“The Liberals introduced welfare reforms in the early 1900s for only political reasons”

I partially agree with the statement. The supposed “moral” reasons for welfare reforms were introduced purely to gain votes. If the population is healthy and has a good quality of life because the government intervened, those living around the poverty line are much more likely to vote for the party in power, this is why the government started to try and improve the quality of life of the working class as more of the working class were allowed to vote. The government needed votes to stay in power and mould the country in to their idea. The country had a vision for Britain to dominate the century and become a world power, to make this a reality the liberals had to stay in power, so at least partly the reforms were introduced for nationalistic reasons and partly for political reasons.

On one hand the reforms were not introduced purely for political reasons. The government felt that it was their duty to make sure that the population of Britain had a good standard of living. Studies suggested that whether someone was in poverty or not was out of their control. A new type of Liberalism had be born, led by Lloyd George and Churchill who felt that in certain circumstances it was right for the state to intervene in people’s lives. Existing measures were completely inadequate such as workhouses and to help people stay out of poverty reforms had to be introduced. Booth and Rowntree found that 30% of the population lived in poverty in both London and York. These are the reasons that suggest that the reforms were introduced for moral reasons; the government had a duty to do what was right for its population.

Another view is that the welfare reforms were introduced for political reasons. I believe that the moral reasons for introducing reforms were only there so it reflected well on the government. It is very convenient that just as more of the working class were able to vote the government started to take an interest in their affairs. The government did not introduce reforms because it was the right thing to do; they did it to win the working class vote. Popular socialism and the Labour party has just come in to existence and they had a strangle hold on the working class with ideas of social welfare policies and unemployment benefits. If the Liberals wished to stay in power they had to win the support of the working class, to do this welfare reforms had to be introduced. Gas and water socialism had been successful in local communities and so it should be very popular on a national scale. If the population is in good health and have a good standard of living because of the government they are likely to vote for the party in power. The public had a growing awareness of poverty so reforms had to reduce poverty for the public to vote liberal. Trade unions were starting to grow, to appease them the government had to take an interest in the workers, the reforms did this. The Liberals wanted to stay in power, to do this they had to introduce welfare reforms to keep the public voting Liberal.

An alternative view point is that the Liberals introduced welfare reforms for nationalistic reasons. The public had a vision of Britain dominating the century and maintaining their world power status, to do this the government had to be able to stay in power to guide Britain into keeping the empire, raise an army, and run the country in an efficient way. At the turn of the century Britain was fighting the Boer war, Britain was losing the Boer war. To be a world power the empire needed to be kept, an army was needed to keep this empire. The Boer was revealed the devastating impact of poverty on the health of a nation; 40% of the men in Britain were unfit for service, you cannot defend an empire with that statistic. Britain’s overall health had to improve, reforms had to be introduced so