

Reasons for the Depression In Britain 1930s

Decline of Traditional Industries

- Rising costs in production, old-fashioned methods and a failure to invest in new technology and machinery.
- Fall in demand for British goods and increased competition from abroad particularly from the USA and Germany.
- More expensive British goods could not compete with cheaper imports from other countries.
- Britain's pre-war export markets (such as Australia, Canada and New Zealand) were no longer prepared to buy British. They bought US steel, German coal and Indian cotton instead.
- When the worldwide economic Depression arrived in the early 1930s, Britain's old industries could not cope.

The Wall Street Crash

- Herbert Hoover called in America's huge loans to other countries.
- He also put up customs barriers by imposing high tariffs to stop imports of foreign goods.
- However, instead of protecting America, Hoover's policy simply spread the Depression across the rest of the world which also fell into an economic slump.
- It has been said, 'When America sneezes, the rest of the world catches cold.'



Government Action

Unemployment

- Unemployment Act of 1934 which set up the Unemployment Assistance Boards.
- The UABs were responsible for managing the means test and ensuring that benefits were paid only to those who were 'desperately in need' and then only if they were 'actively seeking work'.
- The 10 per cent cut in dole was reversed
- The UABs set up training schemes and provided help to workers who wanted to move to another area to find work.

Special Areas Act

- The act identified South Wales, Tyneside, West Cumberland and Scotland as areas with special employment requirements, and invested in projects such as the new steel-works in Ebbw Vale.
- The success of the act was limited because the level of investment – capped at £2 million – was not high enough; after two years of operation only 12,000 additional jobs had been created.

New Industries

- As the traditional heavy industries declined, the new light industries emerged to take their place.
- These industries included cars, cookers, fridges and radios.
- The goods were mass-produced in modern factories equipped with the latest technology.
- Consumers were encouraged by mass advertising to buy the new cars, radios and household gadgets on the new hire purchase system. This new system of credit meant that even the most expensive items could be bought by the ordinary consumer.
- Electricity was clean, cheap and efficient and it began to replace coal as the nation's main fuel supply.
- The government encouraged these new industries by offering grants and by setting up industrial estates.
- Unemployment was not solved by new industry as machines did the job of people.



Migration

- Unemployment in Wales and the north-east of England was widespread, long-lasting and severe.
- It has been estimated that 440,000 people left Wales between 1921 and 1938.
- During the 1920s and 1930s a large number of Welsh and northern English people left Britain altogether. For many of them, the United States of America was seen as a land of opportunity
- For those who did not wish to leave Britain, the only alternative was to seek work in the prosperous regions of England. Thousands of Welsh workers and their families were encouraged to leave Wales by the government.
- The Ministry of Labour set up a scheme to help unemployed workers willing to move to popular destinations such as London, Coventry, Watford, Slough and Oxford. There, they were employed in light engineering and car manufacturing.
- The migration of so many people from Wales to England had serious consequences for some parts of the country. The population of the Rhondda fell 13 per cent in the 1920s and possibly by as much as 18 per cent in the 1930s
- In Wales, the migration and emigration of such large numbers of people had an effect on the Welsh language and culture.

Impact of the Depression on Britain 1930s

Economy

- When America's economy crashed, so did Britain's. This was the beginning of a world slump; its effects on Wales and England were devastating.
- Production slumped because orders declined.
- This in turn led to many companies laying off workers.
- Unfortunately, these redundancies and dismissals contributed to the Depression because as unemployment rose, the decline in orders fell even more sharply as people had no money to spend.

Politics

- Politicians could not agree with how best to deal with the crisis.
- The crisis got so bad that it was agreed in 1931 that, a National Government was set up. This was a mixture of politicians from the main parties, although mostly Conservative led by Labour's Ramsay Macdonald.
- This coalition government tried to cope with the worsening economic and social crisis.

Protest

- Many people thought that mass demonstration with popular support and maximum publicity might force the government into positive action.
- During the 1930s, as well as local protests, there were also many protest marches from the north-east of England and south Wales.
- Protesting in the areas in which they lived appeared to have little impact on the government, so marches to London were organised to confront the government and gain much needed publicity.
- It was hoped that the media would be encouraged to report their story and highlight their plight.

Hunger marches

- In October 1932 there was a large-scale march on London by 2,500 workers from all over the country. They presented a petition to Parliament demanding the abolition of the means test and protesting about the 10 per cent cut in benefits.
- The most famous protest march was the Jarrow Crusade of 1936, but there were also marches from south Wales. Most demanded similar things – government action to create jobs and better benefits for the unemployed.
- The government did not react. To the Hunger marches. In spite of gaining publicity, the Jarrow marchers had had little impact on the government.

