2006

Winston Churchill and Social Reform

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WINSTON CHURCHILL AND SOCIAL REFORM

by

Patrick Winston Kelso

A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

Oxford
May 2006

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Fred Laurenzo for volunteering his time and providing me guidance throughout this process. I am truly grateful for everything.
ABSTRACT

PATRICK WINSTON KELSO: Winston Churchill and Social Reform
(Under the direction of Frederick Laurenzo)

The purpose of this Senior Honors Thesis is to examine the role of Winston Churchill in regards to social reform in Twentieth Century Britain. Although many books have been written on Churchill’s life, few specifically speak to his role in domestic politics. Often times Churchill’s role as Prime Minister during World War II overshadows his lengthy parliamentary career. This study will attempt to explain the role Winston Churchill played in domestic politics in respect to social reform and the rise of the British welfare state. Biographies, academic journal articles, books, memoirs, speeches, archival material, as well as books by the subject have been used to gather information to provide a thorough investigation of the subject matter.

During his career Churchill held many key positions within the British government. Both his actions and inactions help to explain where he stood in terms of social reform and his views on the role of government within society. This thesis covers three periods of Winston’s Churchill’s life tracing his involvement in social reform throughout his political career. His father’s political ideology, the political climate of the day, and the ever-changing industrial society are some of the major issues which affected Churchill’s domestic politics. This thesis seeks to explain the rationale behind a man who spent his early years as a Liberal reformer and his latter years as a Conservative statesman. This work also seeks to examine
the motivation and evaluate the genuineness of Churchill’s work in respect to social reform suggesting that although sometimes convenient for political purposes his interest in this sphere was real and contributory to the British society.
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Introduction

The public perception of Winston Churchill’s political career is often dominated by his role as Prime Minister during World War II. His political career, however, spanned the period from his election to Parliament in 1900 to his resignation in 1964 during which he held numerous positions and wielded considerable influence upon British domestic politics. The emergence of the British welfare state coincides with his own progress in the political realm where he served as a key player in social reform alongside Herbert Asquith and David Lloyd George during a time often referred to as his “radical phase.” Contrary to common belief, Churchill changed very little from his early political stance on social issues but adapted to the ever-changing historical context which saw him become the leader of the Conservative Party. The inexhaustible body of work chronicling Churchill’s life gives enormous insight to the man; yet both the volume of information and his complexity also make it difficult to make a concrete assessment of his place in British politics. As Paul Addison explains, Winston Churchill was “a politician who traveled all the way from the left wing of the Liberal party to the right wing of the Conservatives, to become in the end a symbol and embodiment of national unity.”

Winston Churchill first entered Parliament in 1900 as a member of the Tory Party following an early career in the military. After serving four years as a backbencher Churchill

\[1\] Paul Addison, “The Three Careers of Winston Churchill,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 11, 185. Churchill’s role in domestic politics, most specifically concerning social reform, is a topic few have focused on as much as Addison. This study therefore will often cite his work in regards to this issue.
crossed the floor joining the Liberal party over the issue of free trade. This early switch in party affiliation would symbolize Churchill’s independence in party politics, often considering himself to be above the party fray. As a Liberal MP he attacked the Conservatives and the House of Lords with his biting rhetoric seen by many as an assault on the upper class. The Liberal majority enabled Churchill during this “radical phase,” to serve in several capacities under which he advocated measures of social reform. At the Board of Trade Churchill pushed for unemployment insurance, land reform, and a minimum wage. In 1909 he embarked upon a campaign defending the failed 1909 Budget in which he lauded its reforms and castigated the House of Lords in speeches given throughout Britain. As Home Secretary Churchill addressed the penal system aiming to rectify the inequalities in sentencing with respect to class.

With his appointment to the Admiralty in 1911 many argue Winston Churchill abandoned his radical tendencies and inclinations towards social reform. Beginning with the post at the Admiralty and continuing into World War I it is obvious that social reform took a backseat to wartime concerns for Churchill. By the wars end anti-socialist concepts and warnings became his platform. In 1924 Churchill returned to the Conservative party where he would remain the rest of his political career. In the Baldwin Government he served as Chancellor of the Exchequer in which, despite his party constraints, was able to pass the Widows, Orphans, and Old Age Pensions Bill expanding social insurance. As leader of the coalition government during World War II Churchill faced wartime concerns and domestic politics. More often than not the war took precedence over social concerns in Churchill’s mind. The 1942 Beveridge Report forced Churchill to announce his “Four Year Plan” which was never enacted due to the Labour victory in 1945. With his second administration in
1951 Churchill presided over a new welfare state, courtesy of the post-war Labour party, which bridged his liberal past with the future direction of Britain.

This abridged resume of Winston Churchill’s political career hardly scratches the surface in exploring the man and his philosophy concerning the role of government in society. On the surface, the political career of Winston Churchill appears to be filled with ideological contradictions, opportunistic moves, and personal ambition. Yet beyond this public front exists a man who considered himself consistent during a time of great political change. Churchill’s initial switch to the Liberal party in 1905 and his later return to the Conservative party in 1924 cloud his political ideology and evoke the question whether Churchill himself changed or the political context in Britain changed. Beneath the surface of this ideological consistency question lie the speeches and legislative legwork of the emerging British welfare state that he was a part of.

The sincerity of Churchill’s concern for those targeted in Liberal reforms comes to question. Bentley Gilbert distinguishes differences in “social politics” and “social policy” with the first being a breakdown in agreement upon social policy and the latter being “attitudes so well understood by the effective governing class that they scarcely need discussion.” Was Churchill playing social politics or truly involved in genuine social policy? The answer to this question is not straightforward but is apparent within his writing. The issue in which young Churchill chose to express so fearlessly during his liberal phase was that of responsible government and rights of the British people to not be left helpless by their government. The concept of Churchill as a statesman plays upon his call for social reform while his role as politician hints at mitigating problems concerning the poor rather

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than overhauling the system in place. The cause of poverty and the ways in which
government could stop it served as the concern of the liberal Churchill. Possibly naïve in his
early years, this liberal phase shows an untainted and idealistic view of government. It can
be argued that Churchill later became aware of the political game and had to abandon his
idealism for party loyalty and constraint. Nevertheless, this time of Liberalism fosters
rhetoric condemning the House of Lords as a legislative body while pushing democratic
concepts that leave no social problem outside the realm of the government budget. It is with
Churchill’s switch back to the Conservative party and his apparent abandonment of liberal
ideas that brings one to question his reasons for involvement within social welfare and
whether or not his philosophy changes.

The background of Winston Churchill provides several reasons for him to favor social
reform. At first glance it seems rather odd for someone to show an active concern for the
poor’s welfare when they were born in Blenheim Palace. It is agreed upon by many that his
nanny, Ms. Anne Everest, had a profound effect upon his concern for the elderly and the
poor. After she was fired from Blenheim Palace when young Winston was a boy, he became
outraged and felt a personal responsibility to financially support his surrogate mother in her
old age. Henry George’s Progress and Poverty and Seebolm Rowntree’s Poverty: A Study
of Town Life are also thought to have shaped his mind early on in terms of government
responsibility in alleviating poverty. Not being a product of public schools or Oxbridge,
Winston Churchill seemed to sit in limbo between the upper class and the working class.

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3 Blenheim Palace is the gift home of Winston Churchill’s ancestor, the 1st Duke of
Marlborough, for his military triumph over the French.
4 Paul Addison, ‘Churchill and Social Reform’ in Robert Blake and W.R. Louis (eds.),
Churchill, 77.
5 Malcolm Hill, Churchill: His Radical Decade, 54,72.
Although he never could identify with the working class, it is possible that this transitory state allowed him to foster obligation or at least inclination to help his fellow Britons.

A study of Churchill’s personality also sheds insight into the political role in which he played. Roy Jenkins contends that Churchill was instinctively for the underdog especially when he could remain a top dog.  

Churchill operated in broad terms in both his rhetoric and action never reducing himself to trivial or minute details. He often times spotted an opportunity and seized it as his own devoting his entire energy upon this one specific topic. Lloyd George once remarked that “… Winston is like a torpedo. The first you hear of his doings is when you hear the swish of the torpedo dashing through the water.” He operated on his own intuition and on his own terms. Other than his tenure during World War II, the personality of Winston Churchill created distrust between people of all parties. Churchill’s concept of “Tory Democracy,” embodied in his mind by his father, elevated him in his eyes above party lines to focus on the concerns of the nation as a whole. These ever-changing concerns cloud the man and his legacy, yet leave ample evidence behind to suggest a certain degree of the ideological consistency in which he claimed to possess.

Winston Churchill played an integral role in building the foundation of the British welfare state. During a half-century’s service he sat in seats of great power shaping the future of British society. Both his personality and the political context of the day must be understood to give any picture of a man beyond the archetypal wartime figure embedded in people’s minds. Only then may his true impact on the domestic side be seen.

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Chapter I

"Early Years and the Liberal Phase"

Winston Churchill first came to Parliament in 1900 as a member of the Tory party with a military background including most recently active service during the Boer War where he also gained a reputation as a war correspondent. He possessed noble and Tory roots as the son of the late Lord Randolph Churchill, second son of the Duke of Marlborough, and a former Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Tory party. Churchill campaigned for the Parliamentary seat in Oldham during the Khaki Election of 1900 as a pro-war Tory who saw the Boer War as both "just and necessary." Fresh from South Africa, the young Churchill had become a young star within the Conservative Party which used him to rouse votes for their cause. His first address to the House of Commons was a prepared response to David Lloyd George's speech concerning the Boer War. In his remarks Churchill stated, "...and if I were a Boer, I hope I should be fighting in the field...." This thought did not go over well with the Colonial Secretary, Joseph Chamberlain, yet Churchill himself believed this gained the favor of the Liberal Lloyd George. Most of his speeches from the Conservative bench centered on South Africa, but they were oddly non-partisan in that they defended the government by using arguments that appealed to the Opposition. In many respects he played to both crowds, possibly as an intentional move to avoid making enemies within Parliament on either side. Churchill claimed during his first years in the House of Commons

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1 Winston S. Churchill, My Early Life, 358.
2 Ibid., 365-366.
3 Ibid., 367.
that he had the privilege of meeting with Conservative leaders but felt that men such as
Rosebery, Asquith, Grey, and especially John Morley were more like-minded with him. In
his book *My Early Life* published in 1930, Churchill addresses this topic stating that:

> I became anxious to make the Conservative party follow Liberal courses. I was in
revolt against ‘jingoism.’ I had a sentimental view about the Boers. I found myself
differing from both parties in various ways, and I was so untutored as to suppose that
all I had to do was to think out what was right and express it fearlessly. I thought that
loyalty in this outweighed all other loyalties. I did not understand the importance of
party discipline and unity, and the sacrifices of opinion which may lawfully be made
in their cause.^[4]

The restrictions which party unity demanded did not sit well with Churchill’s personality.
Throughout his life he possessed enormous ambition and a belief in personal destiny which
was not defined by simple party lines. In accordance with this characteristic Churchill, along
with Lord Percy, Lord Hugh Cecil, Ian Malcolm, and Arthur Stanley formed a Parliamentary
dinner group named after Lord Hugh Cecil called “The Hooligans” who invited guests and
discussed the group’s brand of politics unrestricted by party divisions.^[5] This progressive
environment allowed Churchill to discuss opinions with colleagues and sharpen his political
views. One such guest of “The Hooligans” in the spring of 1902 was Joseph Chamberlain
who insinuated to the group that party members should always support their party and in
leaving hinted that knowledge of tariffs would be beneficial to them in the near future.^[6]

> The issue of protectionism in the form of tariffs indeed became the new parliamentary
issue as Chamberlain had predicted due to his own action, and it served as a pivotal issue
dividing Churchill and the Conservative Party until 1904 when he left the party. Since the
repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 the concept of free trade had been the fundamental doctrine

of the British economy. Free trade allowed food to be imported from across the world at a low price to feed the British people. However, as competition in manufacturing increased from other nations the concept of protectionism began to gain support throughout the latter part of the 19th century. Lord Randolph as Chancellor of the Exchequer had briefly toyed with protectionism before reverting to the doctrine of free trade. In 1903 Chamberlain proposed tariffs to provide new revenue and promote unity within the British Empire and its colonies. Churchill opposed this tariff reform as soon as it went public by announcing that:

The old Conservative Party, which contained many protectionists with its religious convictions and constitutional principles will disappear and a new party will arise rigid, materialistic and secular, whose opinions will turn on tariffs and who will cause the lobbies to be crowded with the touts of protected industries.

Sir Francis Mowatt from the Treasury helped brief Churchill on the concepts of free trade. Along with sixty other conservative MPs, including Lord Hugh Cecil, Churchill became a “Free Foorder,” meaning a Tory who supported free trade after the repeal of the Corn Laws. His speeches during this time alluded to the 19th Century free trade leader Richard Cobden and the accomplishments free trade had produced for the country.

The reasons behind Churchill’s backing of this cause are perhaps a mixture of his own liberal inclinations and the influence of his father’s political ideology. In an 1897 letter to his mother while stationed in India Churchill wrote,

I am a Liberal in all but name. My views excite the pious horror of the Mess. Were it not for Home Rule – to which I will never consent – I would enter Parliament as a Liberal. As it is – Tory Democracy will have to be the standard under which I

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8 Ibid., 33.
9 *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, 22 June, 1903.

This "Tory Democracy," which Churchill claimed, was a concept of his father's that Lord Randolph had developed during his own parliamentary career. Lord Randolph Churchill explained his concept of "Tory Democracy" in a paradoxical fashion as both "a democracy which supports the Tory party' and a government inspired 'by lofty and by liberal ideas."\footnote{Roland Quinault, "Churchill and Democracy," \textit{Transactions of the Royal Historical Society} 11, 202.} Paul Addison explains that the concept "was a resonant phrase, suggestive of a long-term strategy, but defined by Lord Randolph in so many different ways, for so many different tactical purposes, as to empty it of all meaning beyond the need for daring and unashamed opportunism."\footnote{Paul Addison, \textit{Churchill: The Unexpected Hero}, 21.}

In his first failed attempt at seeking a seat for Oldham only 2 years after his father's death, Churchill campaigned declaring:

I regard the improvement of the condition of the British people as the main end of modern government. I shall therefore promote to the best of my ability all legislation which, without impairing that tremendous energy of production on which the wealth of the nation and the good of the people depend, may yet raise the standard comfort and happiness in English homes.\footnote{Paul Addison, \textit{Churchill on the Home Front} 1900-1955, 11.}

Churchill not only held deep admiration for his father but also set out to defend his father's career from his political critics. In March of 1901 the Conservative Secretary for War, St John Brodrick, announced plans to increase the standing army by 50 per cent and thereby greatly increasing the cost of maintaining this army. Though seemingly a strange move for a person with a military background, Churchill opposed this idea stating in a note to the Liberal Sir William Harcourt that "I hate and abominate all this expenditure [sic] on
military armament.”\textsuperscript{15} It had been his father’s attempts to cut military spending that had led to his resignation in 1886.\textsuperscript{16} This move by the Conservative government prompted Churchill to ally with the Liberals where he gave a speech in May 1901 lambasting the proposals and criticizing the concept of militarism declaring, “The Wars of peoples will be more terrible than the wars of kings.”\textsuperscript{17}

Opposing the Conservative Party’s plan for military expansion did not settle well within the Tory circle; yet it would be the issue free trade which brought Churchill’s early Conservative career to its demise. Churchill saw the abandonment of free trade as an abandonment of bedrock Tory policy. He held that he was upholding the principle of free trade and following in the footsteps of his father, whose biography he had begun writing at the time.\textsuperscript{18} Churchill had begun a balancing act between the Conservatives and Liberals which had been noticed by both sides of the leadership following Chamberlain’s May 1903 introduction of “tariff reform.” Later in August of the same year Chamberlain, in a letter to Churchill, stated that there was “not much room … for a dissident Tory in politics, but Heaven knows that the other side stands most in need [of] new talent, and I expect you will drift there before long.”\textsuperscript{19} After being barred from the “Conservative Club of North Chadderford Churchill responded in the Manchester Guardian: “I am an English Liberal. I hate the Tory party, their men, their words and their methods.”\textsuperscript{20} It is historian Malcolm Hill’s contention that Free Trade brought Churchill to the Liberal Party; yet once switching he embraced their land taxation and other policies under the idea that “free trade and taxation

