

William Henry Beveridge Biography

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Biography

The English economist and social reformer William Henry Beveridge, 1st Baron Beveridge of Tuggal (1879-1963), authored the Beveridge Report, which advocated cradle-to-grave social security legislation in Great Britain following World War II.

William Beveridge was born in Bengal, India, on March 5, 1879, the son of an Englishman employed in the Indian civil service. Educated at Oxford, Beveridge took firsts in mathematics and classics. He then studied law, but he found the prospect of following a legal career lacking in challenge. Instead he accepted an appointment as subwarden of Toynbee Hall, a settlement house in the East End of London.

Beveridge was soon lecturing and writing lead articles dealing with social issues for the *Morning Post*. These led to his appointment in 1909 as director of labor exchanges and head of the employment department of the Board of Trade. While in this post he played a leading role in the creation of a system of labor exchanges and a system of unemployment insurance. His first book was *Unemployment: A Problem of Industry* (1909). During World War I he served in several key posts dealing with manpower and food-rationing programs. He was knighted in 1919 and appointed permanent secretary of the Ministry of Food the same year.

Beveridge became director of the London School of Economics and Political Science in 1919, and when he left in 1937 to become master of University College, Oxford, the London School had a worldwide reputation. During World War II he served his government in various capacities relating to manpower problems. In 1941 he was named chairman of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Social Insurance and Allied Services. Late in 1942 the famous Beveridge Report was made public and became the basis for the comprehensive social security legislation adopted in the following years.

Beveridge was elected member of Parliament for Berwick in 1944 but was defeated in the general election less than a year later. He was elevated to a barony in 1946 and was an active participant in the House of Lords.

One of the hallmarks of Lord Beveridge's work was a strong commitment to applied methods of social research. He served as president of the Royal Statistical Society from 1941 to 1943 and of the Institute of Statisticians from 1948 until his death at Oxford on March 16, 1963.