

Unit 1: The affluent society: Britain 1951-64 under the Conservatives

Conservative prime ministers

<p>Winston Churchill - 1951-55</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great international statesman but not very concerned with domestic affairs • Used non-Conservative peers to oversee ministries • Eden and Rab Butler often ran the country day-day • Rivalries within his government between Butler, Eden and Macmillan • 300,000 new houses built per year. • Children would take an 11+ test to determine where they'd be educated: Grammar, secondary-modern or technical school
<p>Anthony Eden - 1955-57</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased conservative majority in 1955. • Experienced in foreign policy, limited knowledge of economics • Macmillan resisted him and he failed to rein in trade unions • Placed greater emphasis on technical education • Clean Air Act 1956 aimed to improve air quality • Resigned after the disastrous Suez Crisis, 1957
<p>Harold Macmillan - 1955-63</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unified the party as seen as a 'safe pair of hands' • Nicknamed 'Supermac' due to economic growth in late 1950s • Increased conservative majority in 1959 to 100 seats • Housing and Factory Acts aimed to improve living and working conditions • Homicide Act restricted use of death penalty • 1957 Wolfenden Commission recommended homosexuality should no longer be a criminal offence • Resigned in 1963 - Profumo Affair, economic decline and 'Night of the Long Knives'
<p>Alec Douglas-Home - 1963-4</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compromise candidate to replace Macmillan • Seen as part of the 'establishment' and out of touch • Oversaw reform of election of party leaders and some economic growth • Lost 1964 election to Labour

Post-war consensus:
 All PMs followed this. It was an understanding that post-WW2 the main political parties would agree over having a mixed economy with state involvement and private enterprise; support for the NHS/welfare state; commitment to full employment; and working with trade unions and employers.

SUMMARY:
 Though the economy grew steadily and living standards increased, still a need for stop-go economics; higher imports; and rising wage demands. Britain slipped behind foreign competitors like West Germany, the US and Japan

Labour divisions

Party splits between Nye Bevan and Hugh Gaitskill. Gaitskill was more 'right', Bevan more 'left'.

Splits occurred over:

- Issue of unilateral nuclear disarmament
- Opposition to Gaitskill by Frank Cousins (TGWU)
- Gaitskill proposals to abolish Clause IV

ECONOMIC SUCCESSES

- 1954 rationing ended
- Global economic boom meant increased trade - 29% increase by end of the 50s in exports
- 1955 only 200,000 unemployed
- Rising wages
- 1955 giveaway budget - £134million in tax cuts; 1959 budget - £370million in tax cuts
- 1960 nearly 5 million employed in service industries
- Sterling recovered in 1959 against the dollar after the Suez Crisis
- National Economic Development Council (known as Neddy) - long-term economic planning
- Growth rate increased 4-6% 1963-4

Why did the Conservatives lose the election in 1964?

1. Economic failures (unemployment and inflation increasing)
2. Failure to join EEC in 1963
3. Macmillan's radical cabinet reshuffle in 1962 sacking 1/3 (Night of Long Knives)
4. Spy scandals - George Blake, Cambridge 5
5. Mocking by satirists/media
6. The Profumo Affair (Defence Secretary Profumo had an affair with Christine Keeler who was also having an affair with a Russian diplomat, Ivanov.
7. Conservative perception of being outdated/out of touch
8. Macmillan's illnesses and replacement by Douglas-Home
9. Internal power struggles within the party.
10. Labour resurgence under Harold Wilson



ECONOMIC FAILURES

- Inflation due to growth in wages
- Growth rates of the UK were slower than other European nations and the USA
- Long-term conflict with trade unions regarding lack of rapid increases in wages
- Stop-go pattern meant the government were constantly having to intervene in the economy
- Balance of payments issue when imports exceeded exports
- Suez Crisis led to a run on the pound - 1957
- Internal conflict in the party between McLeod and Thorneycroft
- 1961 government introduced a pay-pause and asked for a loan from the International Monetary Fund
- Trade with Commonwealth declining
- Rejection of application to join EEC
- Imports still 20% higher than exports by 1964