\textsuperscript{15} Paul Addison, \textit{Churchill: The Unexpected Hero}, 30.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 30.
\textsuperscript{18} Paul Addison, \textit{Churchill: The Unexpected Hero}, 34.
\textsuperscript{20} Malcolm Hill, \textit{Churchill: His Radical Decade}, 15.
are necessary for people to hold politicians within democratic disciplines."\textsuperscript{21} Charles Trevelyan, a Liberal MP, wrote to Churchill on December 31, 1903, asking if he would join his cause in pushing a bill concerning land value taxation to relieve local taxation. Churchill responded with interest and hinted that Trevelyan might have to give him lessons on the topic.\textsuperscript{22} He also checked out Henry George’s \textit{Progress and Poverty}, which advocated land taxation on the premise that the community creates the value of land and not the landowner.\textsuperscript{23}

In January 1904 the Conservative Party censured Churchill for “scurrilous statements against His Majesty Edward VII” no doubt as a result of his stray from the party fold. He retorted that: “This appears to me to be utter nonsense; and I challenge the members of your committee to produce the slightest shadow of foundation in any speech of mine for such a ridiculous and abominable charge.”\textsuperscript{24} The groundwork was set for Churchill’s break from the Tories. On May 31\textsuperscript{st} 1904, the young MP walked into the House of Commons, paused at the Bar, then sat next to Lloyd George on the liberal benches in the corner seat below the Opposition gangway where his father had insulted Gladstone. Churchill did this twice within the same day in a deliberate and noticeable fashion.\textsuperscript{25}

The explanation for Churchill’s surprising switch in parties is rooted within his past and his personality. The aforementioned notion that Churchill was the heir of his father’s politics made the party switch all the more easier. Similar to his father he was a Tory of radical sympathies treated unkindly by his own party’s leadership. Churchill displayed “ambivalence” in his attitude towards party politics from the start of his political career thus

\textsuperscript{21} Malcolm Hill, \textit{Churchill: His Radical Decade}, 26,30.  
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 34.  
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 30-31.  
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 18.  
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 20.
aiding him in making such a move as this. Paul Addison holds that egotism was the true
creed of Churchill, as he was known to voice an opinion on almost every issue. He would
never think of consulting the party seeing that party politics put a constraint on great
statesmen. His ideal political setup as explained to Lord Rosebery in 1902 was a
“Government of the Middle … free at once from the sordid selfishness and callousness of
Toryism on the one hand, and the blind appetites of the Radical masses on the other”. His
switch to the Liberal Party made Conservatives think of him as an opportunist while making
Liberals wary of his class and military background. Keith Robbins contends that his switch
appears to be primarily over the issue of free trade while Churchill also recognized there was
no possibility for rapid advancement under Balfour while the Conservatives were losing their
control of the government. During a speech given in June of 1904 at Alexandra Palace,
Churchill addressed his party change and ideological consistency. He stated that:

Men change, manners change, customs change, Governments and Prime Ministers
change, even Colonial Secretaries (Chamberlain) – sometimes they change their
offices, sometimes they change their opinions. But principles do not change.
Whatever was scientifically true in the economic propositions which were established
sixty years ago in a far greater generation than our own is just as true in 1904 as it
was in 1846, and it will still be true so long as men remain trading animals on the
habitable globe.

His father’s concept of “Tory Democracy” also helped Churchill justify this change
of allegiance during his early years in Parliament. Churchill wrote after his father’s death in
1895: “All my dreams of companionship, of entering Parliament at his side and in his
support, were ended. There remained for me only to pursue his aims and vindicate his

26 Paul Addison, “The Three Careers of Winston Churchill,” Transactions of the Royal
Historical Society 11, 188.
27 Keith Robbins, Churchill, 33.
28 Malcolm Hill, Churchill: His Radical Decade, 22.
Pressing ahead with the writing of his father's biography, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, helped Churchill put the criticism of both his father and himself behind him. The work emphasized his father's discovery of this "Tory Democracy" and its ability to rest British politics on political divisions rather than social. Victor Feske holds that, "[Lord Randolph's] blazing of a path to the frontier legitimized his son's later crossing over." Churchill claimed that Tories had been corrupted by the "irretrievable catastrophe" his father sought to prevent. He could therefore assert "Tory Democracy" under the popular cause of Liberalism as he concluded in *Lord Randolph Churchill* by appealing to an England that was beyond party itself, a common theme he would play up throughout his political life. Tory democracy had impressed Churchill with two concepts on social policy. First, social reform was essential for Britain to maintain its overseas power. Churchill himself stated that, "to keep our Empire we must have a free people and an educated and well-fed people. That is why we are in favour of social reform." This attitude, known as "social imperialism, was prevalent in the late 19th and early 20th centuries." Secondly, Churchill saw that the only way to secure the workingman's vote for the party was to protect his interests. Violence had been the manner in which the workingman stressed his economic dissatisfaction prior to the turn of the century where financial assistance was given out of fear. After 1885 the workingman was given the vote and this new more literate electorate caught the eye of the

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30 Keith Robbins, *Churchill*, 34.
31 Victor Feske, *From Belloc to Churchill*, 192.
32 Keith Robbins, *Churchill*, 35.
34 Ibid., 10.
A good economic period around the turn of the century temporarily halted unemployment problems. Yet by 1903, unemployment began to increase and by 1905 trade-union unemployment was at a ten-year high. A problem existed and the party to rectify this situation would capitalize politically in a big way.

Now on board with the Liberal Party, Winston Churchill set out to become a player in British politics combining concepts of “Tory Democracy” with his newfound Liberalism. Lucy Masterman, daughter of the Liberal politician and journalist C.F.G. Masterman, is quoted as saying that Churchill “‘was full of the poor whom he had just discovered. He thinks he is called by providence – to do something for them.’” The idea of liberalism and the causes that it embraced became of great interest to Churchill. However, at this early stage, the young parliamentarian did not completely understand all tenets of liberalism. Malcolm Hill believes that Churchill did not subscribe fully to the thinking of the liberal statesman and his friend, John Morley, at this time. Morley felt that if poverty were reformed, mitigation or minor relief measures were unnecessary. Churchill recognized the distinction between the two but saw nothing wrong in mitigation measures coupled with fundamental reform. Morley gave Churchill a copy of Seebolm Rowntree’s *Poverty: A Case Study of Town Life* in 1901, which introduced him to the problems of poverty and increased his awareness of those problems in Britain itself. Churchill wrote an unpublished review of Rowntree’s study in York intended for an army periodical which stated that, “… strange as it

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36 Ibid., 847.
38 Ibid., 72.
may seem, eccentric, almost incredible to write – our Imperial reputation is actually involved in their condition.”

On December 4, 1905, Balfour and the Conservative government resigned without a defeat in the Commons hoping to let the Liberals lose the trust of the people and thereby regaining power in the long run. Churchill turned down the position of Financial Secretary at the Treasury in Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman’s new government preferring instead to be Under-Secretary for the Colonies. Lord Elgin sat in the Lords as Secretary of State for the Colonies allowing Churchill to lead in the Commons. This position was very advantageous for him due to the issue of South Africa dominating current political debate and his personal involvement and knowledge of the situation. In this post Churchill was also responsive to collectivism and the “new liberalism” on social reform. The politically active and socialist couple Beatrice and Sydney Webb began to influence his thoughts and rhetoric during this time. Borrowing phrases from the two, Churchill made speeches demanding a “national minimum’ standard of life and labour. While giving a speech in Glasgow as Under-Secretary for the Colonies in October of 1906 he stepped outside the realm of his position. After a brief piece on South Africa, Churchill launched into the “New Liberalism’s” points of state responsibility for the sick, the elderly, and children. He warned that a Labour Party would split progressives only helping the Tory Party in the end. He also advocated a poverty line under which no one should be allowed to live. This type of speech was designed to express Churchill’s genuineness in his switch to the Liberal Party and stress that he was not

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40 Malcolm Hill, Churchill: His Radical Decade, 24.
restricted to strictly colonial matters. Paul Addison credits Churchill’s conversion to collectivism and social reform to his change of party and the direction of radical friends and influences. The old Liberals pushed *laissez-faire* where the New Liberals favored state intervention as their doctrine. Of these radical friends and influences, C.P. Scott (editor of the Manchester Guardian), H. W. Massingham (editor of the Nation), Beatrice and Sydney Webb, and Charles Masterman all wielded considerable influence in shaping Churchill’s liberal ideas. It was the Webbs who had invited the young Winston Churchill to dine at 41 Grosvenor Road where they drew his preoccupation with imperial issues to the political importance of social legislation.

Churchill’s personality also aided him in his ascendancy in British politics during this time period. His youthful attitude and capacity to speedily take in new information enabled him as a successful writer and educated politician. He schooled himself in the topics of the day becoming familiar with all available material on his subject of interest. Concerning the psychology of the man, British psychiatrist Anthony Storr felt Churchill’s character matched Jung’s description of the “extraverted intuitive” psychological type. This type describes a person who is “never to be found among the generally recognized reality values, but is always present where possibilities exist.” Lucy Masterman noted in her father’s biography that, Churchill’s “cabinet colleagues, Grey and Birrell, feared that ‘the tendency in him to see first the rhetorical potentialities of any policy was growing and becoming a real

46 Ibid., 187.
intellectual and moral danger."\textsuperscript{47} The ambitious Churchill took British politics head on with his newly-found party and the platform which it provided.

The general election of 1906 presented a unique opportunity for Churchill to further embrace Liberalism. He moved from Oldham to Manchester North-West as a Liberal candidate where free trade was ever so popular. His Tory opponent distributed a pamphlet listing his public remarks previously as a Tory hoping to play up Churchill’s apparently conflicting past. Churchill, in dramatic fashion, threw the pamphlet on the ground at a rally denouncing his old cause and igniting the crowd in his favor.\textsuperscript{48} His platform during the 1906 general election for Manchester was: free trade, religious equality, public control of education, reduction of expense on armaments, the taxation of land values, trade union law reform, and licensing reform.\textsuperscript{49} The election provided the Liberal Party with 377 seats, Unionists 157, Irish Nationalists got 83, and Labour got 53. Balfour lost his seat by 2000 votes in Manchester North-East to one of the 300 new MPs, but he soon afterwards filled a vacated seat intended for him.\textsuperscript{50} Churchill continued as Under-Secretary for the Colonies under Campbell-Bannerman’s newly elected government which, due to their secure majority, expected to push their legislative program through the Commons.

The legislative program of the Liberal Party met opposition from the Conservative House of Lords during 1906. An education bill pushing for public control of elementary schools with public funding, a plural voting bill that would eliminate multiple votes, an aliens bill that sought control of foreign labor during stressful economic times, Agricultural

\textsuperscript{47} Paul Addison, "The Three Careers of Winston Churchill," 187.
\textsuperscript{48} Malcolm Hill, Churchill: His Radical Decade, 40.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., 40-41.
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 42.
Holdings, and the Town Tenants Act for Ireland were all rejected by the higher chamber.\textsuperscript{51} Churchill and the other members of the Liberal Party became enraged that the House of Lords would thwart what they saw as the will of the people. Churchill stated in 1906 that:

\begin{quote}
Mr. Balfour is no longer Prime Minister of this country. He sits in Opposition, in a lonely, solitary place on the left behind the Speaker’s chair. But he has power. He has power to write a note … and give it to a messenger and send it 200 yards down the corridor to the House of Lords. And by writing that note, he can mutilate or reject or pass into law any clause or any bill which the House of Commons may have spent several weeks discussing …\textsuperscript{52}
\end{quote}

Churchill was made a Privy Councilor in May of 1907 and a year later named to the cabinet as President of the Board of Trade due to reshuffling after the death of Campbell-Bannerman. Churchill wanted to remain Under-Secretary for the Colonies but was instead considered for the Admiralty and then the Local Government Board. When offered the Local Government Board he responded saying, “I refuse to be shut up in a soup kitchen with Mrs. Sidney Webb.” Consequently he took over Lloyd George’s former post at the Board of Trade.\textsuperscript{53}

The by-election, required when an appointment to the cabinet takes place, saw Churchill defeated by 429 votes in Manchester North-West. H.G. Wells would brand his victorious opponent, Joynson-Hicks, after the election as “‘an entirely undistinguished man … an obscure and ineffectual nobody.’”\textsuperscript{54} Churchill’s liberalism had gone too far for his constituents in Manchester North-West. After this loss he was offered a more liberal-leaning seat in Dundee, which he easily won on May 9, 1908.\textsuperscript{55}

Many of the ministers saw Churchill as he came to the helm of the Board of Trade as overly ambitious and a young “Napoleon.” He undoubtedly wanted to ascend in power yet

\textsuperscript{53} Malcolm Hill, \textit{Churchill: His Radical Decade}, 57.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 61.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 62.
was careful to be efficient in his work and not to irritate his superiors.\textsuperscript{56} It is debatable whether his strategy was calculated or more of an instinctive action performed by Churchill. The debate over Churchill’s genuineness as a social reformer at the Board of Trade does little to change the fact that his actions produced positive results in tackling unemployment. Alluding to his accomplishments at the Board of Trade, William Beveridge would later claim that “unemployment [reform] was the handiwork of Churchill.”\textsuperscript{57} Bentley Gilbert contends that although the Webbs introduced Churchill to the principles of social reform during their two-year courtship, his ascendancy to the Board of Trade marked the end of their influence. Churchill, with the help of Charles Masterman, Undersecretary at the Local Government Board, and John Burns, the President of the Local Government Board, ushered in a new phase of Liberal reform where unemployment insurance would serve as the cornerstone.\textsuperscript{58}

By the spring of 1908 the Liberal Party needed a new program to regain their weakening momentum. Issues such as Old-age pensions and school feeding programs had been discussed in the past and were advocated by reformers in all parties, yet the continuing issue of idle workmen stricken with unemployment still proved to be a problem within Britain.\textsuperscript{59} In March of 1908 Churchill wrote in \textit{The Nation} that social reform was “the untrodden field of politics.” The idea of treating problems concerning the poor and unemployed using a scientific approach stemmed from the Webb’s influence and became part of his cause.\textsuperscript{60} He wrote in his article:

\ldots attempts to grapple with the evils of unemployment must be concerted between all departments. Youth must be educated and disciplined and trained from 14 to 18. The

\textsuperscript{56} Keith Robbins, \textit{Churchill}, 40.
\textsuperscript{57} Bentley Gilbert, “Winston Churchill versus the Webbs,” 850.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 850.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 851.
\textsuperscript{60} Keith Robbins, \textit{Churchill}, 42.
exploitation of Boy Labour must be absolutely stopped. The Army must be made to afford a life-long career of State Employment ... Means must be found by which the State can, within certain limits, and for short periods, augment the demand for the ordinary market for unskilled labour so far as to counterbalance the oscillations of world-trade. Underneath, but not in substitution for, the immense disjointed fabric of social safeguards and insurance which has grown up by itself in England, there must be – at a low level – a sort of Germanized network of state intervention and regulation.\textsuperscript{61}

His common sense view drove his reform ideas favoring action over mere abstract discussion of the topic. He also convinced himself that leveling was needed but not necessarily full equality.\textsuperscript{62} Churchill sought a more practical approach to alleviating the unemployment problem than had been used in the past. Since the riots of 1886 it had been the practice to employ idle hands in public parks, roads, and forests to aid unemployment. The Unemployed Workmen Act of 1905 was passed by the Balfour government in response to growing unemployment numbers and allowed temporary public works programs to employ those unemployed. This act initiated artificial work by the government to control the unemployment problem during harsh economic times. This approach did not prove very effective in solving the unemployment problem within Britain. William Beveridge would later note in his study \textit{Unemployment: A Problem of Industry} (1909) that artificial work was doomed to fail due to the real problem being underemployment and not unemployment.\textsuperscript{63} This concept explains that it was not a case of many workers suddenly losing their jobs but that many workers found the period between jobs longer and their standard of living falling below the subsistence level.

\textsuperscript{61} Bentley Gilbert, "Winston Churchill versus the Webbs," 851.
\textsuperscript{62} Keith Robbins, \textit{Churchill}, 42.
\textsuperscript{63} Bentley Gilbert, "Winston Churchill versus the Webbs," 848.
The idea of unemployment insurance departed from this artificial work concept and proved much more effective for those in need. Bentley Gilbert maintains that it is unimportant whether Churchill or Lloyd George had the first idea of unemployment insurance, the responsibility for the scheme was all Churchill's. Contrary to others, Gilbert claims that Churchill was the "sole active representative of social reform in the cabinet" while Lloyd George battled over the 1909 Budget and the Lords veto. The Board of Trade began planning ideas for unemployment insurance without official cabinet sanction in the fall of 1908. A committee was established after unemployment rose on October 14, 1908. The Trades Union Congress study of Germany found the German insurance of workmen had no ill effects on their trade unions. After trade-union unemployment jumped in September to the highest rate since 1886 (9.8%) and 46 people in London starved during the previous winter, Churchill saw the need to take action. He wrote to Herbert Asquith stating:

The need is urgent and the moment ripe. Germany with a harder climate and far less accumulated wealth, has managed to establish tolerant basic conditions for her people. We are organized for nothing except party politics. The Minister who will apply to this country successful experiences of Germany in Social Organization may or may not be supported at the polls, but he will at least have left a memorial which time will not deface of his administration. It is not impossible to underpin the existing voluntary agencies by a comprehensive system – necessarily at a lower level – of state action. We have at least two years. We have the miseries which this winter is inflicting on the poor classes to back us.

