

# HISTORY

Read the extract below and then answer the following question:

## What can this extract tell us about British society in 1945?

I feel that I've never had such a sour attitude to life in general. I thought of the fun and laughter there used to be at the Centre<sup>1</sup>, even in the darkest days of war. Sometimes they just say in the office, 'You are quiet' - they say it in wonder - and I just smile but think, 'I feel quiet, I'm tired out', and wonder if that is why others feel dim. There was such an eager looking forward to the end of the war. When I used to talk of still lean times until all got reorganised, I was looked on as a real dismal person. Now it's over. Winter promises to be short of coal and food. Women who thought their husbands would be released from military service if their old job was waiting are feeling disappointed. Husbands are coming home so tired and with such altered outlooks they seem strangers. Women are leaving their wartime jobs and finding it's not as easy to pick up threads as it is to lay them down. Clothes coupons are beginning to seem inadequate lately when big things are needed<sup>2</sup>. Meat is scarcer and there is nothing to replace it in the menus of harassed landladies and mothers of families. Milk is down to two pints a week per family. There is so little brightness in life and people's heads are so tired. Speaking for myself, I feel that if anyone said, 'tell me what you would really like to do,' I could not tell them. I could say I'd like to go somewhere where there were no bitter winds and damp to make me dread winter, somewhere I could lie down in the sun and feel warm, but I feel too indifferent to think of anything I'd really like to buy, or do, and what I do seems only like another job - all except when I come to bed and lie reading. It's my chief joy today. I think that this tiredness must be magnified to the highest degree amongst the homeless.

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1 A local centre, run by volunteer women, which provided welfare services in wartime.

2 Rationing of food and clothing had been introduced in wartime and continued after the war.