited intelligent children but the government did not help those children that were less able, when these were the people that were going to become a burden on the society, if they were not educated. Therefore overall Labour's attempt to tackle ignorance was not successful, as it highlighted the social inequities in society.

There was also concern about the use of exams at an early age to categorise children. All children sat an exam at 11 (called the 11 plus exam), the results of which decided the type of secondary school a child went to. For those who passed the exam the system worked well. They went to senior secondary schools and were expected to stay on at school after 15, go to university or get jobs in management and the professions. However, those children who failed the exam went to a junior secondary and were expected to leave school at 15 and go into unskilled jobs. By failing the 11 plus, thousands of children were trapped in a world of low expectations and inferior education. Many people opposed the idea of deciding a child's future at the age of 11 or 12.
Therefore this attempt to stop a child falling into poverty in later life due to lack of education could be considered mixed, good if you passed the 11+, no better than before if not.

As a result of the baby boom more primary schools had to be built which meant that the number of place at grammar schools were limited and it became a socially divisive method of choosing which school children went to. Education in Britain certainly improved especially when education was made compulsory until the age of 15 but this was not really due to Labour. They just carried on Conservative Policy and didn’t really create any new opportunities. The major problem was the divisive grammar and junior/senior secondary system. Only as it left office did Labour commit itself to the more egalitarian comprehensive system.

Paragraph 6: Here deal with the social reforms passed to tackle Idleness. Tell me about what these reforms involved. Were the reforms successful? Tell me if they were or weren’t. Back it up with evidence. Answer the question being asked.

The Beverage report called upon the government to make sure that there were enough jobs for all those that wanted employment. The government tackled unemployment by nationalising key industries under the control of the government, which gave them a substantial sector of the economy. Profits would be used by the government and in this way Labour believed they could control and manage the economy more effectively and maintain full employment.

The restriction of imports also helped, so British production created a positive upturn for the economy. Any unprofitable industries were subsidised to keep the people in work.

The change in the type of economics from classical (profit based) to Keynesian (full employment based) helped at the time but stored up problems for later.

Nationalisation was expensive and at times led to bad management and the policy of full employment led to inflation and balance of payment problems. However at the time this attempt to combat poverty due to unemployment could be considered a short term success. Labour successfully achieved this with unemployment being about 2.5% by 1946. This was impressive considering the post war economic depression and shortages of goods and materials. Yet with end of the war demobbed service men came home and pushed many women out of jobs that they have been content to continue with. In addition working conditions and wages were mainly unimproved.

The Labour government did as they promised and created jobs for almost all, this was an accomplishment with the post war economy. With this achievement it can be stated that they made successful social reforms in this area.

Dalton the first post-war Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer, claimed that full employment was "the greatest revolution brought about by the Labour Government." Another positive in Labour tackling idleness was the fact that they did it under the serious economic problems of post-war Britain. Therefore, it is clear that Labour 1945-51 dealt effectively with problem of idleness under difficult economic conditions.
Conclusion: In your conclusion give both sides of the argument summarising all the information stated. Then directly answer the question agreeing with the statement, disagreeing with the statement or agreeing to a certain extent (balanced conclusion). It is up to you as long as you can back it up with evidence.

In conclusion it is clear that there were both successes and failures in the social reforms of Labour 1945-51. Labour adopted three principles universalism, comprehensiveness and adequacy meaning that no longer were the government’s services reserved for the poor. Labour were successful in raising the living standards of the poor through the various acts such as the National Insurance Act, Insurance against injury Act and Family allowance. Although perhaps inadequate in the amounts paid, these Acts banished the financial uncertainties of unemployment and serious illness as the people always knew an income was available for a certain period of time. Disease was also tackled successfully as the NHS provided free medical care which is still available to this day. Idleness was also successfully dealt with as the majority of the population was in employment. However, there were faults with regard dealing with squalor as not as many houses were built as had been promised leading to people being homeless. Also, ignorance was never dealt with effectively as what was created was a two tier education system where those who passed their 11 plus prospered and where those who failed were trapped in a world of low expectations and inferior education. Nonetheless, overall it has to be said that the Labour Reforms 1945-51 were successful as they were implemented in a time of economic uncertainty and gave many a better standard of living than they had ever had before.