FABIANISM

Fabianism is a non-revolutionary socialist movement advocating the rational, empirical study of social issues with the goal of direct government intervention. Fabianism originated with the Fabian Society, which was founded in London, England in 1884 and is still currently active. The Society emerged out of the radical and progressive debating clubs and discussion societies of late Victorian London, and particularly the Fellowship of the New Life. The Society reportedly took its name from the Roman general Q. Fabius Maximus, known as *Cunctator* or “The Delayer,” who defeated Hannibal through a policy of attrition and careful timing. Gradualist in its approach to social change, the Society focused on research and drafting policy recommendations, which it then passed on to political decision makers. The Society is thus often considered to be a forerunner of the contemporary political “think tank.” After the First World War, the Society became associated with the Labour Party, although it remained organizationally independent. The high-water mark of Fabian influence in Britain came with the 1945 Labour majority government. More than half of the Labour MPs elected, including Prime Minister Clement Attlee, were members of the Society, and the welfare state they implemented drew on many Fabian ideas.

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