At the Board of Trade Churchill sponsored unemployment insurance, labour exchanges, and statutory minimum wages in the 'sweated trades.' Although not original ideas, he provided the muscle to push such legislation while advocating their necessity to the

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64 Bentley Gilbert, "Winston Churchill versus the Webbs," 852.
65 Ibid., 853.
66 Ibid., 853.
67 Ibid., 854.
It was Churchill who called for legislation prior to the 1909 report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Law and convinced Asquith and the Cabinet to go along. He was the first to introduce unemployment insurance into parliament and it would later be implemented with the National Insurance Act of 1911. Churchill saw these reform measures as alternatives to Socialism. They were to prevent extreme poverty for specific groups not necessarily for all. He claimed during his by-election campaign in May 1908 that, “Socialism seeks to pull down wealth, Liberalism seeks to raise up poverty ... Socialism would kill enterprise; Liberalism would rescue enterprise from the trammels of privilege and preference.” In a way, the reform measures were conservative in nature explaining why the leaders of the Conservative Party welcomed the reforms. He presented ideas in moderate and conservative terms such as stressing that giving the working class a vested interest in society kept property secure and avoided conflict.

The relationship between Churchill and Lloyd George made the two a formidable pair during this radical phase. Asquith relied heavily on Lloyd George and Churchill to devise policies concerning taxation and welfare since he specialized chiefly on free trade and legal matters. Churchill found that carefully writing an argument which Asquith could read at his leisure helped to gain approval and in turn influence within the cabinet. Churchill focused primarily on ideas where Lloyd George focused on strategic politics. Although Churchill

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69 Ibid., 61.
73 Malcolm Hill, Churchill: His Radical Decade, 58.
74 Ibid., 60.
remained one of the few to call him “David,” the two men developed a sort of a rivalry through the years. Their rivalry embedded political competitiveness in terms of taking both action and credit for ideas. After arriving to Parliament and the Board of Trade late, representing Dundee when defeated earlier in Manchester, Churchill remarked, “I have got to this pie too late; Lloyd George has pulled out all the plums.” Their relationship however would mature as the two men began working together on issues of social reform and their subsequent Budget in 1909. Churchill immediately took up the leftover cause of the Miners’ Eight Hour Bill from the Home Secretary. This bill aimed to limit workers’ hours to eight and gave Churchill a chance to champion the worker’s plight by arguing that they should have times of leisure and family socializing in daylight, as well as time to read and work in their gardens. Both Lloyd George and Churchill were committed to expensive moves in social reform such as pensions, labour exchanges, and unemployment insurance. Like his father, Churchill wanted to limit military spending and in fact had his own office in the War Office where he could access files which, as the government’s self-appointed war veteran advisor,” helped him argue his point for restraining military expenditures. Churchill and Lloyd George wanted the production of dreadnoughts reduced from eight to four citing them as a waste when Germany had no aims at war. The Liberal government reduced the number of dreadnoughts produced in part due to the two men’s urging; yet not to their ideal four.

Asquith began to show concern over Churchill’s manner of crusading for a specific cause with such intensity and capriciousness. Lloyd George remarked during this time that

75 Malcolm Hill, *Churchill: His Radical Decade*, 92.
76 Ibid., 63.
77 Ibid., 63.
78 Ibid., 67.
79 Ibid., 67.
Churchill was like “a chauffeur who apparently perfectly sane and drives with great skill for months, then suddenly takes you over a precipice.”\textsuperscript{80} Despite this skepticism, Churchill remained determined in his fight for social reform at this time. In effect he saw this as a worthy way to go down even if the party failed: “I say-thrust a big slice of Bismarckianism over the whole underside of our industrial system, and await the consequences, whatever they may be, with a good conscience.”\textsuperscript{81} Churchill was determined to let the cabinet know that reform meant more than home rule, pubs, the House of Lords, and that striving for the German program did not mean militarily speaking. He never admitted welfare was to improve the character of the poor. There is a striking difference in the philosophy of social insurance between Churchill and the Webb’s. In his eyes social insurance might never concern itself with causes but only the shortcomings of economics. The Webbs believed that until insurance could be applied to all who wanted it, the workingman could be trained to avoid habits that could cause poverty until the prior system was abolished.\textsuperscript{82} In contrast, Churchill was interested in freedom for the individual. Bentley Gilbert states “Churchill’s preoccupation was rather with the fate of the sinner than with the possibility of redemption.”

In a letter to Llewellyn Smith on June 6, 1909, Churchill states,

\begin{quote}
I do not feel convinced that we are entitled to refuse benefit to a qualified man who loses his employment through drunkenness. He has paid his contributions; he has insured himself against unemployment, and I think it arguable that his foresight should be rewarded irrespective of the cause of his dismissal . . . . Our concern is with evil, not with the causes. With the fact of unemployment, not with the character of the unemployed.\textsuperscript{83}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{80} Malcolm Hill, \textit{Churchill: His Radical Decade}, 67.
\textsuperscript{81} Bentley Gilbert, “Winston Churchill versus the Webbs,” 854.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., 855.
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., 856.
This attitude towards social reform prompted Churchill and Lloyd George to take governmental action. In April 1909 Churchill introduced a Trade Boards Act that covered 200,000 workers of whom 140,000 were women and children. A board comprised of employers and employees, within and outside of the trade, would sit for each individual trade and set minimum pay for each. Bentley Gilbert contends that, "Unemployment insurance was the handiwork of Churchill. It constitutes, perhaps, the major legislative justification for his reiterated claim that he was; at heart, a social reformer." By this time Churchill had departed from his previous notions of welfare taught to him by his mentors, the Webbs. His gambler persona allowed him to push a program that others could have failed at doing. The Webbs had taught him the concept of a national minimum which was manifested in the Trade Boards Act of 1909 but he pushed forward the effort with his own political intuition. A major contribution to the base of the welfare state came with his scheme for compulsory unemployment insurance and for labour exchanges. With the suggestion of Beatrice and Sidney Webb, Churchill hired the 29-year-old William Beveridge, a future economist and social reformer, and the two worked on what was to become the Labour Exchanges Act of 1909 which called for the extension of labour exchanges to all parts of Britain. Although this was not enacted until 1911 due to politics, the groundwork for labour exchanges and unemployment insurance was laid by both the young Beveridge and Churchill. Despite the fact that John Burns, the President of the Local Government Board, treated Churchill's Labour Exchange Bill in May 1909 with little sympathy, the first exchanges opened by

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84 Malcolm Hill, Churchill: His Radical Decade, 68.
86 Ibid., 850.
87 Ibid., 852.
February 1910 and by the time the National Insurance Act of 1911 passed there were 414 in existence.\textsuperscript{88}

In addition to the Labour Exchanges Act of 1909, Churchill became involved in the infamous 1909 Budget. After the rejection of the Licensing Bill in November 1908 by the House of Lords, Churchill and other Liberal Party members became furious. The Liberal Party had lost several by-elections and the upper chamber continued to prevent them from running a government by holding up and vetoing legislation.\textsuperscript{89} Asquith wanted Lloyd George to propose a budget that would enliven the mid session for the liberals. Unionists had gained several seats in the past few by-elections thereby weakening the political capital of the Liberal Party. An enlivening and radical budget that addressed social problems was not foreseen to ignite a war between the House of Commons and the House of Lords but this is indeed what occurred.\textsuperscript{90} The House of Lords, long dominated by Conservatives, had begun to anger Liberals by vetoing money-related legislation. The constitutional question thus came to the forefront of British politics at this time as to what extent the Lords should have a say in money matters. It is in this context that Churchill announced, “We shall send them such a Budget as shall terrify them, they have started a class war, they had better be careful.”\textsuperscript{91} Lloyd George summarized the budget of 1909 known as the People’s Budget stating:

This is a War Budget. It is for raising money to wage implacable warfare against poverty and squalidness. I cannot help hoping and believing that before this generation has passed away we shall have advanced a great step towards that good time when poverty and wretchedness and human degradation which always follow in

\textsuperscript{88} Malcolm Hill, \textit{Churchill: His Radical Decade}, 79.
\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., 69.
\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., 84.
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid., 69.
its camp will be as remote to the people of this country as the wolves which once
infested its forests.\textsuperscript{92}

A Budget Protest League was formed by Unionist Walter Long thereby prompting the
Liberal Party to form a countering Budget League with Churchill being elected its President.
As a platform speaker, he avoided speaking too much on details but relied on his rhetorical
abilities to address the overall scheme and necessity of the Budget.\textsuperscript{93} The Budget League
headed by Churchill was a massive organization holding thousands of meetings while
distributing 17 million leaflets and 680,000 posters. Malcolm Hill believes that having a
captive political audience and a grand political idea greatly enlivened Churchill and provided
an alternative to the boring debate on the Budget within the House of Commons.\textsuperscript{94} Churchill
set out on a speaking tour late in 1909 advocating the People’s Budget and hoping that he
would elicit a mandate in the upcoming general election in 1910.

Speaking at Leicester in 1909 Churchill highlighted what he considered to be the
greatest danger to Britain. He proclaimed:

The greatest danger to the British empire and to the British people is not to be found
among the enormous fleets and armies of the European Continent ... No it is here in
our midst, close at home, close at hand in the vast growing cities of England and
Scotland, and in the dwindling and cramped villages of our denuded countryside. It is
there you will find the seeds of Imperial ruin and national decay – the unnatural gap
between rich and poor, the divorce of the people from the land, the want of proper
discipline and training in our youth, the exploitation of boy labour, the physical
degeneration which seems to follow so swiftly on civilized poverty, the awful
jumbles of an obsolete Poor Law ... the absence of any established minimum
standard of life and comfort among the workers, and, at the other end, the swift
increase of vulgar, joyless luxury – here are the enemies of Britain.\textsuperscript{95}

\textsuperscript{92} Malcolm Hill, \textit{Churchill: His Radical Decade}, 87.
\textsuperscript{93} Ibid., 93.
\textsuperscript{94} Ibid., 101.
This “unnatural gap” as Churchill called it was the social and economic chasm which Liberals hoped the People’s Budget could begin to close. Those who sat “at the other end” in their lavishness could be found in the impeding House of Lords. Churchill often spoke of democratic ideals casting the House of Commons as the voice of the people while invoking a usurper image for the House of Lords. Lord Curzon, who followed Churchill from town to town disputing the tenets of his speeches, advocated the Lord’s position. He advocated the experience and professionalism, which the Lords felt they offered the British people as opposed to the House of Commons. The shots fired between the two men often proved entertaining. Lord Curzon once stated that, “The upkeep of all civilizations has been the hard work of aristocracies.” Mr. Churchill countered stating:

Again I say this only needs to be stated to be dismissed as absurd. ‘All civilization has been the work of aristocracies.’ It would be much more true to say ‘The upkeep of aristocracies has been the hard work of all civilizations.’

Churchill’s speech given in Edinburgh on July 17, 1909, is thought by Malcolm Hill to be one of the most radical from a frontbench Minister concerning taxation in British history. In his speech Churchill advocated the ideas of Henry George who argued that land value is created by the community and therefore belongs to the community. Churchill received a rebuke by the King, himself, when he prophesized the dissolution of Parliament if the Lords rejected the Budget. Obviously, angering the King was not the strategy which the party had in mind. Churchill’s later speeches in Lancashire prompted Asquith to write the royal private secretary pointing out Churchill’s moderate tone so as to prevent another

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97 Ibid., 117.
98 Ibid., 112.
99 Ibid., 112.
During this campaign Churchill, pursuing his constant theme of broad vision, often spoke on principles that the budget did not address. The budget was rejected by the end of November 1909 and the political climate within Britain became increasingly tense due to the constitutional crisis concerning the House of Lords. Two subsequent elections took place following the Lords' rejection of the 1909 Budget.

After the Liberal Party's victory in the first General Election of 1910, Churchill was offered the Irish Office. Faced with the burden of traveling and the continuous Home Rule issue, he turned this position down opting for the Home Office. Churchill's stint as Home Secretary was to be a pivotal period in the shaping of his future political life and his public reputation. The job of Home Secretary had the inescapable problem of always balancing liberty and order. Paul Addison notes, interestingly enough, that Churchill's brief tenure at the Home Office was "radical in both directions" in that "he extended the boundaries of liberty and order in a series of bold strokes." On one end of the spectrum Churchill's efforts towards penal reform showed his leniency and practical approach towards the justice system causing him to be seen as the prisoner's friend. His handling of law and order, most especially the suffragist movement and worker strikes, clouded his reform measures at the same time. At this other end of the spectrum was an alter ego hidden from the public eye and prompting Churchill to contribute to the formation of the emerging British secret state and intelligence gathering services.

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100 Malcolm Hill, *Churchill: His Radical Decade*, 114.
101 Ibid., 120.
103 Ibid., 51.
104 Ibid., 54-55.
After his promotion in January of 1910, Churchill immediately proposed comprehensive penal reform. In regard to the British penal system his main goal was to reduce the social bias of the courts against the poor and those of the lower class. Petty crimes were the most common in Britain and were mostly committed by the poor who faced almost certain imprisonment. Those with three convictions or more could be put in “preventative detention” for up to ten years under the Gladstone Era laws. As Home Secretary, Churchill did not wait for mercy pleas but searched individual cases to find disproportionate rulings.105

As Home Secretary Churchill attempted to use the power inherent in his office. He favored the Webbs idea of compulsory labour colonies for vagrants and formulated his own idea of ‘defaulter’s drill” which would have put convicted minors to work in police stations.106 Although these concepts were never enacted during his brief tenure, he did grant reprieve to 21 of 43 death sentences, which sat above the normal trend for reprieves. Unlike the complicated nature of labour policy, Churchill felt he understood the prison system. This enthusiasm can undoubtedly be linked to his experience in prison during the Boer War.107 In My Early Life Churchill writes, “I certainly hated my captivity more than I have ever hated any other period in my whole life ... Looking back on those days I have always felt the keenest pity for prisoners and captives.”108 Although he was unable to legislate in this position due to his short tenure, Churchill exercised the royal prerogative by varying sentences of many prisoners (he was to report to the king but the king always took the

106 Ibid., 63.
107 Paul Addison, Winston Churchill: The Unexpected Hero, 51.
advice). He used his administrative powers to improve the treatment of political prisoners (chiefly suffragettes) and limit solitary confinement. Many felt his actions would undermine the deterrent powers of the system currently in place. Churchill’s Permanent Secretary, Sir Edward Troup, claimed that, “‘He nearly drives me crazy at times but he’s the first great Home Secretary we’ve had since Asquith ... Anyone can use the ideas already in the Office. He brings ideas to the Office.’”

During his tenure at the Home Office Churchill also was forced to deal with social issues such as the Women’s Suffrage movement. As previously mentioned Churchill used his powers as Home Secretary to improve prison conditions, and this was especially true for suffragettes. Yet one must not forget he, himself, was a product of Victorian England and held the opinion that women were inferior to men. Churchill denounced a suffrage bill in July, 1910, but on a technicality so as not to appear completely against the movement. Suffragists sought to vote on the same terms that men had; yet the current law stipulated that only heads of households had the existing franchise. The bill in 1910 would have then enfranchised only single or widowed property owning women, who would probably be more inclined to vote conservative. The “democratic” argument, which opposed the enfranchisement of a minority group of women, can be seen as a convenient strategem for many Liberals who were opposed to female suffrage. Churchill as well as many other politicians of the time tended to grow angry when Emmeline Pankhurst’s Women’s Social and Political Union began disrupting political rallies and adopting militant tactics as early as 1905. His opinion toward women in politics remained negative throughout his liberal phase.

