

Source E indicates that the Beveridge Report was accepted by the Conservative Party. How far do you agree with this interpretation?

Use your own knowledge, Sources B, D and E and any other sources you find useful to explain the answer.

Source B *The official notes of a Cabinet meeting on 15 February 1943. These notes were not made public until 2006.*

On 15 February, the Cabinet discussed what to say in the debate on whether to introduce legislation to give effect to the Beveridge Plan during that Parliament. It was pointed out that if they were to be ready to deal with post-war problems they needed to start planning.

The Cabinet agreed the Government should not be committed to introducing legislation for the reform of social services during the war but should not put themselves in a position where it was impossible to introduce such legislation.

Prime Minister stated: Impossible to predict the international situation after war. Make no promises; give no commitments; but make every possible preparation.

Source D *A cartoon published on 17 February 1943, over two months after the Beveridge Report was published.*



Source E *Part of a speech made by Winston Churchill at the Lord Mayor's Lunch in London on 9 November 1943.*

I regard it as a definite part of the responsibility of this National Government to have plans perfected to make sure that in the years immediately after the war, food, work and homes are found for all. The war would not be won unless there was a policy of food, work and homes after victory for the men and women who fought and won.

At face value, Source E appears to support the interpretation that the Conservative Party endorsed the Beveridge Report. In source E, Churchill claims that after the war, “... food, work and homes ... for all” will be necessary, which appears to chime with the general principles outlined by the Beveridge Report. However, Churchill is not advocating support for the Beveridge Plan *per se*, but rather a non-descript form of government intervention to achieve the same outcomes. Furthermore, Churchill was speaking publicly at the ‘Lord Mayor’s Lunch’ in March 1943, just 4 months after the publication of this highly popular report which sold 70,000 copies in just 3 days. Therefore, Churchill would be unlikely to publicly critique the plan, as this would have been hugely unpopular, reducing the weight that Source E can bear as evidence. Indeed, Churchill states that the Government will need a plan to provide social welfare “in the years immediately after the war”, but does not specify what that plan is, or indeed commit himself to any particular course of legislative action in the future. Therefore, the content of Source E does not constitute bona fide support for the plan, and therefore challenges the interpretation to a large degree.

This is supported by Source B to a significant extent, where the ‘Minutes of the Cabinet meeting’ in February 1943 state that “... to deal with post-war problems they (the government) need to start planning”. However, the Government agrees that it should “... Make no promises; give no commitments ...” in regards to introducing legislation, which is hardly a ringing endorsement of the Report on behalf of the Conservative Party. Indeed, the government is agreeing to the fact that *something* will need to be implemented in regards to social policy at some point, without agreeing that the mechanism to be used to achieve this end should be the Beveridge Report, thus challenging the interpretation. Furthermore, as the records of this Cabinet meeting were not for public consumption, they are more likely to reflect the true opinions of the Conservative Party. Therefore, the weight of Source B as evidence is stronger than Source C. In addition, the 1945 Conservative Election Manifesto made no explicit promise to implement the Beveridge Report if they were elected. Instead, it focused on Churchill’s success as a wartime leader, stating ‘Confirm your Confidence in Churchill’, rather than on any future intention to implement the Beveridge Report, undermining the claim that the Conservative’s supported the Report. At best, it would appear, they were ambivalent about it.

Source D is a satirical cartoon which appeared in a newspaper less than 3 months after the publication of the Report, during a period when the recommendations of the Report were very popular with the general public - in particular a large quantity of the serving armed forces who were keen to secure work and houses upon their return. It shows the ‘Five Giants’ sitting on top of a dynamite, with Churchill looking perplexed and

undecided about the prospect of 'lighting the fuse' to destroy them, which is a visual metaphor for the implementation of the Beveridge Report. Indeed, this suggests that he was not keen to act on the Report. The crowd – who represent the British public – look particularly excited about the prospect, which would have exacerbated the political dilemma that Churchill and the Conservative's faced at the time; to accept the Report would be to compromise their political beliefs on Government intervention, while to explicitly challenge the Report would have undermined their popularity as democratic politicians. Given that the Conservative Party had not advocated large scale government action during the Great Depression of the 1930's, it is unlikely that Churchill would have been keen to undertake a political 'volte face' and endorse the Beveridge Report now. While the Coalition Government did implement the 1944 Education Act and 1945 Family Allowances Act, they certainly stopped short of acting on all of Beveridge's recommendations, challenging the interpretation that the Conservative's supported the Report. Given that Source D is a satirical cartoon, it cannot be completely reliable as a benchmark for analysing the Conservative's opinion on the matter, as it exaggerates the situation and is solely the perception of the artist. However, it does reflect the awkward political dilemma that the Report posed for the Conservative's.

Overall, the sources challenge the interpretation to a large extent. Source E seemingly supports the idea of implementing some social reform after the war. However, Churchill does not explicitly agree to its implementation or commit himself to any particular course of action. Indeed the strength of Source E as evidence is compromised by the fact that it is a public speech, therefore Churchill would have reason to conceal his true opinions. Similarly, Source D challenges the fact that the Conservative's supported Beveridge, as it shows Churchill turning his back on the opportunity to act on the Report. However this is a satirical cartoon, which by definition is the opinion only of its author and is guilty of exaggeration. The most trustworthy Source for analysing the Conservative's true feelings is Source B; here the National Government agree "... not be committed to introducing legislation for the reform of social services". While this quote refers to the period of war, it shows that the Conservatives were hesitant at best about the prospect of implementing wide ranging social reform, as advocated by Beveridge. Therefore, the interpretation that the Conservatives supported the Report is largely unfounded.