Unemployment

- By 1933 3 million British, were unemployed. The worst hit areas in Britain were those still dependent on the old heavy industries, South Wales and the north-east of England.
- By 1938 the unemployment rate in each of the four basic heavy industries of coal, cotton, shipbuilding and steel was twice what it was in other forms of employment. In these areas, and in these industries, unemployment became a way of life.

Women

- The lives of the majority of British women did not change that much during the 1930s.
- The Depression contributed to a decline in the women's movement.
- Few women managed to break out from the limitations of the home into the public world of politics, commerce and the professions.
- The only opportunity available to the majority of women was in domestic service or in the retail trade as shop assistants.
- Maintaining the home on a tight budget was a constant source of stress and anxiety for women who worked very long hours in the struggle against poverty and grime.
- An increasing number of women participated in the campaigns to persuade the government to change its economic policy and to prevent cuts to benefits.
- Many women took part in the hunger marches whilst others organised demonstrations of their own.
- The Depression had a significant impact on the lives of women during the 1930s.



People

- Many people lost their jobs as a result of the Depression.
 - The unemployed had no wages and could not buy things.
 - This resulted in more businesses going bankrupt which in turn created more unemployment.
 - This was a vicious circle made worse by the fact that the dole or unemployment benefits were barely enough to pay the rent, let alone feed and clothe a family.
- Life was very hard for those people whose lives were blighted by unemployment.

Entertainment

- Despite the Depression, there were lots of opportunities for people to enjoy themselves in the 1930s.
- It was seen as escapism from their bleak situations.
- Popular entertainment included:
- Betting on the dogs or horses
- Going to a football or rugby match
- Going to social clubs or even to the free libraries to read books and newspapers.
- Radio
- Cinema.

Cinema

- The biggest rival to radio was the cinema.
- For the price of a sixpenny (2p) ticket, the cinema offered an escape for many people from the harsh realities of life.
- A majority of the films shown in British cinemas were American, made in Hollywood.
- Film stars such as Clark Gable, Greta Garbo and Errol Flynn became famous across the world. It was the dream of every cinemagoer to meet their screen heroes or to become film stars themselves.

Steps to WW2

1934-35: CONSCRIPTION AND REARMAMENT

- Hitler's build-up of Germany's armed forces broke the Treaty of Versailles. Britain and France did not respond.

1935: ANGLO-GERMAN NAVAL AGREEMENT

- Britain signed an agreement allowing Germany to build a navy. This broke the Treaty of Versailles.

1936: RHINELAND

- Hitler remilitarized the Rhineland when troops were ordered in to occupy this region of Germany. This broke the Treaty of Versailles.

1938: AUSTRIA

- After stirring up trouble in Austria by encouraging the Austrian Nazis to demand union with Germany, Hitler invaded the country. This broke the Treaty of Versailles.

1938: SUDETENLAND AND MUNICH

- Hitler next stirred up trouble in Czechoslovakia by encouraging the Sudeten Germans to demand union with Germany. Hitler made plans to invade Czechoslovakia but was persuaded to meet with the leaders of Britain and France to discuss the situation. At a conference at Munich in September, Britain and France appeased Hitler by giving him the Sudetenland. The Czechs were ignored.

1939: CZECHOSLOVAKIA

- In March Hitler's troops marched into the rest of Czechoslovakia. This broke the agreement signed at Munich six months earlier. The British and French realised that Hitler could not be trusted and they agreed not to give in to him again.

1939: POLAND AND THE NAZI-SOVIET PACT

- Hitler shocked the world by signing a treaty with his enemy, communist Russia. He thought this would stop Britain and France helping Poland.
- On 1 September 1939 Hitler invaded Poland. On 3 September Britain and France declared war on Germany.