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110 Ibid., 50.
and onward. Churchill was noted in a 1912 Cabinet meeting as stating, "We already have enough ignorant voters and don’t want anymore."\textsuperscript{111}

Perhaps the area in which Churchill is best remembered during his tenure at the Home Office is his management of the working class and the reactions to the threat of the strike. With respect to his handling of specific strikes and riots as Home Secretary, Churchill has garnered a mixed assessment from both his political contemporaries and historians alike. The events which occurred under Churchill’s watch cloud his record and tend to overshadow his accomplishments as Home Secretary. The first accusations of Churchill as an aggressor stemmed from an incident in November of 1910. Metropolitan Police used rough tactics and injured several women at a suffragette rally at Westminster. Although Churchill was not “personally responsible” for the dubbed “Black Friday” he refused to call for an inquiry and refuted allegations against the Metropolitan Police. A few days after this incident a strike by miners broke out in a south Wales coalfield employed by the Cambrian Colliery. A rioter was killed by police during the strike in Tonypandy, a nearby town in the coal-mining Rhondda Valley.\textsuperscript{112} The local authorities wanted the Home Office to dispatch troops to maintain the peace, but Churchill worried that doing so could escalate the problem. He therefore initially sent the Metropolitan police. A day later the riots continued and Churchill was forced to dispatch troops and allow the police to act as a buffer. He was politically lambasted by the Labour leader Keir Hardie for condoning the forcefulness of the troops and the legend grew (with the help of later misconstrued events) that Churchill ordered troops to

\textsuperscript{111} Paul Addison, \textit{Winston Churchill: The Unexpected Hero}, 50.
\textsuperscript{112} Geoffrey Best, \textit{Churchill: A Study in Greatness}, 40.
After receiving harsh criticism from the Conservatives for displaying "undue leniency" Churchill addressed Parliament stating:

Law and order must be preserved, but I am confident that the House will agree with me that it is a great object of public policy to avoid a collision between soldiers and crowds of persons engaged in industrial disputes ... For soldiers to fire on the people would be a catastrophe in our national life, for the Minister who is responsible to run some risk of broken heads or broken windows ... to accept direct responsibility in order that the shedding of British blood by British soldiers may be averted, as, thank God, it has been successfully averted in South Wales.\footnote{Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 7 February, 1911.}

Incidents in the summer of 1911 coupled with Tonypandy further hurt Churchill's name. A dock strike escalated into a railway strike throughout the country. In many people's minds, especially Churchill's, the strike created visions of a crippled nation starved by "industrial anarchists." He dispatched troops throughout the country giving them power over the local authorities. In Llanelli troops shot and killed two men thereby prompting Keir Hardy to accuse both Asquith and Churchill of intentionally sending troops to shoot and kill strikers. Paul Addison explains that, "Together with Tonypandy, these events marked a turning point in Churchill's relations with the Labour party and the trade unions. His record as a social reformer was eclipsed by his new reputation as a class warrior with a 'Prussian' love of order imposed by military force."\footnote{Paul Addison, Winston Churchill: The Unexpected Hero, 54.}

Churchill attempted to improve his relations with organized labour after the Tonypandy incident to some degree by promoting the Coal Mines Act and the Shops Act in 1911 with some success, but he would never fully shed the negative reputation that he had obtained.

\footnote{Paul Addison, Winston Churchill: The Unexpected Hero, 53. The concept that Churchill was "trigger-happy" is a constant theme which develops throughout his career and will be further discussed within this work.}
Beyond his penal reform policies and his law and order record exist the efforts by Churchill in helping form the secret state of defense gathering intelligence. As Home Secretary he authorized the new Secret Service Bureau (precursor to MI5) "to draw up a register of thousands of enemy aliens to be arrested at the outbreak of war" without notifying Members of Parliament or the public. Churchill's position at the Home Office brought him in contact with the intelligence service which was at the time worried about possible German spies in the country. Likewise he sponsored the Official Secrets Act passed through a half empty Commons on a Friday afternoon in August of 1911 which remained in force until 1989. The Official Secrets Act made it an offense to disclose or receive official information without authorization.

As one of the duties as Home Secretary, Churchill was required to brief the King on situations in the Commons most specifically dealing with relations regarding the House of Lords. These relations, especially for the Liberals, had grown sour over the recent years. In February of 1910 Churchill wrote a Cabinet memo favoring total abolition of the House of Lords and replacement by a newly elected assembly. In the House of Commons Churchill stated that the House of Lords was:

... A weapon and engine, which has been used by one party to vex, harass and humiliate and finally destroy the other and it has been used so cruelly, so violently, and so bitterly in recent times that there is not a single man on these benches who will consent to hold office on these conditions, except for the sole and express purpose and with the reasonable hope of effecting a permanent change in these conditions.

Churchill had subscribed to the New Liberalism and the "progressive alliance' with Labour during his stint in the Liberal party. Yet due to the January 1910 General Election the

\(^{117}\) Ibid., 54-55.
\(^{118}\) Malcolm Hill, *Churchill: His Radical Decade*, 124.
political environment changed for the Liberal Party; it lost its majority and became dependent upon the Irish Nationalist and Labour parties. The battle between the Commons and the Lords took place and was completed with the Parliament Bill in 1911. Churchill had hoped that the Liberal and Conservative parties would both grow towards the center after this monumental step. Lloyd George apparently told Churchill at this point that there were two choices: either the Liberals and Conservatives would compromise over divisive issues, or there would be a Liberal Government which would continue to expand progressive social policy. At this point Churchill believed mutual agreement could be achieved between the two major parties. He sought to reach common ground with Conservative counterparts such as F.E. Smith by founding the “Other Club” in 1911 where both the Liberal and Conservative whips were members. Lloyd George in 1910 secretly expressed a desire for a coalition government, an idea of which Churchill greatly approved. This coalition however did not materialize and time caused the two men’s relationship to begin to drift. In October of 1911 Churchill became First Lord of the Admiralty, which forced him to focus most of his time and efforts on naval affairs. Lloyd George remained Chancellor of the Exchequer to oversee what he and Churchill had done in terms of reform. Lloyd George, seeing the people’s point of view from below, continued his radicalism with the great land campaign of 1913-1914, whereas Churchill began to display a more and more a paternalistic approach favoring

120 Ibid., 55-56.
122 Malcolm Hill, *Churchill: His Radical Decade*, 133.
change in the social order from above. The onset of World War I would halt Churchill's involvement with social reform and triggered a new stage in his political career.

Chapter II

“The Middle Years”

In October of 1911 Prime Minister Herbert Asquith offered the Admiralty to Winston Churchill. Although the position was inferior to the Home Office in the hierarchy of the cabinet, Churchill saw great potential in this post.¹ By 1911 Churchill had become a more bipartisan player between the Liberals and Conservatives. He and F.E. Smith had founded “The Other Club” where members of all parties could be elected to membership and discuss politics and political theory. The club put emphasis on bipartisanship, yet it should be noted that no Labour Party member ever joined. Henry Pelling contends that the club in fact turned out to be nothing more than an admiration club for Churchill.² The position of First Lord of the Admiralty undoubtedly made him focus more closely on military aspects and the looming war rather than domestic issues such as social reform. In many respects, this stage provides a political segue between Churchill’s early radicalism and the political direction which he followed after the Great War. The actions taken by Churchill during this period contributed to his public persona and affected his political ambitions and capabilities throughout his subsequent career. Churchill’s ever-changing relationship with both the Liberal and Conservative parties at this time also help to explain his political position in his ensuing years.

² Ibid., 118.
There was a level of skepticism among politicians as Churchill assumed his position at the Admiralty. The radical wing of the Liberal Party had hoped Churchill’s appointment to the Admiralty would signify a time where naval expenditures would be cut thus freeing up revenue for other government programs. Others such as H.W. Massingham were more suspicious of Churchill’s future as he wrote in the *Nation* in January of 1912 that:

As Liberalism does not fund a war policy, so the value of its contribution to the true standard of national strength – which is the condition of the people of Great Britain – is lessened by this concentration on the fighting services. Mr. Churchill has his father’s impressionable temper; much of his youth was spent amid the pageantry of guns and marching armies; like Faust (and most of us), he resembles the spirit which he comprehends, and which is nearest to him. Manchester made him a radical reformer. What kind of political interest will two or three years at the Admiralty develop? He has a mind of incessant activity and great acquisitive and receptive power; he likes to be at the centre of the brilliantly lighted stage that the modern statesman treads; he is a specially close and intelligent student of war. A careful director of party energies would like to see him at a safer post.

It would be Massingham’s assessment that proved more correct as Churchill slipped into a more militaristic mindset in preparation for a looming war. On February 8, 1912 in Glasgow, Churchill gave a speech as First Lord of the Admiralty in which he argued that it is a necessity for Britain to maintain a large navy whereas for Germany it is only a “luxury.” This sentiment, which drew heavy criticism from Germans, proved contrary to his initial stand in 1909 and signaled his intentions and ambitions while at the Admiralty.

In 1912 he announced that Britain would maintain a sixty percent superiority over

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4 Ibid., 63.
Germany in dreadnoughts, the largest warships of the Royal Navy, and later expanded his plan when Germany increased her production.⁵

Between 1913 and 1914 Churchill proposed the construction of four more dreadnoughts. This was in fact the opposite of what the Liberals at the time wanted and had expected Churchill to do at the Admiralty. In actuality Churchill did not intend to build the four dreadnoughts but to hide from Germany the government decision to abandon the 60 percent notion and their plan to build two battleships in place of submarines.⁶ This move hurt him politically with the Liberal Party and to a degree distanced him from the progressives; yet it proved an example of his ability as a military strategist by successfully deceiving the German military. During his time at the Admiralty, Churchill also made the monumental move of converting the British fleet from coal to oil-fired engines and headed the government’s negotiations for the purchase of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company to guarantee the oil supply.⁷

With the outbreak of World War I in 1914, Churchill became preoccupied with military matters thus putting aside domestic issues for the time being. Although social reform served as a minimal topic during this period of his political life, his actions as First Lord of the Admiralty had a direct effect in shaping his political future. His involvement and responsibility in the Dardanelles campaign damaged his career and caused harsh criticism of his military capabilities even during World War II. The Dardanelles served as an important strait separating Europe and Asia. If seized, it was believed by the allies that the Ottoman Empire could be forced out of the war. Geoffrey

⁶ Ibid., 63.
⁷ Ibid., 61.
Best explains, “The Dardanelles story is so complicated in itself that historians find it impossible to come to the brisk and decisive judgements on it made by partisans at the time and ever since.”^8 Although the British Government backed the plan, it was Churchill who received the overall blame for the expedition when it failed. Churchill had been a major advocate for the use of Royal Navy battleships to capture the mined straits. After failing to capture Gallipoli, public opinion and the government concluded that Churchill was incompetent at his post. The Dardanelles debacle helped to push Churchill out of the government’s favor. Lord Beaverbrook explains in his memoirs:

> Here was a man of extraordinary abilities, of adroit debating strength, of originality and resourcefulness. At the height of a major war he was out of employment. Yet the greater part of his career had been occupied with problems of a military kind. ... Instead he was extruded from the centre of action by men of lesser ability and initiative, and his knowledge and his inventiveness of mind all were wasted. It was a time of grievous frustration for Churchill. Indeed, there were days when he feared that all might be lost if his services were denied to his country.\(^9\)

After his removal from the Admiralty Churchill found solace in oil painting, for which he proved to have a natural talent. He also sought relief by pursuing active military service. On January 4, 1916 Lieutenant Colonel Winston S. Churchill was put in command of the 6\(^{th}\) Battalion of the Royal Scots Fusiliers. In this role he was instrumental in implementing many similar reforms as he had done at the Home Office such as mitigating punishments and providing entertainment to his soldiers.\(^10\) The idea of reforming everything seemed to be ever-present in the mind of Winston Churchill. As with any person who displays great leadership qualities, he had to not only possess power but also use this power to implement a degree of change. I believe his propensity to

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^8 Geoffrey Best, *Churchill: A Study in Greatness*, 64.
reform rested upon genuine concern as well as the romantic notion that his destiny was to secure a place in history. Those who take action are those who are remembered. His prewar reform measures as well as his attempt to penetrate the Dardanelles exemplify bold actions that he hoped would stand the test of time. The implementation of reform measures within his Battalion offers a more human side where perhaps Churchill displays a more pure and genuine belief in making life better without attempting to impact world history. His action in this minor amelioration hints at a more genuine side to his reform efforts in much larger arenas.

With his ouster from Whitehall, Churchill became an outspoken critic of the government, especially in terms of the offensives in France. During the Coalition he sat in the Opposition benches yet seldom voted against the Government. However, on May 10, 1917, Churchill opened a Secret Session debate for the Opposition where he was critical of the government’s war plans in France. This speech prompted Lord Beaverbrook to write in his memoirs, “Churchill could not be left out of the Government. He must be fenced in, and that forthwith. What could not be squashed must be squared and what could not be squared must be squashed.”¹¹ After Churchill’s speech Lloyd George delivered his own which was equally praised prompting the two to meet behind the Speakers’ Chair. Churchill records in The World Crisis that:

In his satisfaction at the course the Debate had taken [the Prime Minister] ... assured me of his determination to have me at his side. From that day, although holding no office, I became to a large extent his colleague. He repeatedly discussed with me every aspect of the war and many of his secret hopes and fears.¹²

¹¹ Beaverbrook, Men and Power: 1917-1918, 122.
Through partial fear that Churchill would become leader of the Opposition against the Coalition Government, Lloyd George pushed to make him Minister of Munitions in 1917.\textsuperscript{13} During this time there was growing distrust of Churchill's ambition and party loyalty. Lloyd George asked Andrew Bonar Law, a Conservative member of the coalition government at this time, "Is he [Churchill] more dangerous when he is FOR you than when he is AGAINST you?" to which Bonar Law replied, "I would rather have him against us every time."\textsuperscript{14} His appointment to the Ministry of Munitions in July brought about some public criticism. On August 3, 1917, the \textit{Morning Post} stated:

... that dangerous and uncertain quantity, Mr. Winston Churchill – a floating kidney in the body politic – is back again at Whitehall. We do not know in the least what he may be up to, but from past experience we venture to suggest that it will be everything but his own business.\textsuperscript{15}

It must be noted that Churchill entered this post with a deliberate non-partisan stance that undoubtedly aided him in regaining authority within the government. His previous party switch and his ever-present penchant for self-promotion needed to be hidden if he was to remain a political player in Whitehall.

When not in France, Churchill's work at the Munitions dealt heavily with labour relations. Roy Jenkins holds that many would say he was not fit to handle this particular duty due to lack his lack of experience and his temperament. He explains Churchill’s approach to the labour problems was a mixture of the sympathetic and authoritarian. He was uncomfortable with the idea that workers could strike safely while soldiers were

\textsuperscript{13} Paul Addison, \textit{Winston Churchill: The Unexpected Hero}, 87.
\textsuperscript{14} Beaverbrook, \textit{Men and Power}: 1917-1918, 125.
\textsuperscript{15} Martin Gilbert, \textit{Churchill: A Life}, 376.
dying in France. On August 15, 1917, Churchill presented his Munitions of War Bill to the House of Commons where he explained the aim of the Bill was "output on the one hand and industrial peace on the other." There would be special wage awards to those that were skilled and no worker would be penalized if they belonged in a trade union or participated in a trade dispute. Churchill expressed that the war could not be won "unless we are supported by the great masses of the labouring classes of this country." In a more authoritarian manner, Churchill also persuaded Lloyd George to threaten conscription to strikers in 1918, which proved quite effective in preventing further labour disputes.

Churchill's Ministerial post included over a million women workers under his responsibility during this point in time. In November 1917, Churchill met for the first time with the Women's Trade Union Advisory Committee. Only eight months prior he had voted in favor of the franchise extension to older and married women, and now he heard their demands for fairer wages. In this meeting he proved to be quite sympathetic to the women's demands voiced by Ernest Bevin, who would later serve in Churchill's War Cabinet. Churchill stated in the meeting that he believed women's labour should be more than "an incident of the war." At the end of the meeting he claimed:

If you think that I have an idea that this is to be a mere sham and that we have called you together to keep the women quiet, you make a very great mistake. That is the last thing we have in view. The times are much too serious for games like that. This is really an earnest attempt to face the problem of women in industrial life and in munitions life during the war.

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20 Ibid., 380.
Churchill was not a member of the War Cabinet and was therefore not asked about his views regarding war strategy. He did, however, manage to streamline the administrative structure of his office while at the helm. In place of fifty semi-autonomous departments Churchill created a Munitions Council made of eleven members, who would be in charge of several related aspects of munitions production.\textsuperscript{21} As he had done in previous posts, Churchill overhauled what he saw as an inefficient department and organized it as he deemed fit. This appears to be a continual theme in Churchill's management style. His ability to produce enormous amounts of work was enabled by his organizational skills. Churchill would not tolerate an inept and ineffective office and therefore sought to streamline administrative agencies in which he worked throughout his career, as previously seen when at the Board of Trade and the Admiralty.

