
A Concept Of Tory Conservatism

On the Effectiveness of Victorian Era Political Strategy

The Victorian Era was an era of great political revolution and ideological shift. This Era marked the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars and the expansion of the British empire. Along with this it saw a reimagining of the government's role in the hierarchy of social classes and the proliferation of populist sympathies across the world. As the plight of the poor became more documented and prevalent, the government's goals shifted to accommodate the needs of its citizens as politicians rose to power with their own tailored solutions for class inequality. This renewed progressivism manifested itself through a slew of political legislation from new ideologies, such as Tory Conservatism and Gladstonian Liberalism, that targeting housing, health, and wellbeing of the poor populous.

In the political strife of the Victorian Era, conservatives and liberals respectively harked to their own keystone ideologies. This such ideology for the conservatives was the mentality of Tory Conservatism which was championed by Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli. His ideals and tenets acted as the backbone for conservative policy enacted in the Victorian Era. Benjamin Disraeli was marked by his reformation of British politics from a constantly shifting set of groups to a rigid two party structure that led itself with coherent policies. Of these policies emerged a central doctrine that was irreplaceably influential in determining British politics. This was the notion of One-Nation Conservatism. One Nation Conservatism was a moral and political philosophy that supported Keynesian government intervention and also encouraged moral obligations for the rich. It set the precedent among the rich that a growing middle-class would leave the poor in a defenseless position and that it would be the obligation of the rich, the pinnacles of Britain, to invest in and protect the poor. This resulted in a multitude of laws passed that effectively reformed the British government into a Welfare State (Blake, 2012). Some of these laws attacking class inequality included the Artisans' and Labourers' Dwellings Improvement Act and the Public Health Act of 1875. The Artisans' Dwellings Act allowed for local city councils to buy and forcefully clear land occupied by slum dwellings in order to clean and rebuild them. The Public Health Act set a standard for urban living conditions in that it required houses to include running water and internal sewage systems and also enforced stricter housing construction and mandated medical and sanity inspections (UK Parliament). These laws created and set powers in law that had the potential to renovate and improve the status of the majority of the poor in Britain. However, another of Disraeli's tenets stood in the way of true progress. This tenet being the use of permissive legislature that did not enforce the powers set in the law and instead left them as options that cities could opt to take. This limited the good that these pieces of legislature could do. For example, 6 years after passing the law, only 10 out of 87 towns in England had used these powers. Nonetheless, these prescribed powers were still important in improving the lives of at least some of the lower class (London City Council, 1913)

However, it is within the social implications of Tory Conservatism where its results truly lie. The philosophical tenets of One Nation Conservatism took hold in culture and society and spread virulently as it became a mindset that became an expectation of the people. The idea that the rich must protect and espouse the poor became common and accepted knowledge. This is

reflected in Dickens' tale of Pip. Pip expects his "great expectations" to derive from the lucrative Miss Havisham and although he later finds this to be untrue, the fact that Pip's initial thought was that for Miss Havisham to provide aid to him, a poor orphan boy, is a sign of One Nation Conservatism in action in that the rich are expected to help the lower classes.

The counterpart to Tory Conservatism was Gladstonian liberalism eponymous to Prime Minister William Gladstone. Gladstonian Liberalism called for an ardent defense of Laissez-Faire capitalism but it also evolved over time to accommodate Old age pensions and forms of National Insurance. In the modern day, this style of governance is referred to as Social Liberalism. Gladstonian Liberalism sought mainly to allow capitalism to work to its devices in order to improve the lives of the poor. The government was to intervene only when it was deemed incredibly necessary. As such, Gladstonian policy acted to reduce taxes and regulations and balance the federal budget in order to maximize the growth of corporations and the economy. Social Liberalism also played a factor in Gladstonian legislation which targeted more indirect ways of improving the lives of British citizens in order to make them more efficient for the economy and thereby increase the effects of capitalism. One such act was the Elementary Education Act of 1870 which created a framework of elementary schooling and mandated attendance for all children. This served to help educate the populous and thereby increase their ability to find and do better work. Another consequence of Social Liberalism is seen in the Third Reform Act which greatly expanded the electorate and thereby extended the vote in parliament to many more poor and rural districts.