Appeasement

- Appeasement was intended to avoid war and confrontation by discussion, negotiation and compromise.
- The policy was popular in Britain because the majority of people did not want another war.
- British Prime Minister Baldwin resigned because he couldn't decide whether or not to continue appeasement.
- He was succeeded as Prime Minister by Neville Chamberlain who believed that he could maintain peace. By continuing Appeasement.
- Chamberlain believed that Hitler could be satisfied if he was given certain territories which he claimed as belonging to Germany (like Rhineland, Austria and Sudetenland.)
- He was convinced that Hitler did not want war and that he was as eager as he was to keep the peace.
- Chamberlain's policy had a great deal of support in the country because of the strong pacifist sympathy. In Parliament he was supported by the Labour Party
- In 1936 Lloyd George even went so far as to meet Hitler in Germany, after which he publicly stated that Hitler was a man to be trusted.
- Britain was simply not ready for war; she had only begun to rearm and was unable to defend herself from a determined attack.
- The economic depression had cut the amount of money Britain was able to spend on arms and the army.
- The most outspoken critic of the government's policy of appeasement was Winston Churchill. Few in government listened to him, but he was gaining support in the country for his views that, unless Hitler was stopped, war was inevitable.
- In the Munich Agreement, Chamberlain persuaded Hitler to stop his aggressive foreign. Hitler lied.

Preparation for War

- 1) Conscription—To increase the size of the army as quickly as possible, conscription was introduced. By the end of 1939 more than 1.5 million men had been conscripted to join the British armed forces.
- 2) The Emergency Powers (Defence) Act of 1939 - gave the British government the power to take certain measures to defend the nation and to maintain public order.
- 3) Air Raid Precaution Wardens were recruited and given the task of enforcing strict rules, such as the blackout, in the event of enemy bombing. Half a million people volunteered to join the ARP. ARP wardens were to patrol the streets and warn householders against showing any lights. ARP wardens were also expected to advise householders and co-ordinate the emergency services – police, fire and ambulance.
- 4) At the outbreak of the war the British government ordered a million coffins.
- 5) To protect the people from bombing, the government ordered the construction of air-raid shelters or bomb shelters.
- 6) The development of radar became an important weapon in the nation's defence from German bombers.
- 7) Large barrage balloons were lifted and secured above the city of London to deter German bombers from coming in too low on their bombing runs.
- 8) Deployment of thousands of anti-aircraft guns, backed with powerful searchlights for attacks during the hours of darkness

The Battle of Britain

- * Hitler gave the order for a massed air offensive against Britain on 31 July, to be followed by an invasion in September, the Luftwaffe's main targets were the airfields of the RAF's fighter command and British shipping in the English Channel.
- * The Battle of Britain was fought high above the countryside of southern England, watched by the British public.
- * The RAF was saved from total destruction when the Germans changed their tactics to bombing cities instead of airfields.
- * Victory to Britain

Coping with the Blitz

- * ARP wardens, the Auxiliary Fire Service, the First Aid posts and the Auxiliary Ambulance Service all had roles during the Blitz.
- * Civilians could protect themselves using air raid shelters.
- * Communal shelters were used for large numbers of people, while Londoners were fortunate enough to be able to use the Underground.
- * At first, the continuous night-time bombardment of Britain's cities and the resulting heavy casualties damaged morale.
- * Winston Churchill raised people's morale by his stirring speeches, patriotic radio broadcasts and by touring the damaged areas.
- * Government censorship ensured that newspapers were not allowed to show pictures of damaged houses or mutilated corpses. Radio and cinema were told to concentrate on stories about the heroism of the rescue services.
- * Fear, hate, destruction and government propaganda all contributed to an increased community spirit, a feeling of togetherness.
- * The British people were determined to show Hitler that they could not be beaten and they tried to carry on their daily lives as normally as possible.

Life on the Home Front

Rationing

- * In January 1940, food rationing was introduced, followed by clothes, petrol and coal rationing.
- * By 1942 even water was being rationed and people were only allowed 13 cm of water in their weekly bath!
- * Ration books were issued to everyone and the ration coupons could only be exchanged for goods like meat, eggs, butter and sugar at shops where people had registered.
- * Some foods such as bread, most vegetables and potatoes were not rationed. But it was almost impossible to get hold of fruits like bananas, oranges and lemons, except on the black market where most rationed items could be bought illegally, but only for a high price.
- * By 1940 wasting food became a criminal offence.
- * Rationing did not end fully until 1955.

The Blitz

- * On 7 September a furious Hitler ordered the Luftwaffe to bomb London in retaliation for the RAF bombing of Berlin.
- * The Blitz, the German word for 'lightning' was the heavy and frequent bombing raids carried out over Britain in 1940 and 1941.
- * The aim was to destroy Britain's industry and her towns and cities, of which London was the main target.
- * He hoped to force the British government into surrendering by continuously bombing civilians and thereby damaging their morale.
- * London was bombed every night from 7 September to 2 November; in all some 13,500 tons of high-explosive bombs were dropped in fifty-seven raids.
- * Other cities like Coventry also endured mass bombing.
- * The Blitz lasted from September 1940 until May 1941, during which 45,000 civilians were killed and three and a half million houses were either damaged or destroyed. For every civilian killed, thirty-five were made homeless.