At the war's conclusion a split occurred within the Liberal Party. Those in favor of continuing a coalition government backed Lloyd George and those wanting a return to partisan status favored Asquith's leadership. Churchill had no desire to go back into the political wilderness and therefore chose to cling to Lloyd George. Patronage from Asquith was no longer necessary as Churchill had "become a client of Lloyd George," more so than in the 1908-1912 radical days which they had shared. The question at this point was what would Lloyd George do with Churchill now that the Liberal Party began to crumble.\textsuperscript{22} Churchill sought to make the Coalition manifesto as radical as possible and included these ideas in his Dundee campaign. The nationalization of railways served as a major issue for Churchill in which he showed full enthusiasm even if it involved

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{21} Martin Gilbert, \textit{Churchill: A Life}, 377.
\item \textsuperscript{22} Roy Jenkins, \textit{Churchill: A Biography}, 335.
\end{itemize}
government subsidy. In regard to nationalization he stated that, "It might even pay the
State to run the railways at a loss if by developing industries, creating new ones, reviving
agriculture, and placing the trader in closer contact with his markets, they stimulated a
great development at home."  

In an effort to keep as many Liberal concepts as he could in the Government’s
policies, Churchill urged Lloyd George to heavily tax the war profits arguing, "Why
should anybody make a great fortune out of the war"? He also argued for the control of
monopolies "in the general interest" and for taxation levied "in proportion to the ability to
pay." Lloyd George believed that his and Churchill’s programs in the Liberal Party
since 1908 could regain the working-class voter from Labour. They would seek social
and economic equality by using Liberalism for the voice of the underprivileged.
Churchill sought to build upon the wartime cooperation of the British people by
advocating unity in times of peace as they had in war. He asked, "‘Why should peace
have nothing but the squabbles and the selfishness and the pettiness of daily life? Why, if
men and women, all classes, all parties, are able to work together for five years like a
mighty machine to produce destruction, can they not work together for another five to
produce abundance’"? This idealistic approach to politics is a constant theme for
Churchill in which he advocated a coalition government capable of transcending petty
party politics. Clearly by this point in his career he had shown both liberal and
conservative tendencies. It is conceivable that Churchill himself knew he could be a

24 Martin Gilbert, Churchill: A Life, 403.
25 Ibid., 404.
more effective politician if he was allowed to voice his own opinion free of party restraint. His dynamic personality would undoubtedly serve as an advantage if a moderate coalition style government would follow.

His reelection campaign also included the language of anti-Bolshevism, which had begun to occupy his mind more and more. This sentiment was a product of the events taking place in Russia as well as of the evidence that socialism and the Labour movement were gaining ground in Britain at the time. In a speech to his constituents in Dundee in November of 1918 he warned that, “Civilisation is being completely extinguished over gigantic areas, while Bolsheviks hop and caper like troops of ferocious baboons amid the ruins of cities and the corpses of their victims.”

Churchill viewed the Bolshevik Revolution as infectious in Britain itself and therefore he sought to prevent this brand of socialism from festering within British society. Paul Addison believes his greatest fear was Bolshevism conquering Russia and Germany thus allowing it to sweep across Europe and Asia. His involvement with the intelligence service made him aware of the presence of Soviet agents in Britain and their funding to groups such as the British Communist Party and other Labour groups who had opposed the war. Churchill’s past dealing with disgruntled workers and strikes coupled with his growing suspicion of socialism would become a major theme in his political life. It appears that these concerns would serve as the boundary for his level of commitment to social reform in the future.

Paul Addison points out that beginning in 1919 Churchill distinguished himself as a reactionary instead of a former radical. He contends that Churchill took up “negative

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28 Martin Gilbert, Churchill: A Life, 403.
29 Paul Addison, Winston Churchill: The Unexpected Hero, 93.
30 Ibid., 95.
anti-socialism” towards Russia and the Labour party and abandoned the rhetoric of social progress. Addison argues that the polarization of British politics affected this move where “as a Coalition Liberal, dependent on the patronage of Lloyd George and the goodwill of the Conservative Party, Churchill was politically insecure. In calling for the creation of a permanent anti-socialist bloc, he was trying to resolve the problem of his own political identity.” ³¹ I would argue that his fear of socialism undoubtedly blunted his prior inclination to push forward progressive legislation. The change in the British political landscape brought about uncertainty and forced Churchill to question the degree to which social progress could be taken and where socialism could harm the stability of the society in place.

The election of 1918 was a triumph for Lloyd George’s Coalition with 133 Liberal seats won and 335 Coalition Conservatives compared to only 28 seats won by the Asquith Liberals. Churchill won with a majority labeled “immense” by the Dundee paper but by fewer votes than he had hoped. ³² Churchill wanted to return to the Admiralty under the new Coalition Government; however, Lloyd George wanted him to head the demobilization task by installing him as Secretary for War and Air in January of 1919. ³³ He inherited the job with a crisis already underway. Military morale was very low at the time while major strikes threatened both the coal industry and the railroads. Churchill took action by creating an alternate plan to that of the current failing government plan. All men who had enlisted before 1916 or were over 40 years of age were to be released from service. Continuing on, three out of four soldiers were to be sent home with the

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³² Martin Gilbert, Churchill: A Life, 404.
³³ Ibid., 405.
remaining fourth soldier receiving a pay increase. To provide for the Armies of
Occupation, peacetime conscription was enacted on a temporary basis. Paul Addison
notes that this plan reflected the work of a politician who saw the need to consolidate
troop numbers. He also took precautions if discontented soldiers clashed with
discontented workers, by organizing the use of the military in the case a national strike.\textsuperscript{34}

At this time the major concern of the government was social stability. Churchill agreed
with Lloyd George that trade unions were organizations which the government could
negotiate with and that could help moderate the industrial masses. At the same time
Churchill believed that the current state of trade unionism could be as damaging as it was
helpful. He remarked in a February 4, 1919 War Cabinet meeting that:

Trade union organization was very imperfect, and the more moderate its officials
were, the less representative it was; but it was the only organization with which
the government could deal. The curse of trade unionism was that there was not
enough of it, and it was not highly developed enough to make its branch
secretaries fall into line with the head office. With a powerful trade union, peace
or war could be made.\textsuperscript{35}

The war debt incurred by Britain was also a subject in which Churchill found
himself involved while at the War Department. The National Debt had risen from 706.2
million pounds in 1913-1914 to 7,481.1 million in 1919-1920.\textsuperscript{36} Churchill supported the
idea of taxing war wealth. Instead of a proposed capital levy which taxed personal
wealth, the Liberal plan would tax personal wealth that had increased between 1914 and
1918. This thereby would tax an unpopular group that had profited while many Britons
suffered during the war. Churchill wrote to Lloyd George on August 4, 1919 stating:

\textsuperscript{34} Paul Addison, \textit{Churchill on the Home Front} 1900-1955, 202.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 206.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 208.
I do not see how we can look the working classes in the face while these enormous war fortunes remain untouched ... I don’t wonder there is an ugly spirit abroad when everyone can see a whole new class of millionaires who made their fortunes while 5/6ths of the industries of the country were in suspension or abeyance & every little shopkeeper who [could] march was serving in the trenches. This sense of injustice rankles in every heart and is in my opinion at the root of our troubles.  

On June 4, 1920 the majority of ministers followed Bonar Law’s lead in rejecting the duty proposed. Mary Short, a clerk within the government, wrote, "‘in the end it was only Churchill who stayed with the duty and he saw the rejection of it as a fatal blow to the democratic credentials of the government: his dissent was recorded in the Cabinet minutes.’" He saw both the financial and political advantages this duty would bring and found it a shame that money was left to the war profiteers that could have easily been transferred to the State. In terms of war wealth, Churchill was on the same page as the Labour Party. This and other issues concerning class politics began to jeopardize Churchill’s seat in Dundee during this time. The Labour movement began to gain momentum and the Liberal Party began its decline. While Churchill sought to resolve his political identity problem, the country began to undergo a change in its own political identity. Churchill would find himself victim to the changing political circumstances of post-war Britain.

In 1922 Churchill found himself in the difficult position of recovering from appendicitis surgery during an election cycle. Remarking after his electoral defeat he wrote, "I found myself without an office, without a seat, without a party, and without an

38 Ibid., 210.
For the first time in 22 years he found himself out of Parliament finishing in fourth place in the Dundee election. T.E. Lawrence wrote to Churchill, "What bloody shits the Dundeans must be." Churchill did not take such a bitter stance on the outcome as he told former Cabinet colleague Herbert Fisher, "If you saw the kind of lives the Dundee folk have to live, you would admit they have many excuses." He had been a leading Liberal Parliamentarian for the previous seventeen years. The Conservatives were now in office for the first time since 1905 with 354 seats and Labour second with 142. The Liberal dominance in Britain had ended and Churchill had to find his place in the changing spectrum of British politics.

Churchill following the defeat of the Liberals retreated to the south of France where he focused on writing The World Crisis, his history of the Great War. The World Crisis would eventually have five volumes published over a ten-year span filling 2,150 pages. The first volume came out in April of 1923 and the New Statesman commented, "He has written a book which is remarkably egotistical, but which is honest and which will certainly long survive him." The publication of The World Crisis in 1923 coincided with his return to politics as he saw the more accommodating Stanley Baldwin succeed Bonar Law as Prime Minister and leader of the Conservative Party. This appeared to be an opportune time for Churchill to make amends with the Conservatives. Unfortunately for him, Baldwin and the Conservatives campaigned on protectionism when calling for a general election in December of 1923. At this point Churchill would

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39 Winston S. Churchill, Amid These Storms: Thoughts and Adventures, 213.
40 Martin Gilbert, Churchill: A Life, 456.
41 Ibid., 456-457.
42 Ibid., 457.
43 Ibid., 458.
44 Paul Addison, Winston Churchill: The Unexpected Hero, 110.
still not abandon his subscription to free trade. When asked by a friend where he stood politically as Baldwin took office, Churchill responded stating, "I am what I have always been – a Tory Democrat. Force of circumstance has compelled me to serve with another party, but my views have never changed, and I should be glad to give effect to them by returning to the Conservatives."45 Addison believes Churchill recognized that he had to play a waiting game before being welcomed into the Conservative Party. At the same time he continued to wait and see how the party position of Tariff Reform would evolve. Had the Conservatives won the General Election in 1923 and introduced protection, he believes Churchill would have continued with the Liberals and rekindled his relationship with Lloyd George.46 Churchill once again found himself in party limbo; yet by having a finger on the political pulse, he could choose his destiny and align with the most beneficial side for himself.

Churchill stood for the last time as a Liberal for the seat in Leicester West and was defeated by the Labour candidate. The Liberal Party decided to support a minority Labour government thereby making Churchill a leader of the right-wing Liberals who were opposed to socialism. Churchill issued a statement to The Times on January 18, 1924 declaring, "The enthronement in office of a Socialist Government will be a serious national misfortune such as usually has befallen great states only on the morrow of defeat in war."47 By January 21, 1924, the Baldwin government was defeated by Labour and Liberal votes making Ramsey McDonald the first Labour Prime Minister. Following the

46 Ibid., 227-228.
47 Paul Addison, Winston Churchill: The Unexpected Hero, 110.
election, Winston Churchill sent a private letter of congratulations to the Right Honourable Ramsey McDonald.  

Baldwin’s loss of the General Election on a protectionist platform allowed Churchill to play up both his anti-socialism and his social reform while attempting to distance himself from the past wartime criticism he received at the Admiralty courtesy of the Dardanelles debacle. In March of 1924 he ran as an “Independent Anti-Socialist” in Abbey where he told voters:

> Although my war record is frequently referred to, I have a large number of measures of social reform to my credit. These seem to have been forgotten. My interest in social reform is very real, and it is only because I feel that I will be able to assist in remedial legislation dealing with housing, and the extension of National Insurance, so as to give real security against the common hazards of life, that I am willing to stand before you.

In the Abbey election Churchill lost a narrow race finding it difficult to run against Conservative candidates. Two months later on May 7, 1924 Churchill addressed more than 5,000 Conservatives in Liverpool. Speaking to his first Conservative group in twenty years he explained there was no longer a place for an independent Liberal party in British politics. He continued stating that the Conservative Party provided a large enough base “for the successful defeat of Socialism” and explained that Liberals like himself must join forces with Conservatives on a “broad political platform.” After this speech Churchill was offered four invitations from Conservative associations to be their candidate. At first he was reluctant to rejoin the Conservative Party hoping to retain the Liberal association he had formed over the previous decades. By mid-June he sought to

form a party of “orthodox” Liberals, as Martin Gilbert explains, named “Liberal-
Conservatives” which would be independent of the Liberal and Conservative Parties.
This plan failed to materialize; yet by July Churchill was able to reach an agreement with
Baldwin whereby he would stand in the next election as a “Constitutionalist” candidate
and have official Conservative support. He also secured Baldwin’s promise to find a seat
for him in or near London that would enable him to speak freely throughout Britain
against MacDonald’s economic loan to Soviet Russia and the ideas of Socialism. 51

In September Churchill accepted the nomination for the seat in Epping, a safe
Conservative seat northeast of London. Two weeks after his acceptance he spoke to a
group of Conservatives in Edinburgh where he stated that there was, “no gulf of
principle’ between Conservatives and Liberals.” He declared that Labour’s desire for an
Anglo-Soviet Treaty must be resisted prompting a new surge in his popularity within
Conservative circles where they saw him as once again in line with their views. 52 The
Times quoted the “Constitutionalist” Epping candidate on October 13, 1924, where he
explained his position as similar to a Liberal Unionist of 1886 stating:

I am entirely opposed to minority rule ... the will of the majority ... is the only
healthy foundation of the State ... ‘Trust the people!’ These words of Lord
Randolph Churchill ... embody and express the fundamental principles of British
national life and government.” 53

The General Election on October 29, 1924 saw a complete victory of the Conservatives
with 419 seats won to 151 for Labour and only 40 for the Liberal Party in which
Churchill had been a leading figure only ten months prior. After the win Churchill wrote

51 Martin Gilbert, Churchill: A Life, 462.
52 Ibid., 463.
53 Roland Quinault, “Churchill and Democracy,” Transactions of the Royal Historical
Society 11, 208.
to a friend on November 4th and claimed, "I think it very likely that I shall be invited to
join the Government as owing to the size of its majority it will probably be composed
only of impeccable Conservatives."54 Many posts were in fact discussed for Churchill
such as the Board of Trade, War Office, Admiralty, and the Ministry of Health. His wife
Clementine urged Churchill to take the Ministry of Health after being summoned to meet
Baldwin as she saw there was much to be done "in housing and other social services."55
It was in fact the Treasury which Baldwin offered Churchill. He would later recount that
when asked, "I should have like to have answered, 'Will the bloody duck swim?' [B]ut as
it was formal and important conversation I replied, 'This fulfils my ambition. I still have
my father's robe as Chancellor. I shall be proud to serve you in the splendid office.'"56

Churchill by 1924 had successfully made his second party switch thus returning to
the Conservative fold that he had left in 1904. His political consistency and party loyalty
had long been in question since his crossing the floor and joining rank with the Liberal
Party. Churchill addresses this aspect in his book, *Amid These Storms; Thoughts and
Adventures*, where he argued:

A change of Party is usually considered a much more serious breach of
consistency than a change of view. In fact as long as a man works with a Party he
will rarely find himself accused of inconsistency, no matter how widely his
opinions at one time on any subject can be shown to have altered. Yet Parties are
subject to changes and inconsistencies not less glaring than those of individuals.
How should it be otherwise in the fierce swirl of Parliamentary conflict and
Electoral fortune? Change with a Party, however inconsistent, is at least defended
by the power of numbers. To remain constant when a Party changes is to excite
invidious challenge. Moreover, a separation from Party affects all manner of
personal relations and sunders old comradeship. Still, a sincere conviction, in

54 Martin Gilbert, *Churchill: A Life*, 464.
55 Ibid., 465.
Churchill had justified to himself his place in the political spectrum arguing that he had remained consistent in his political beliefs and that the political climate of Britain was in fact what had changed. In this respect he had adapted to the times and was comfortable with what he saw as a continuation of his “Tory Democracy” under the banner of a different party. The 46-month period of Lloyd George’s peacetime Coalition and the time spent out of office were what Roy Jenkins refers to as “the least creditable of Churchill’s career.” In comparison to other periods of his life this chapter was indeed the most uneventful, in respect to domestic politics, of an otherwise continually notable life. He now sat poised to once again make an impact on British politics and more fully define his position in terms of social progress.

