

surplus funds to modernize plant facilities to make them globally competitive. Margaret Thatcher's successor, John Major, would later go on to privatize some of the 'Next Steps' agencies as well as expand the practice of contracting out various other public services.

Believing that local council administrators had grossly mismanaged the construction and management of Britain's public housing sector, the Thatcher government arranged the private sale of large amounts of government-owned properties. Previously, these councils had retained administrative control over millions of properties completely untethered from essential legal guidelines or procedural accountability. In order to promote increased administrative efficiency in housing management, the prime minister enacted the Housing Act of 1980. Under this initiative, long-

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term tenants with financial means were provided with a 'right to buy' option and significant legal provisions were adopted to ensure the property rights of these tenant 'customers'. Unfortunately, Thatcher's well-meaning 'reforms' were poorly executed. In the absence of any comprehensive publicly subsidized financing scheme, many tenants could not afford to purchase their newly 'privatized' homes. As a result, they were forced to move to cheaper and often less desirable neighbourhoods, thereby exacerbating existing disparities among Britain's social classes.

Similarly, when faced with massive structural unemployment resulting from Britain's waning industrial sector, Thatcher put her unwavering trust in the hands of the 'free market' to determine which occupations would be protected or abolished. Believing that Britain's economic future rested in

the hands of the financial services sector, her government adopted a series of policies that helped accelerate the rebirth of the 'City' of London as a leading global trading centre. As part of this 'transformation' the prime minister imposed strict NPM-based private-sector performance standards on public-sector-controlled coal pits, mines, and manufacturing plants. Remaining faithful to the principles of the NPM, Thatcher mandated that goals and objectives were to be clearly outlined and outputs evaluated according to strict efficiency standards.

Driven by her fervent desire to cut state expenditures, Thatcher zeroed-in on inefficiencies associated with Britain's state welfare sector. Among the most spectacular and controversial was her high-profile crusade to reform child benefit assistance that had been made available universally

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to all working mothers irrespective of their income and means. Insisting that social security and child benefit programmes should be accessible only to the 'truly needy', Thatcher sought to impose strict means tests in order to reduce the financial burden on the country's taxpayers. The prime minister, though famous for her uncompromising spirit, was forced to scale back these reforms in the face of a severe political backlash from voters and even some members of her own party.

Undeterred, the 'Iron Lady' pressed ahead with efforts to reform Britain's 'antiquated' public pension system. Thatcher sought to 'liberate' employee accounts from the control of the unions by allowing individual workers to carry their investitures with them when they moved from one job to the next. The evisceration of rigid state-imposed hurdles that tied employees' pensions to

their existing employers, Thatcher argued, would help encourage employees to seek higher skilled and higher paying positions. Confronted once more with strong political resistance from a hostile political electorate, Thatcher was forced to moderate her reform ambitions. The resolute prime minister was, however, ultimately successful in implementing a number of NPM-style administrative improvements to existing means-testing eligibility requirements. In the end, her government was able to make considerable strides towards streamlining rules and procedures in ways that promoted greater consistency and equity in the distribution of benefits.

Asserting that the root cause of all of the problems associated with Britain's National Health Service (NHS) was structurally embedded in bureaucratic inefficiency rather than a lack of proper funding.

DUCTION (VERY SHORT INTRODUCTIONS)

Thatcher looked to the free market for innovative solutions. Unshaken in her faith in NPM-based remedies, the prime minister mandated that public hospitals field bids from private healthcare providers. In that vein, the Thatcher government instituted 'flexibilist' reform legislation that provided local health authorities with greater administrative power and authority to help manage rising healthcare costs by contracting out to the private sector for the delivery of many public health services. When opposition arose within her own Conservative party to her austere economic reforms and neoliberal-based NPM programmes, Thatcher defiantly proclaimed, 'You turn if you want to. The lady's not for turning'.

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Australia

Australia's experiments with NPM-inspired 'managerialist' ideas and practices were not

dissimilar to those adopted by its American and British counterparts. Indeed, it is a documented fact that Australian Public Service (APS) officers and administrators were heavily inspired by the NPM experiments undertaken by the Thatcher and Reagan governments. As the public administration wing of the Australian federal government, the APS's NPM-based public sector reforms unfolded in three discrete stages. Initially introduced to the public by the left-leaning Australian Labour Party Governments (ALPG) of prime ministers Robert Hawke in 1983 and Paul Keating in 1996, the NPM programme would later be adopted more strictly by the conservative Liberal-National Party Coalition Government (LNPCG) of prime minister John Howard.

Times were tough for Australians in the early 1980s. The Keynesian administrative framework