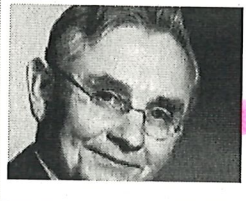




Today in History

◀ 6 December ▶



**1935 First Labour government takes office**

The first Labour government assumed office as a result of its landslide victory in November's general election. Led initially by the charismatic Michael Joseph Savage, this government is best remembered for its landmark social welfare reforms.

One of the most significant aspects of this welfare policy was the 1938 Social Security Act, which some described as 'the greatest political achievement in the country's history'. The Act combined the introduction of a free-at-the-point-of-use health system with a comprehensive array of welfare benefits. It was financed by a tax surcharge of one shilling in the pound or 5%. The family benefit was extended to all mothers irrespective of the family's income, which increased the number of allowances overnight from 42,600 to 230,000. This policy, which was often described as looking after New Zealanders from the 'cradle to the grave', was a key factor in keeping Labour in power until 1949.

Image: Michael Joseph Savage in 1935

**Internal links**

The first state house - state housing in New Zealand Michael Joseph Savage Michael Joseph Savage

**External links**

Liberal to Labour (Te Ara) Social Security: scope of 1938 legislation (1966 encyclopaedia) Labour Party (1966 encyclopaedia) Michael Joseph Savage biography (DNZB)

This Week in History

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Timeline Sec

Month Calendar  
Today in History

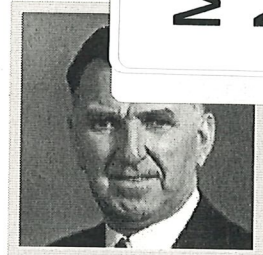
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See historic e day of the year date below. W birthday?

DD/M

Visit the

Kiwi of the



**Sidney Holland**

Holland became PM in 1949. A year later he abolished the Legislative Council, and in 1951, after winning the Waterfront Dispute, he increased his majority in a snap election.

more

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THIS WEEK'S QUIZ

Test your knowledge of NZ history

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