Churchill’s ascension to the Treasury allowed him to separate his ties from Lloyd George and the Liberal Party’s failures as well as escape his so-called blunders during the Great War. The position of Chancellor of the Exchequer was seen as a stepping-stone to the Premiership, as the Chancellor in fact lived next door to the Prime Minister in No. 11 Downing Street. The Treasury was the epitome of orthodox British government where Churchill could work on fiscal issues that affected all aspects of society. In orthodox fashion he favored a balanced budget yet, similar to his father, saw the Treasury as a “platform for popular politics.” P.J. Grigg, Churchill’s Private Secretary, stated Churchill wanted to turn the Treasury into “an active instrument of Government social

57 Winston S. Churchill, Amid These Storms: Thoughts and Adventures, 46-47.
58 Roy Jenkins, Churchill: A Biography, 345.
59 Paul Addison, Winston Churchill: The Unexpected Hero, 112.
policy instead of a passive concomitant or even, as it sometimes was, an active opponent.\textsuperscript{61} The Chancellorship was the most powerful department in Whitehall in that every aspect of government relied upon the budget which Churchill was responsible to produce. His position encompassed such important matters as the handling of the war debt, labour movement issues, taxation schemes, and the expansion of social programs.

Churchill immediately began working on his 1925 Budget within weeks of taking office. Unlike many Chancellors, who simply balanced the books, Churchill implemented political strategy.\textsuperscript{62} One of Churchill's first moves at the Treasury was to devise and finance a substantial extension of national insurance, the social reform which he had fifteen years prior been instrumental in enacting. On November 28, 1924 Churchill told the Deputy Secretary of the Cabinet, Thomas Jones: "I was all for the Liberal measures of social reform in the old days, and I want to push the same sort of measures now. Of course I shall have to give some relief to the tax-payers to balance these measures of reform."\textsuperscript{63} He sought to maintain his old position of social reform while also taking a realist approach by recognizing the political climate of the day. As political pragmatist, Churchill had risen back to the upper ranks of the government and he intended to hold onto the reins of power by continuing his reform efforts as in the past and appeasing his Conservative constituents at the same time. Churchill's blatant desire for power make it easier to brand him as a partially self-serving politician; yet his subsequent Budget would embody not only accolades for himself but benefits for the middle and lower classes of Britain as well.


\textsuperscript{62} Paul Addison, Churchill on the Home Front 1900-1955, 236.

\textsuperscript{63} Martin Gilbert, Churchill: A Life, 467.
The 1925 Budget gives insight into the major issues in British politics during this time. The centerpiece of Churchill’s 1925 Budget was a substantial reduction of the income tax. At this point income tax rested primarily on the shoulders of the middle class and was levied only on fees, salaries, and company profits. Therefore a reduction of the tax would greatly benefit the British middle class. Churchill also proposed a new contributory state pension scheme for the benefit of the working classes to go along with the tax reduction. He explained to Baldwin that it would be hard to give tax breaks to the professional class,

unless from the standpoint of social and political justice a relief to the direct taxpayer should be accompanied by a benefit to the mass of the public ... The assumption by the State of the very large capital liabilities involved in the new insurance for the benefit of the mass of the people might well be taken as an equipoise in the general scheme of the Budget. 64

Churchill was constrained somewhat in that the Treasury was seen as a controller of spending instead of a financier for government programs. In order to finance social reform measures Churchill began campaigns to cut spending which provoked some controversy. He acknowledged the need to spend more for the Air Force and to maintain a certain level in the Army, yet saw the Admiralty’s plans as grandiose and wasteful as he had previously done when President of the Board of Trade in 1908. 65 When Churchill found out that the Admiralty wanted increases in expenditures to counter Japan’s navy he retorted claiming that if the Admiralty got what they wanted there would be “nothing for the taxpayer and nothing for social reform.” He did not foresee a war with Japan and

64 Paul Addison, Churchill on the Home Front 1900-1955, 236-237.
65 Martin Gilbert, Churchill: A Life, 468.
eventually the Admiralty accepted Churchill's imposed ceiling on expenditure.\textsuperscript{66} He urged colleagues to "concentrate on a few great issues in the social sphere, such as the solutions of the housing problem and an "all-in" insurance scheme, rather than fritter away our resources on a variety of services ...."\textsuperscript{67}

One such cause which Churchill embraced became a major contribution to the social welfare state. He saw an opportunity to extend social insurance by working with the Minister of Health, Neville Chamberlain, on what would become the Widows, Orphans, and Old Age Pensions Bill. Neville Chamberlain recorded in his diary on November 26, 1924:

Saw Winston Churchill ... about pensions for widows and old age .... I first gave him the history of the investigations ... and he then expounded to me the picture which, as he said, he had made for himself of his next budget. He was anxious to reduce direct taxation in order to relieve industry ... But he would have to balance the benefits by doing something for the working classes, and for this he looked to pensions ... it would have to be my bill, but he would have to find the money, and the question was would I start in with him, would I enter partnership and work the plan with him.... It seemed plain to me that he regretted that he was not Minister of Health. He spoke of the position, 'you are in the van, you can raise a monument, you can leave a name in history.'\textsuperscript{68}

The first scheme introduced in 1908 by Asquith had entitled men and women over 70 a pension of 5 shillings per week. Although a modest amount, this was funded completely out of taxation and therefore seen by the Treasury at the time as too expensive. Lloyd George and Churchill had later come along believing that pensions should be expanded and built into a forthcoming scheme of health insurance. Lloyd George offered a 1911 widows' and orphans' pensions bill but it died due to opposition by nervous insurance companies. After the war, popular opinion favored expanding social insurance, and a

\textsuperscript{66} Paul Addison, \textit{Churchill on the Home Front 1900-1955}, 238.
\textsuperscript{67} Martin Gilbert, \textit{Churchill: A Life}, 469.
\textsuperscript{68} Keith Feiling, \textit{The Life of Neville Chamberlain}, 131.
civil servant committee in 1924 urged the Labour Chancellor at the time to implement old age, widows, and orphan pensions. The Labour Government would fall before the recommendations could be implemented; but Stanley Baldwin's Conservative shadow government, with the help of Neville Chamberlain, was already investigating the idea of creating a single insurance scheme which included pensions, health, and unemployment insurance. Churchill found Chamberlain's bill to be a perfect bridge from his old reform efforts and also a way to counter his reduction of the income tax by helping the working class.

In preparation for his Budget, Churchill interrogated officials looking for possible flaws in the proposition of an expanded social insurance program and assessed possible opposition. On March 4th prior to announcing his Budget, Lord Weir headed an employers' delegation to lobby Churchill and warn him against the extension of social insurance. Their argument held that industry could not stand the burden of growing social expenditure, which was higher in Britain than many other industrialized countries at the time. Churchill responded to this claim stating:

"Personally, I feel that the system of insurance, whatever may be the effects on the self-reliance of the individual, is going to be an absolutely inseparable element in our social life and eventually must have the effect of attaching the minds of the people, although their language and mood in many cases may not seem to indicate it -- it must lead to the stability and order of the general structure."  

It is clear that Churchill recognized that the government had both the ability and the responsibility to provide for its citizens. It can also be construed that Churchill saw action in this matter as a political necessity. When political necessities exist it is difficult

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70 Paul Addison, 'Churchill and Social Reform' in Robert Blake and W.R. Louis (eds.), *Churchill*, 68.
for one not to attempt to capitalize on the political benefits. As in previous times, Churchill had seen his crossing the floor both times as political necessities. He had seen unemployment insurance and the devolution of the House of Lords’ power as political necessities. Whether his actions at this point were genuinely humanitarian or politically motivated, one can only reach a speculative answer. It is my contention that Churchill convinced himself that the welfare of the people must be addressed and that he had the answers to solve these social problems. The extraordinary ability of politicians to convince themselves of their correctness on an issue must not be forgotten. In Churchill’s case it cannot be understated that this tendency proved true to a much greater degree than his contemporaries. Churchill’s proclivity to see himself as an authority in all areas of politics does not in itself void him of genuineness in this respect. It is undeniable that Churchill played a crucial role in not only arguing for social insurance but also working to enact measures to widen the social welfare state. It is with this action that one must note a level of concern and dedication to the issue of social reform.

Another issue over which Churchill toiled in preparation for his 1925 Budget was the idea of returning to the gold standard. His advisors at the Treasury attempted to convince him that returning to the pre-war gold standard would reduce unemployment. Churchill, as he often did, gathered proponents of both sides where Otto Niemeyer (Controller of Finance) and Sir John Bradbury argued against Reginald McKenna and John Maynard Keynes at a dinner party Churchill hosted. The McKenna/Keynes argument claimed that deflation and unemployment would follow if there were a return to the gold standard. When asked by Churchill what choice he would make as a politician...
McKenna replied, "There is no escape. You will have to go back; but it will be hell."

Churchill was uneasy in the Treasury Department's recommendation. He told his officials on January 29, 1925 that, "to go back to Gold favoured the special interests of finance at the expense of the interests of production." Again on February 22 he told them "I would rather see Finance less proud and Industry more content." Keynes would later retort (highlighting the same previously mentioned concerns of Churchill) in his pamphlet entitled *The Economic Consequences of Mr. Churchill* where he argued that the return to the pre-war standards would involve "overvaluation of sterling where export industries would attempt to reduce production costs by cutting workers' wages. Keynes' choice of a title is somewhat misleading as his argument blamed Churchill's advisors more than the man himself. In his Budget speech Churchill announced the return to the pre-war gold standard at $4.86 to the pound. This move made the Conservative Party, the Treasury, and the Bank of England very happy and calmed those of Tory leaning who showed distrust in Churchill. Labour also supported the return to the gold standard at this time, and criticized Churchill when the pound faced devaluation. Churchill would later recognize the return as a mistake but blamed the Governor of the Bank of England, Montagu Norman for this.

The return to the gold standard served as only one aspect to this famous freshman Budget that Churchill announced before the House of Commons on April 28, 1925. His Budget centered on the introduction of the new reform measures and changes in the

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72 Martin Gilbert, *Churchill: A Life*, 469.
74 Ibid., 113.
75 Ibid., 114.
income tax in the interests of the middle and working classes. He stated in his speech that when misfortune had descended upon a workman's home:

It leaves this once happy family in the grip of the greatest calamity. Although the threat of adversity has been active all these years, no effective provision has been made by the great mass of the labouring class for their widows and families in the event of death. I am not reproaching them, but it is the greatest need at the present time. If I may change to a military metaphor, it is not the sturdy marching troops that need extra reward and indulgence. It is the stragglers, the weak, the wounded, the veterans, the widows and orphans to whom the ambulances of State aid should be directed. 

He continued his speech announcing that Chamberlain would soon introduce an old age widows’ and pensions bill. Under this plan widows and orphans would receive pensions at the point of bereavement making 200,000 women and 350,000 children immediate beneficiaries. Other benefits would begin at age 65 and the “restrictions, inquisitions and means tests” would be eliminated altogether. In his speech Churchill took some credit for the pensions reform referencing his newfound Toryism while also alluding to his continuity in the arena of social reform. He stated that, “The old laissez-faire or laissez-aller ideas of mid-Victorian radicalism have been superseded, and no one has done more to supersede them than the right. Hon. Member for Caernarvon Boroughs [Lloyd George]. I am proud to have been associated with him from the very beginning of those large insurance ideas.” The issue of his political consistency was tacitly addressed by Churchill and once again he alluded to his constancy in the area of reform and his ability to conduct bipartisan politics.

Neville Chamberlain wrote in his diary following Churchill’s Budget speech on May 1, 1925:

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76 Martin Gilbert, *Churchill: A Life*, 471.
77 Ibid., 471.
"Winston’s exposition of the Budget was a masterly performance, and though my office and some of my colleagues are indignant at his taking to himself the credit for a scheme which belongs to the Ministry of Health, I did not myself think that I had any reason to complain of what he said. In a sense it is his scheme. We were pledged to something of the kind, but I don’t think we should have done it this year if he had not made it part of his Budget scheme, and in my opinion he does deserve special personal credit for his initiative and drive."\(^{79}\)

Chamberlain and Churchill’s scheme did not guarantee against poverty but nevertheless helped. It cost the government £4 Million a year but paled in comparison to war pensions, which cost £67.3 Million per year. It served as the first contributory scheme of state pensions and covered roughly 15 million people freeing thousands from depending upon the poor law.\(^{80}\) It is Martin Gilbert’s contention that social reform was the ‘great cause’ in which Churchill was immersed at the time. He claims that, “[Churchill’s] concern was the hardship that fell upon a family after the prolonged unemployment, old age, sickness or death of the breadwinner.”\(^{81}\) Paul Addison believes Churchill’s involvement “underlined his commitment to the idea of the state as the provider of a safety net.” He also believes that Churchill recognized the long-term effects this project would have upon the Exchequer and the forthcoming apprehensions of industrialists. Therefore it is his contention that “perhaps ... the act was a lesson for Churchill in the limits of social insurance: a terminus beyond which no further extension was feasible.”\(^{82}\) This particular experiment is in fact the last major social project in which Churchill engaged on his own initiative. From this point on legislation in response to pressure rather than self-motivated actions are mostly taken by Churchill in regards to social reform. It is unfair to wholeheartedly conclude that he had reached his personal

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\(^{79}\) Keith Feiling, *The Life of Neville Chamberlain*, 131.  
\(^{80}\) Paul Addison, *Churchill on the Home Front* 1900-1955, 243.  
\(^{81}\) Martin Gilbert, *Churchill: A Life*, 470.  
\(^{82}\) Paul Addison, *Churchill on the Home Front* 1900-1955, 243.
limits concerning social legislation. At the same time it must be noted that his work in the domestic reform arena after his term as Chancellor of the Exchequer became much more reactionary in comparison to his earlier career.

In addition to the announcement of Chamberlain’s bill, Churchill also addressed changes in the national income tax that reflected his interest in the plight of the middle and working classes. Churchill cut the income tax just as other Chancellors since Gladstone had aimed to do. What made his budget different was shifting the direct tax burden from active to passive wealth by increasing death duties.\(^{83}\) Churchill announced a 10 per cent reduction of income tax on the lowest income groups hoping that in Martin Gilbert’s terms, “that by liberating the production of new wealth from some of the shackles of taxation the Budget might stimulate enterprise and accelerate industrial revival.”\(^{84}\)

Although known for his extravagant spending habits and constant need of income, as Chancellor of the Exchequer Churchill exercised control over public monetary matters. The post-war period allowed him to trim military spending while giving benefits to the middle and lower class through Chamberlain’s pensions bill and a reduction in the income tax in this 1925 Budget.

In his subsequent years at the Treasury, Churchill faced several obstacles due to the changes in the political and industrial climate. In regard to the concept of Free Trade he accepted only minor moves such as imperial preference and the safeguarding of industries against competition abroad. One of his first actions as Chancellor was in fact a new “Safeguarding Bill” which Liberals used to accuse him of abandoning Free Trade. His astute political mind quickly went to work picking them off one by one in showing

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\(^{83}\) Paul Addison, *Winston Churchill: The Unexpected Hero*, 238.

\(^{84}\) Martin Gilbert, *Churchill: A Life*, 471.
they had each supported similar measures in the past.\textsuperscript{85} Churchill shot down tariff reformers who pushed for protective duties in the iron and steel industries giving no concessions to those who pushed for concepts which he viewed as socialistic.\textsuperscript{86} Churchill was initially seen as a good person to pick up for the Conservatives as a free trader in hopes that some Liberal voters would join their camp.\textsuperscript{87} However, his decision to return to the Gold Standard as well as the events of the General Strike in 1926 would hurt his reputation in both Liberal and Labour circles.

