



## RETURNING HOME

Although Britain won the war, repaying its debts took a great economic toll on the postwar nation. Rationing had been introduced in 1918 and continued into the postwar years. Soldiers returned to a crippled economy and spiraling inflation, all of which made many feel that a new government was needed to fulfill the promise of nationalized care to the British working classes, veterans, and the poor.

The political posters of the Labour Party aggressively addressed the disillusionment, with labeling the rationing system as “food profiteering” and pointing out that the pensions allocated for disabled soldiers, war widows, and orphans were far exceeded by the interest accrued for war debts. “No charity” was afforded by the government to the wounded veterans; the only way to get “justice for the soldier” was to vote for the Labour Party.

Another issue was free trade, which brought in cheap overseas goods, thereby contributing to a loss of British jobs. An anti-free trade poster depicts a crowd of factory workers picketing outside an industrial complex with a “Factory Closed” sign posted on it. Working class protections and domestic employment were essential planks of the platform championed by the Labour Party in the early twentieth century.

The three posters in this case make clear several aspects of postwar British society, including discontent, both real and manufactured, over how the government had handled the war and its aftermath. At the same time, the public greatly respected its soldiers, making them a primary symbol for those seeking to sway public opinion. The evils Britain faced in the postwar period, however, were less concrete, less easily captured, less gripping to the public mind than those experienced during wartime. It was easier for artists to vilify the German army than to adequately demonize the specter of homelessness. Yet the art in these posters demonstrates that the propaganda techniques developed during the war were still in use long after the final shots were fired.

*Christine Su*  
*Class of 2008*

*Michael Sexton*  
*Class of 2009*