

27th January 2010

Absolute Poverty

IS IT TRUE TO SAY THERE IS NO ABSOLUTE POVERTY IN BRITAIN TODAY?

Absolute Poverty can be defined as a lack of sufficient resources to keep an individual going such as food, shelter, clothes, good health and one can argue education. In April 2001, there was a report done where it was estimated that "over five million live in absolute poverty" in Britain.

"The survey took its definition of absolute poverty from a 1995 United Nations statement, defining it as "a condition characterised by severe deprivation of basic human needs." The UN statement defined anyone lacking three or more of the following items as living in absolute poverty: food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and access to social security benefits."

I agree to this but I must say that if we are to be realistic, the word **absolute** also means total, complete and utter. Using these other words give more depth into the world of "absolute poverty". Britain some people say is a developed nation. It is known to every individual living here that there are many types of benefit people receive even council homes for underage girls who get pregnant and teenagers who decide upon themselves that it is a good idea to leave home and "search for freedom" or something the youth of today feel is maturity. There is free education up until University level, there are many homes, and we also have benefits which if not much, bring in a little money to persons in question. Britain can boast of a good health service, and generally, an advanced social infrastructure therefore, I stand to believe that it is very much true to say there is no absolute poverty. What exists is a type of poverty known as **relative poverty**. I also believe that the manner in which poverty is measured in Britain isn't very accurate as it seems to be based only on income. Wikipedia states that **"Poverty is defined by the Government as 'household income below 60 percent of median income'. The median is the income earned by the household in the middle of the income distribution."**

This doesn't appear to be accurate as they have not looked at other aspects in which people can be poor or rather suffer from poverty. Unlike in third world countries of which my focus is in the continent **Africa**, we can argue with many points and evidence that countries in Africa suffer from poverty. This is not in Africa, but a recent example of a people in poverty is Haiti. There was an earthquake there a few weeks back and many lives were lost, homes were destroyed, clothes were obviously destroyed and many more life essentials were lost. Now, we can call this absolute poverty.

Nevertheless, in terms of **relative poverty**, Britain does suffer from this as many people are poor. There is unemployment, low income, family breakdown, bad health, and people are not fortunate enough to welcome three full meals a day unlike some people in other parts of the country It is said that this can be called **"social exclusion"**. It is a new term used by the government and the Prime Minister described it as **"...a shorthand label for what can happen when individuals or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown."** To conclude, I think that a majority of the people living in Britain are poor they just don't severely lack life's essentials. Most people even spend money they don't have through the use of credit cards these days which then leaves them in a rather poor state as the government keep adding interest to the money they owe giving them more time to pay and that means these

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people have unknowingly signed up for a life in debt. But overall, it is true to say **Britain has no absolute poverty whatsoever.**