In late April of 1926 a temporary wage subsidy to prevent a possible miners’ strike ended with no resolution to the issue. A general strike was threatened by the General Council of the TUC in support of the miners which prompted the Baldwin Government and Churchill to recognize a strike must be prevented. Judging by Churchill’s prior strike credentials, Baldwin chose to put him in an “ill-defined” role with an editorial capacity at the \textit{British Gazette}, which served as an emergency government newspaper to battle the strikers.\textsuperscript{88} In this role Churchill was prevented from engaging in incidents to the degree of Tonypandy or Llanelli and he was unable to avoid the public image of the “class warrior” which he had gained in his earlier years. Labour greatly emphasized Churchill’s happiness during the strike. A character in H.G. Well’s novel \textit{Meanwhile} (1927) describes the General Strike to a friend stating, “As might be expected Winston has gone clean off his head. He hasn’t been so happy since he crawled on his belly and helped snipe in Sidney Street. Whatever anyone else may think, Winston

\textsuperscript{86} Paul Addison, \textit{Winston Churchill: The Unexpected Hero}, 115.
\textsuperscript{88} Paul Addison, \textit{Winston Churchill: The Unexpected Hero}, 118.
believes that he is fighting a tremendous revolution and holding it down, fist and jaw. He careers around staring, inactive, gaping, crowded London, looking for barricades.\textsuperscript{89} Whether his words and actions merited this view, allusions to Churchill's past encounters such as the misconstrued Sidney Street affair, where he only observed a robbery and police standoff, testify to the continual accusations that he was in fact trigger-happy and looking for an incident. Churchill saw the General Strike as challenging the Constitution yet viewed the problems within the coal industry as purely industrial. The Canadian Prime Minister, Mackenzie King, put the blame completely on Churchill noting in his diary:

"Baldwin did splendidly till the last moment, he has been influenced by Winston Churchill against his better judgment ... Churchill may be shot, anything may happen & a revolution greater than anything England has ever known brought on ... I feel sorry for Baldwin, for the King, & many others – for Churchill I feel a scorn too great for words. He has been the evil genius in this."\textsuperscript{90}

Churchill seemed to be an easy scapegoat to blame considering his past relations with social unrest and his disdain for the strike as a bargaining tool. Yet, regardless of these negative accusations, Churchill himself worked to bring about a compromise and the miners back to work following the end of the General Strike. Although the General Strike ended after nine days, the problems within the coal industry continued without much help from the Baldwin Government.\textsuperscript{91} Tom Jones, the Assistant Secretary of the Cabinet, comments in his diary that Churchill was at work on securing an agreement in

\textsuperscript{89} H.G. Wells, \textit{Meanwhile}, 106.
\textsuperscript{90} Paul Addison, \textit{Winston Churchill: The Unexpected Hero}, 120.
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid., 119.
September only to be "thwarted by the minowners in the end." Churchill would later support the Trade Union Act of 1927 which made general strikes illegal as well as prohibited civil servants from joining trade unions that were associated with the Labour Party and reduced political funds available to trade unions. Churchill was in fact anti-union in that he had disdain for the use of the strike as a weapon. However, the ability of unions to create a dialogue between workers and the government that could yield results and rectify disputes was an aspect in which Churchill fully believed. This sentiment which Churchill held fit within the philosophy of "Tory Democracy" which assumed that the Tory in power would always show benevolence toward the working class. This belief also naively assumed that a union without the weapon of the strike could still maintain bargaining power with the government of the employer. In 1928 the Kent local secretary of the Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers in fact invited Churchill to become a member due to his hobby of brick laying. Churchill replied in writing stating, "I should be very pleased to join the union if you are of the opinion that it would not be unwelcome to your members." After paying his dues and being formally admitted at the Treasury the union's Executive Council ruled him ineligible.

During his time as Chancellor of the Exchequer Churchill also offered reform ideas with respect to the way economic matters were to be handled by the British government. The Great Economic Slump of 1929-1932 followed the Black Tuesday Wall Street Crash. Britain, as did the United States, faced major economic problems and

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unemployment as a result. It was offered by the Left that the poor economic times
proved capitalism had failed and the system needed major reform. The slump in Britain
had revived the protectionist cause in the Conservative Party prompting Lord
Beaverbrook to begin a campaign for “Empire Free Trade” in 1930. This move began to
shake the Conservative leadership making Neville Chamberlain look to be the most likely
successor to Baldwin. These political events prompted Churchill to begin what Paul
Addison calls a “dignified retreat” from Free Trade. On June 19, 1930, Churchill
delivered a lecture at Oxford University entitled “Parliamentary Government and the
Economic Problem.” In his speech he pointed out that since the war many of the issues
facing Parliament were not political but economic. It was his contention that a system of
government “seems to lose much of its authority when based upon universal suffrage.”
He continued by arguing:

Everyone knows what people wish. They wish for more prosperity. How to get
it? That is the grim question, and neither the electors nor their representatives are
competent to answer it. Governments and the various parties moving in the
political sphere are not free to proclaim the proper remedies in their completeness,
even if they knew them. All kinds of popular cries can be presented for an
election, and each may contain some measure of truth. None in itself will provide
us with the key. For this reason opinion has been turning towards the treatment of
the subject on national and non-party lines.

Consequently he would recommend the creation of a subordinate “Economic Parliament”
made up of people with technical and business qualifications. Churchill did not believe
a single political party would adopt necessary, but unpopular, economic policies for fear

96 Ibid., 129.
98 Ibid., 238.
99 Ibid., 239.
of their electoral consequences.\textsuperscript{100} This proposition testifies to the pragmatical side of Churchill and his self-image as one who stood above party politics.

As the decade of the 1930’s began and Labour once again took control of the government, issues such as the economy and international relations began to occupy Churchill’s mind more so than the topic of social reform. Churchill’s career would enter a new stage where he would play a minor role in domestic politics until the realities of a second World War created new demands on British society.

\textsuperscript{100} Roland Quinault, “Churchill and Democracy,” 210.
Despite occasional interventions, Winston Churchill postponed the subject of social reform after resigning from the Shadow Cabinet in 1931. Following the Conservative defeat in 1929 he played the role of opposition spokesman on economic issues but by 1931 had shifted his focus to India where he led Tories in opposition to Baldwin's imperial policies.¹ From 1931 to 1939 Churchill found himself in his so-called "Wilderness Years." During this time India, foreign policy, rearmament, and writing would occupy most of his attention. Both his country and his political colleagues saw him at this time as being somewhat antiquated. Paul Addison notes that Churchill's aforementioned Romanes Lecture at Oxford in 1930 was "more than a farewell to free trade."² It was a farewell to the social and economic questions he had tackled with such confidence in the Edwardian era, and with much bafflement as Chancellor of the Exchequer." The defense of British rule in India became Churchill's new cause to gain political power where, it appears, his ambitions overrode his convictions.³

The issue of India hardly pertains to the topic at hand nor does the topic of his growing push for rearmament to meet Germany. Excluding his international concerns,

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¹ Paul Addison, 'Churchill and Social Reform' in Robert Blake and W.R. Louis (eds.), *Churchill*, 70.
² See page 63.
Churchill’s primary focus in politics would continue to be economic matters. There are rare instances during this time when Churchill rose to speak in Parliament about social concerns. One such outburst came in March of 1936 where Churchill shocked the House of Commons by attacking the Household Means Test on the unemployed. He stated:

> When we were introducing the legislation in regard to Old Age Pensions the whole trend of it ... was to consolidate the home, and give the old man and the old woman who sit by the ingle nook something to pay their way in the cottage home, something to give them the right to sit there and make it possible for their dependants and children to support them. It was a matter of weaving together the ties of the family. Now this household means test, which is so much considered at the present time and which has much to be said for it plausibly at first sight, is found to work a splitting function in regard to this home life, and to invite people in the same family, under the same roof, to ask, ‘What are you doing, what are you bringing in?’ and to assess in a meticulous and invidious fashion each other’s relative contribution to the maintenance of the family circle.4

It appears that beyond such outbursts, Churchill during this period of his political life viewed social reform as a matter of past accomplishments in which he had played a crucial role instead of a current pressing concern. The causes of social reform that had occupied his early Parliamentary career and had resurfaced during his tenure at the Treasury seemed to dissipate in his mind during this period. His preoccupation with India and the growing threat of fascist Germany caused many to be skeptical of his direction.

Distrust in Churchill continued during these “wilderness years” and colleagues issued harsh criticism of his character. His friend Lord Beaverbrook would note, “He has been everything in every Party. He has held every view on every question ... he is utterly unreliable in his mental attitude.”5 Churchill continued to battle the issue of party loyalty.

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5 Paul Addison, Winston Churchill: The Unexpected Hero, 135.
as he had done throughout his career. Neville Chamberlain would write in 1935 that, "As for Winston he makes a good many speeches considerably fortified by cocktails and old brandies. Some of them are very good speeches in the old style, but they no longer convince. His following tends to shrink rather than to increase." Not only was Churchill mistrusted in terms of partisan issues but, he was also viewed by colleagues as somewhat out of touch with the times as evidenced by his Victorian Period political mannerisms.

Churchill would devote much of his time to writing instead of politics during the decade of the 1930's. His literary career during this time was spurred by both political and monetary reasons. He did not rewrite history; but purposely chose topics that involved himself and his family in an attempt to rectify any political harm or criticism of the past. *My Early Life*, published in October, 1930, expounded upon his childhood, adventures in the military, and his early life in Parliament. His major work during this decade would be the great biography *Marlborough: His Life and Times*; the first volume was published in autumn of 1933 and the fourth and final volume in 1938. He would also sign a contract for *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples*, which he began in August of 1938 with a 1,000 word-a-day target. By September of 1939 he suspended work on the almost completed project amassing roughly 530,000 words. Churchill would publish a series of biographical profiles published as *Great Contemporaries* in 1937 while also contributing weekly commentaries in the *Evening Standard*, which were

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8 Ibid., 431.
syndicated throughout Europe. Churchill was probably the highest paid English author of his day although his earnings hardly matched his lavish spending habits.9

Churchill's political resurrection came with the advent of World War II. Following Chamberlain's radio announcement that Britain was at war with Germany, Churchill made his way to the House of Commons. Although being out of office for over ten years, such was his stature that Churchill was asked to address the Commons immediately. Subsequently after the debate he was summoned to Chamberlain's room and offered his former post at the Admiralty, which he had held from 1911 to 1915.10 As the war continued on, there grew pressure for a change of Prime Minister, most strongly after the military failure in Norway. Chamberlain recognized a coalition government was inevitable and Labour had refused to serve under his leadership. Viscount Halifax looked to be a promising candidate for the post, but he quickly removed himself from the picture knowing he could not operate a war from the House of Lords. Chamberlain's advice to install Churchill as Prime Minister was seen by many as a dangerous gamble but power was transferred on May 10 of 1940 with the cooperation of the Labour Party. Churchill of course saw this opportunity in quite a different light remarking, "I felt as though I were walking with destiny and that all my past life had been a preparation for this hour and for this trial."11

The issue of social policy for Winston Churchill during his first tenure as Prime Minister was, as Paul Addison describes, "less a problem for the future than a record of

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progress accomplished.\footnote{12} He offers this as one reason why Churchill would take a more negative view of the issue of reform while Prime Minister. One explanation for Churchill’s apparent departure from radical social reform is that he believed Britain had achieved an adequate level of social reform. Another explanation of his Premiership’s hands-off approach is that military matters superseded any debate on domestic and long-time partisan issues. After all he served not only as Prime Minister but also as the self-appointed Minister of Defense overseeing all military decisions. The future existence of Britain was uncertain as Germany waged war, and thus a fine line exists between Churchill’s lack of concern and his lack of time.

Kevin Jefferys suggests that Churchill’s lukewarm approach to social reform during World War II was also shared by many in the coalition leadership such as Beaverbrook and Kingsley Wood. The Conservative leadership therefore left these matters to younger and more junior members of the government such as R.A. Butler, who would become Minister of Education in 1941. Labour leaders on the contrary held key positions in regards to social reform. Men such as Bevin, Morrison, and Dalton often justified their participation in the coalition with the notion that they were securing Britain’s future economic and social welfare.\footnote{13} This being said, the Conservatives still exercised the most control in the government. While R.A. Butler controlled education policy, Lord Portal and W.S. Morrison were in charge of housing, Henry Willink at the Ministry of Health, and Kingsley Wood at the Treasury.\footnote{14}

\footnote{13} Kevin Jeffrys, “British Politics and Social Policy During the Second World War,” The Historical Journal 30, 125.
\footnote{14} Ibid., 126.
Churchill would first encounter social policy issues as Prime Minister with respect to R.A. Butler’s work at the Board of Education. After two months as Minister, “RAB” recommended to the Prime Minister an increase in technical training, a settlement with churches concerning church schools and religious instruction, and a discussion of the role and future for public schools. Churchill would respond in a crushing manner to RAB stating it would be “the greatest mistake to raise the 1902 controversy during the war, and certainly cannot contemplate a new Education Bill.” He would continue to stress the war’s priority stating:

No one can possibly tell what the financial and economic state of the country will be when the war is over. Your main task at present is to get the schools working as well as possible under all the difficulties of air attack, evacuation, etc. If you can add to this industrial and technical training, enabling men not required for the Army to take their places promptly in munitions, industry or radio work, this would be most useful. We cannot have any party politics in war time, and both your second and third points raise these in a most acute and dangerous form. Meanwhile you have a good scope as an administrator.15

This line of reasoning is representative of Churchill’s domestic strategy as a wartime leader. Issues that could be delayed and issues that were susceptible to partisan bickering were topics which he wanted to avoid. It must be noted that Churchill himself was not clueless as to the issue of education during this time. A government official recorded in 1942 after speaking with Churchill that he was glad public schools had their attention and “wanted 60-70 per cent of the places to be filled by bursaries – not by examination alone but on the recommendation of the counties and the great cities.” Churchill did not want to send people to schools due to their “accident of birth and wealth

but by the accident — for it was equally accident — of ability."\(^{16}\) Churchill, when speaking in 1940 at Harrow School, told pupils that once the war was over the advantages of Public Schools must be broadened and extended to others.\(^{17}\) It appears that Churchill was not against education legislation but opposed to it simply during the time of war. Clearly he recognized faults in the current education system and felt that at the appropriate time action should be taken.

For the first two years of the war, almost all political energy was directed to the war effort. Kevin Jefferys believes the appointment of the Labour veteran Arthur Greenwood as the minister responsible for reconstruction suggested the low priority of reform during this time.\(^{18}\) Greenwood himself found it difficult to enact any policy initiatives in this position. Hugh Dalton, the Minister of Economic Warfare and later President of the Board of Trade, would suggest that Churchill was "allergic to post-war policy" in which he succeeded in the most part of avoiding domestic issues which could threaten his coalition's unity.\(^{19}\) The first half of the war was absent of social initiatives and reflected the mood of the Conservative Party. There was lingering resentment over the removal of Chamberlain in 1940, which prompted some backbenchers to voice disapproval of Churchill's leadership.\(^{20}\) This would coincide later with Labour's growing tendency to vote against the coalition government in 1942. Some within the Labour Party began to fear a repetition of "the 1918 trick" where they would be kept in

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\(^{16}\) Anthony Howard, *RAB: The Life of R. A. Butler*, 115.
\(^{17}\) John Wheeler-Bennett, *Action this Day: Working with Churchill*, 74.
\(^{19}\) Ibid., 125.
\(^{20}\) Ibid., 126.
government until victory was seen and then pushed back to minority political status. It was at this time that the famous Beveridge Report entered the political forefront.

William Beveridge's publication in 1942 helped to transform the coalition government's social policy and forced Churchill and his ministers to pay attention to the concept of postwar reconstruction. The reaction Churchill had to this report helps to clarify his position on social reform during this stage in his life and allows some conclusions to be drawn in regard to his opinion on the subject of reform as a whole.

William Beveridge had been asked to chair a minor government committee on insurance benefits in 1941 and he used this position to create a blueprint for post-war social reform. The report called for a comprehensive system of social security based on rates of subsistence along with a new health service. Jose Harris suggests that this work's significance is not the originality of its ideas but the "successful synthesis and transmission of plans to rationalize the disjointed insurance schemes which existed before the war." Beveridge's plan which included family allowances, a National Health Service, and policies to prevent mass unemployment, was met by much popular acclaim. Churchill and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Kingsley Wood, feared the proposals would place too large of a burden on post-war industry. This fear which both Churchill and Wood shared was not held by the majority of people as the Beveridge Report had quickly gained popular support among the masses. Churchill could also not afford to distance himself from Labour leaders who supported Beveridge and could bring problems on the Coalition. The War Cabinet accepted Churchill's proposal to halt social

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22 Ibid., 129.
legislation during wartime, yet preparation for post-war reconstruction commenced during this time especially within the Labour camp.\(^23\)

Beveridge himself had cordial relations with Churchill during the inter-war years yet both had grown intellectually estranged since their earlier Edwardian reform stages. Jose Harris believes the war had reinforced Churchill’s beliefs in traditional values whereas it gave Beveridge “an almost extrasensory consciousness of revolutionary change.” Churchill at this point saw Beveridge as an “impractical visionary.”\(^24\) Harris contends that what hurt Beveridge in the eyes of the government was the manner in which he solicited the advance publication of his report. It was his behavior which people had a problem with. It appeared to be a usurpation of the “regular policymaking machine” and a breach of protocol. He would not play an official role in policy-making for the rest of the war but he had forced the coalition government to address his cause nonetheless.\(^25\)

There is some speculation regarding Churchill’s motives for delaying real execution of the Beveridge Plan. Jose Harris states that Churchill believed the planning of reconstruction should wait until after the war and a general election to test popular support before he could commit himself.\(^26\) Clement Attlee stated, “I think the real reason was that Winston planned to come in as the first post-war Prime Minister and he thought it would be a nice thing to have the Beveridge Report to put through as an act of his


\(^24\) Jose Harris, \textit{William Beveridge: A Biography}, 369.

