Collectivism Is A Better Approach To Tackle Social Inequality Compared To Individualism

Currently, in the UK parliament, there are two main types of parties - individualist and collectivist. Collectivist parties are those described as 'left-wing' or 'liberal', such as the Green Party or SNP, who hold the belief the Government should assist those tackling social inequality through funding and delivering services. Individualist parties are those often described as 'right-wing', such as the Conservatives and UKIP, with their policies having the belief that an individual is responsible for dealing with social inequality themselves rather than the Government. There are also parties, such as the Liberal Democrats, who are neither left nor right, neither collectivist or individualist, but central. Collectivist parties are more humane and empathetic towards problems, whereas individualist parties are more statistically based, as in if a majority is not affected, it is not a significant problem. However, having a collectivist government will reduce social inequality as parliament is best suited, equipped and knowledgeable to help those suffering from the systematic disparity in the UK with collectivism providing a compassionate basis to help the members of the public that need it so desperately.

One of the multiple reasons why collectivism is a better approach for tackling social inequality is due to collectivist governments having access to the means to address many of the inequalities, such as health and income, that are currently distressing Public. The causes of social inequality and social issues are often considered too complex and systematic for a charity or non-governmental organisation to tackle on their own. Instead, it needs a substantial governing body such as the Government as they have access to resources and funds to develop policies across a range of interlinking issues. If they use their power correctly, through research and testing, they can tackle the complex causes and issues that are faced by public today. An example of a policy being utilised effectively is the introduction of free prescriptions by the Scottish Government. The collectivist policy was introduced in 2011 [5] to offer free prescriptions throughout Scotland.

In contrast, the Individualist Conservative-Lib Dem government in England did not follow suit, even after Wales had implemented the free prescriptions before. Free prescriptions were introduced in Scotland due to the SNP realising the link between those in poverty and poor health, arguing the individualist lack of free prescriptions was like taxing those who were ill - it was inhumane and illogical. Free prescriptions also allowed for everyone to have access to medication, more specifically preventative medication, which allowed the NHS to prevent a £4,500 cost of a patient staying in the hospital for a week. Instead, a patient had a GP appointment and free medication that could then prevent the illness. The resulted in a cost to the Scottish Government of £30 [2] per appointment rather than £4500 on a hospital visit for a week that could have been prevented through medication.

However, an argument against the collectivist strategy is the individualist opinion that big governments are less fit to meeting the needs of specific local communities. Individualists argue that since the country is such a great place (filled by 66.6 million people to be exact), one governing body tackling inequalities will not be enough to attack each different cause in each different area. They say that the Government is only able to provide a standard level of care throughout the country, meaning they cannot provide for the individual and specific needs to

tackle the causes and problems faced by social inequality in hundreds, even thousands, of communities across the UK. However, the individualist argument can be countered, as social inequalities have common causes and impacts throughout the country with the cause of social inequality often being systemic. The Government, and all their power and wealth, can implement universal solutions to these systematic issues, with each community benefiting and progressing, therefore creating nationwide progress on the impacts and causes. Overall, the continuation of free prescriptions, and the further creation of other collectivist policies in Scotland, highlight collectivist approaches are needed when tackling complex, systematic, issues such as health inequality, as only the Government have access to funds that can create policies and services to do so.

Collectivist policies also further help those facing social inequality, rather than individualist policies which can often worsen social inequality. In individualism, it is believed that social inequality is a person's own fault. They believe that instead of 'depending' on the Government, a person should take responsibility in their situation and not 'blame' it on anything else. Individualist policies implemented by the Government are often cruel, with examples including the Benefit Freeze of 2015 and the introduction of Universal Credit in 2013. Since the benefit freeze of 2015, despite an increase in the cost of living in the UK, there has not been an increase in benefits. Those who rely on benefits, for whatever reason, have viewed their income and disposable income steadily fall as goods and services cost more. These cuts have disproportionality impacted people with disabilities, single parents, and their children.

Cruel individualist policies, such as the benefit freeze or introduction of universal credit, has then meant for those facing a lack of income to rely on food banks and other non-governmental charities and organisations for essential goods such as food and heating. For example, the Trussell Trust [3] reported that since the introduction of the Benefit Freeze in 2015, there was a 73% increase in the use of food banks across the country. As said before, the Benefits Freeze was not the first individualist policy introduced by a Conservative government that increased social inequality, as there was also the initiation of Universal Credit starting in 2013 and slowly being released around the country. Universal Credit is a Conservative policy over benefits that introduced sanctions. If someone does not spend 30 hours per week 'looking for employment' they are at risk of cuts. It resulted in many people's income being cut unfairly and cruelly at the beginning of the application, with some having under £100 to survive on for a month, causing a lack of income and money to spend on essential goods. For example, the use of Trussell Trust foodbanks has increased by 50% in areas where the Universal Credit has been rolled out — compared to 13% in non-universal credit areas [4]. The increase of these food banks and the increase of Universal Credit around the country demonstrates that the individualist policy has resulted in an increase of austerity for thousands, growing social inequality around the UK rather than reducing it. These non-governmental organisations, such as the Trussell Trust, highlight that individualist policies almost always originate in the motivation for money from the Government, rather than relief for the poor, with the enforcement to get off the benefits scheme creating more austerity in its thousands.

In conclusion, the damaging individualist policies of the UK government demonstrate that the self-responsible ideals they believe in should be disregarded. To address social inequality, the UK Government should instead follow the route of its northerly neighbour, creating collectivist policies that support those facing social inequality. Rather than scaring a person into work which may not solve their problems, or facing the almost dystopian reality of their only income being cut and food or medicine no longer being accessible, the Government should change to a more

collectivist, humane and empathetic approach to help those facing social inequality through their funds and ability to develop policies that can impact multiple communities. Society benefits those who are well and working, whereas everybody loses if people are sick, hungry and unable to access work.