\(^25\) Ibid., 435.

\(^26\) Ibid., 424.
It can therefore be construed that Attlee did not believe Churchill was opposed to enacting the Beveridge Report. Paul Addison believes this is highly plausible but acknowledges that Conservative implementation would have been organized differently than the Labour Government's. If Churchill did not want to avoid reform in 1943 he wanted to delay reform until after the war. This would prove difficult for him and he would face electoral repercussions as a result. Slowly concessions were given to both sides of the isle as he walked a thin line between handling a war and appeasing his coalition government.

After the debate on the Beveridge Report it was decided to create another official committee, without Beveridge included, to determine what the government was to do concerning social reform. Once Conservatives realized they could not ignore the report they tended to welcome it in principle and then whittle it with criticism. Although both Conservative and Labour members now backed social reform in principle, there were few signs of a consensus on welfare issues. Labour accepted coalition policy as a minimum installment of reform while Conservatives believed this to be a maximum for a post-war administration. Kevin Jefferys states:

The fact that both parties operated within the same political framework made a certain level of agreement inevitable, and the war had clearly brought social reform to the forefront of politics in such a way that it could not be ignored by any post-war government. But the overt hostility of the early war years and the differing interpretations given to coalition policy after 1943 make it difficult to endorse the idea that Labour and Conservative supporters were coming to have certain beliefs in common. Apart from the recognition that particular issues

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28 Ibid., 73.
30 Ibid., 127.
would have to be tackled, the parties were in many ways as far apart on social issues as they had been before 1939.\textsuperscript{31}

On the 21\textsuperscript{st} of March 1943, Churchill announced that his government would prepare a “Four-Year Plan” for post-war reconstruction. He recognized that the only way his party could remain in office was to compromise with the Beveridge Plan. If he could not avoid the report then he would appropriate it.\textsuperscript{32} In a radio speech Churchill stated, “You must rank me and my colleagues as strong partisans of national compulsory insurance for all classes for all purposes from the cradle to the grave.”\textsuperscript{33} Churchill began to prepare for an inevitable election in which his party must appear in step with such popular reform measures. The government’s white paper during this time would reaffirm many recommendations made by Beveridge but abandon his crucial emphasis on providing minimum subsistence income. Adopting a party platform that struck a resemblance to the Report looked to be in the Conservatives’ favor for a looming election.\textsuperscript{34}

Early in 1943 the government accepted the idea of reforming the nation’s health services as advocated by Ernest Brown and William Beveridge. The Ministry of Health published a white paper later in February 1944 which committed the government to a new and free national health service and served as a precursor to what Labour would pass during their administration after 1945.\textsuperscript{35} The coalition government by spring of 1945 had prepared draft bills which included not only this plan for national health services but also

\textsuperscript{31} Kevin Jeffrys, “British Politics and Social Policy During the Second World War,” 143.
\textsuperscript{33} Ralph Raico, ‘Rethinking Churchill’ in John V. Denson (ed.), \textit{The Costs of War: America’s Pyrrhic Victories}, 359.
\textsuperscript{34} Kevin Jeffrys, “British Politics and Social Policy During the Second World War,” 131.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 133.
comprehensive social insurance and family allowances.\textsuperscript{36} It appears as though Churchill aimed to enact this type of legislation once elected to a second term. It was in this context that the general election of 1945 took place.

Henry Pelling states, "Not until Germany appeared on the point of collapse in late 1944 did the prospect of peace revive the conflict of party."\textsuperscript{37} The existing House of Commons had been elected in 1935 and of course the minority parties were the most unhappy with the current makeup. Conservatives favored a new election soon hoping to capitalize on the war while Labour assumed to delay a little longer hoping that the Conservatives' popularity would die down after some time had passed. On May 18, 1945 Churchill sent a letter to Attlee offering an early dissolution of Parliament or the continuation of the coalition government until the end of the war with Japan. Attlee responded suggesting an amendment to this letter which would appease the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party in continuing the coalition. The amendment was the inclusion of the sentence: "In the meantime [during the continued Coalition] we would together do our utmost to implement the proposals for social security and full employment contained in the White Papers which we have laid before Parliament."\textsuperscript{38} Despite this effort, Attlee would be overruled by his party executive in continuing to participate in a coalition thus prompting Churchill to call for elections in July. Clearly Attlee wanted the government's focus to be on social security and employment, but it was unclear what Churchill would choose to focus on during the reconstruction process.

\textsuperscript{36} Paul Addison, 'Churchill and Social Reform' in Robert Blake and W.R. Louis (eds.), \textit{Churchill}, 73.
\textsuperscript{37} Henry Pelling, "The 1945 General Election Reconsidered," \textit{The Historical Journal} 23, 401.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 401.
Churchill became Prime Minister of a caretaker government mainly of Conservatives, National Liberals, and remaining civil servants. He and Attlee both gave election radio broadcasts where in one Churchill made the famous comment that a Socialist government "would have to fall back on some form of Gestapo, no doubt very humanely directed in the first instance."\(^{39}\) The socialist scare tactic which Churchill had employed in the past once again reared its head once peacetime politics resumed. This sentiment would evoke the events of Tonypandy and Churchill’s handling of the General Strike in many Labour-leaning minds. The Tory campaign manifesto was entitled “Mr. Churchill’s declaration of policy to the electors,” hoping to capitalize on his leadership and reputation.\(^{40}\) These two different yet equally strong aspects of Churchill’s reputation testify as to the divided opinions the nation held of their wartime leader facing postwar reconstruction. It was thought that his leadership would make the election outcome favorable to the Conservative Party but results told a different story. Labour would capture 393 seats to 213 seats for the Conservatives and their allies, giving Labour an overall majority of 148 that has only been topped by Tony Blair’s Labour Party in 1997.\(^{41}\)

Several explanations have been offered as to the electoral outcome in 1945. Paul Addison believes Churchill failed to recognize the importance of housing and employment policy to the electorate while campaigning. Although the leadership which he had provided was believed to guarantee a win in his reelection attempt, it is widely held that his continual management throughout the war had drained him both mentally and physically.

\(^{39}\) Henry Pelling, “The 1945 General Election Reconsidered,” 404.
\(^{40}\) Ibid., 407.
\(^{41}\) Ibid., 408.
and physically thus preventing him from campaigning to his fullest ability. The Times remarked that Churchill had used the wrong tactics in the election and was to blame for “emphasizing the narrow animosities of the party fight.” The Manchester Guardian believed the mistake was Churchill’s attempt “to turn the election into a personal plebiscite.” Churchill himself did not subscribe to these points of view. His wartime memoirs explain that he believed the defeat was due to weakness in the Conservative organization. Many of the Tories had gone to serve in the war where Labour agents were in factories and ready for political activity. He states, “They all did work on the home front which no one else could have done, and at the same time they maintained – and who could blame them? – their party affiliations.”

After 1945 Churchill had nowhere to go but down. Roy Jenkins suggests:

He was always subject to bouts of ‘black-dog’ depression, the threat of which became greater as his life moved to a stage when windows were more likely to close than open. The best prophylactic for black dog that he knew was red boxes and the fleet of private secretaries and sense of purpose and power which went with them.

The period between 1945 and 1951 saw Churchill as Leader of the Opposition during which he largely attacked the Attlee Government’s economic record. From 1945 to 1947 Churchill did not participate in any debates concerning nationalization, social insurance, or the National Health Service. In fact it was not until the spring of 1946 when the government lowered food rations below the wartime level that Churchill showed any fire. He told Moran, “A short time ago I was ready to retire and die gracefully. Now I’m

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going to stay and have them out ... I'll tear their bleeding entrails out of them [Labour Government]." In terms of social policy however he would contest the idea that Labour had been solely responsible for welfare measures and he looked to gain credit for his coalition government in the formation of the British welfare state. In a Commons debate in 1949 Churchill declared:

It really is remarkable that the accusation of being callous about unemployment or the welfare of the people should be launched against me, the author of the labour exchanges and the first Unemployment Insurance Act, and, as Conservative Chancellor of the Exchequer, of the Old Age Pensions Act being lowered from 70 to 65 and the institution of the Widows and Orphans Act. When the right hon. and learned Gentleman or anybody on those benches can show services to the working classes equal to those I have mentioned they will be more free to throw stones at others. All the benevolent and beneficial aspects of this Parliament were actually planned ... by the National Coalition government of which I was the head and which rested on an overall Conservative majority in the House of 150."

Although Churchill was no socialist, he was proud of his accomplishments in the arena of social reform. He was quick to point out his past efforts yet disciplined enough to maintain accuracy in his election promises. With growing budget concerns and the possibility of a Conservative win in the future general election, Churchill warned his fellow party members at the 1949 Conservative Conference. He stated, "We are not going to try to get into office by offering bribes and promises of immediate material benefit to our people ... It would be far better for us to lose the election than to win it on false pretences."

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48 Paul Addison, *Churchill on the Home Front* 1900-1955, 402
By 1951 he would be restored to office and leading a country which under the exiting Labour Government had undergone massive change in social structure and the expansion of the British welfare state. The government that Churchill regained was a different government from the one he had known during the first half of the Twentieth Century. Churchill once again sat at the helm as a new era of British politics began. Roy Jenkins states: "It is impossible to re-read the story of Churchill’s life as Prime Minister of that second government without feeling that he was gloriously unfit for office. The oxymoron is appropriate to the contradictions in his performance."\(^{49}\) Churchill was 76 at the time he formed his cabinet making him the oldest Prime Minister since William Gladstone.\(^{50}\) Prominent Conservatives such as Anthony Eden, R.A. Butler, and Harold Macmillan all joined Churchill’s cabinet where Macmillan noted, "It was fun to join again in the old scenes which reminded me of the wartime Churchill."\(^{51}\) Churchhill even attempted to recreate a coalition style government by offering the Liberal Party leader Clement Davies the post of Minister of Education. Henry Pelling believes that Davies would have accepted this post had his own party let him.\(^{52}\) Churchill chose a government that according to Ralph Raico was probably the least recognizably Conservative in history.\(^{53}\) Under his second premiership, Churchill would not attempt to undo the welfare state enacted by Labour. He actually addressed deficiencies in areas such as housing and

\(^{49}\) Roy Jenkins, *Churchill: A Biography*, 845.

\(^{50}\) Martin Gilbert, *Churchill: A Life*, 900.

\(^{51}\) Ibid., 899.


public works which were leftover from the Labour government while directing his
"leftist" Labour Minister, Walter Monckton, to appease unions at all costs.  

Earlier in 1950 Churchill had remarked to R.A. Butler that: "There will, in the future, be much less politics in social reform though much perhaps in economic breakdown." Churchills administration focused more on economic concerns during this time where there was debate about whether or not to float the pound in respect to the economic crisis. Roy Jenkins asserts that the currency issue was a constant situation where the incoming government exaggerated the poor budgetary legacy left by the former government. Despite this debate it was the desire of the Conservative Party to dismantle the economic controls implemented by the Labour government while retaining the welfare state in place. Kenneth Morgan states that, "[Winston Churchill] was above all anxious to demonstrate his capacity for ordered, peaceful statesmanship, carrying the working class with him in patriotic endeavor, and to refute early accusations that he was an unreconciled class warrior." This notion thus cued the more moderate government he would install.

As Prime Minister, Churchill would only reverse the nationalization of iron, steel and road haulage with the first two being hardly implemented and the third highly unpopular. Thereby he would leave fully intact the nationalization of coal, railways, civil aviation, electricity, gas, and the Bank of England. The main social security provisions,

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56 Paul Addison, Winston Churchill: The Unexpected Hero, 233.
57 Roy Jenkins, Churchill: A Biography, 850.
the National Health Service, and constitutional changes under Attlee such as the Second Parliament Act were all left in place. Roy Jenkins suggests, "What this Churchill government essentially did was to give the country a rest from dogma and to relax the acerbities of Crippsian austerity without setting the clock back on most of the work of the Attlee administration."\(^59\)

Churchill would maintain cordial relations with organized labour. As previously mentioned, appointing Walter Monckton as Minister of Labour helped to ease the apprehension of the trade unionists. Jenkins suggests his appointment was "like ringing up a signal that all differences would be split, all disputes would be arbitrated, and the seeds of the great inflation would be sown."\(^60\) Returning to an earlier point, Churchill had the utmost respect for trade union leaders provided they were patriotic. He would reject the idea to re-enact the Trade Disputes Act of 1927, which prevented civil servants from joining unions.\(^61\) In fact there was only one instance when the General Council of the TUC came into real conflict with the government. The TUC demanded a meeting with the Prime Minister in the summer of 1952 to discuss pay awards not automatically confirmed by the government. In the end these awards would be confirmed and unaltered.\(^62\) Churchill listened intently to the demands of the TUC according to The Times and reminded the group of his hand in creating protections for the lowest paid worker. The politics of employment had always concerned Churchill, therefore when unemployment looked to exceed half a million in June of 1952 he appointed a committee

\(^{60}\) Ibid., 500.
\(^{62}\) Ibid., 127.
to create jobs for public works yet fortunately did not have to act as the numbers quickly went down.\textsuperscript{63}

Although little legislation concerning social reform occurred during Churchill’s second administration, it must be noted that his reserve in striking down prior moves points to both his recognition of public will and his personal acceptance of the new British welfare state. Roy Jenkins believes the central achievement of this government was the restoration of the balance of British politics. He states that, “The late 1940s and the 1950s, even more so than the age of Gilbert and Sullivan, were the time when every child ‘That’s born into the world alive was either a little Liberal [Laborite] or else a little Conservative.”\textsuperscript{64} Churchill would tender his resignation to Queen Elizabeth II in April 1955 yet remain a Member of Parliament until 1964 with no major interjection involving social reform during this time.

When appraising the second premiership of Winston Churchill one must note the distinct difference in the political context from that of his wartime leadership. It is Paul Addison’s assumption that overall during this time Churchill was bored by domestic affairs. It is worth noting that Churchill did rejoice over the matter of abolishing food rations while supporting Macmillan’s housing programs and Monckton’s appeasement policy towards the trade unions.\textsuperscript{65} During World War II it is clear Churchill prioritized the war effort over reform and reconstruction discussions. His second tenure at Number 10 however would be under entirely different circumstances, sitting as guardian of a

\textsuperscript{65} Paul Addison, \textit{Winston Churchill: The Unexpected Hero}, 233.
newly completed reconstruction process. It is evident that Winston Churchill, in the end, would prove to be an evolutionary rather than a revolutionary in respect to social reform.
Conclusion

The political career of Winston Churchill is a complicated story. On the surface it appears that Churchill's political life was full of inconsistencies and frequent acts made for personal gain. Undoubtedly decisions were made due in part to the political climate of his time and in a manner so as to wield the most influence possible. Nevertheless, it is my contention that Churchill convinced himself that social reform was a necessity of modern society and that the role of government was to provide for those who could not provide completely for themselves. This is persistently shown beginning with his early radical years, continuing into his middle career while serving as Chancellor of the Exchequer, and enduring into his second Premiership by accepting the welfare state put in place by the preceding Labour government.

Churchill's subscription to his father's "Tory Democracy" played an integral role in his political ideology throughout his career. As the political context of Britain changed, Winston Churchill himself adapted to these changes while maintaining consistency in respect to social reform. The degree to which social reform measures should be taken directly reflected his view of society as time progressed. At times he saw revolutionary actions must be taken while other times a more evolutionary approach was needed. Nevertheless, these thoughts and concerns regarding social reform were genuine. Churchill's ideas and actions were by no means original but they were affective and valuable in providing both the foundation and evolution of the British social welfare
state. His name cannot be omitted from the list of Twentieth Century social reformers. Britain can attribute its perseverance and victory in World War II to his wartime leadership but she cannot forget the role he also played in shaping her social structure.
Bibliography