Evacuation

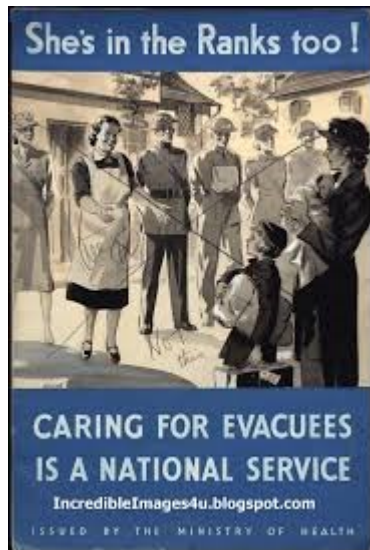
- * Evacuation was always voluntary but very much encouraged.
- * The government wanted to avoid women and children being killed because this would affect morale.
- * Women and children were to be evacuated from likely targets like London to safe areas such as Wales & Shropshire.
- * Around one and a half million people moved around the country in search of safety.
- * The local billeting officers tried to help the evacuees and their host families to get on together.
- * The majority of evacuees came from large towns and cities, they were not used to living in the country.
- * Many city children, particularly those who came from the slums of the east end of London, found life in the country healthier and more exciting.



Life on the Home Front

Winston Churchill

- * Churchill proved to be an outstanding wartime leader. He restored the battered morale of the British people by giving stirring speeches and by making personal appearances in various parts of the country.
- * Churchill toured the bombed cities to offer moral support when the Blitz was at its worst.
- * He even turned serious setbacks such as at Dunkirk in May 1940, the defeat in the desert war in January 1941 and the fall of Singapore to the Japanese in February 1942 into propaganda victories.
- * Churchill's hard work ensured that the allied war leaders, Roosevelt of the USA and Stalin of the USSR, set aside their differences in order to defeat Hitler and Germany.
- * To many people it was Churchill's leadership which ultimately won the war.
- * Churchill also made mistakes, like misjudging the public mood when he called a general election in 1945. He lost.



Propaganda & Censorship

- * In Britain as in Germany, every form of mass-media – radio, newspapers, magazines, cinema films and newsreels – were censored.
- * The aim was to ensure that the people only got to know what the government wanted them to know or what it thought they should know.
- * Bad news was kept to a minimum so that information on military disasters and defeats was suppressed or kept secret.
- * Good news like military victories and other successes were not censored, but the truth of them was often exaggerated to make them look more than they were.
- * The most effective weapon the British had was the BBC. It broadcast in Britain and abroad so that the people of the occupied countries too would be able to listen to the news.
- * Posters were put up everywhere, ranging from motivational images to simple information exchange.
- * It was an essential tool in the government's drive to shape and control public opinion.

Women and the War

- * Thousands more women were recruited or conscripted for the war effort. They worked in factories making war materials, on the land growing food to feed the nation and in the hospitals tending to the sick and injured.
- * Many women signed up to the Women's Land Army which was given the task of increasing food production. The work on the farms was hard and poorly paid.
- * In the army, women joined the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS), while those destined for the Air Force joined the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF).
- * The Women's Voluntary Service also contributed to the war effort. The WVS had one million members by 1943 and although the majority of them were elderly, they did whatever was needed.
- * The government used propaganda campaigns, the key message was 'There's Not Much Women Can't Do'.
- * The contribution of women to the war effort was immense. By the end of the war in 1945, there were 450,000 women in the military and over 6 million in civilian war work.

Britain in 1945

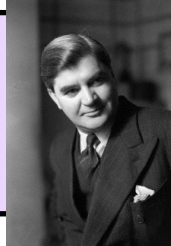
- After the war, Britain was economically ruined.
- There was a lack of housing, there were bomb sites covered in rubble all over the country.
- National Debt had increased by £2.6 million
- Shortage of food and raw materials. Rationing was still in force until 1952 for some goods.
- In the 1950s it was a time of austerity for people (poverty and making do with what you've got)
- Britain had to borrow loans off the USA to stay afloat (Marshall Aid)
- Labour won the General Election in 1945 because they promised to help people economically and socially.

Aneurin Bevan

Established the NHS

Oversaw Housing

Resigned in 1951 when Labour decided to charge for prescriptions.



Clement Attlee

Clement Attlee was the Labour leader and Prime Minister 1945-1951

He was a popular Prime Minister

He had a careful and modest approach, was a skilled negotiator

He oversaw all the major social and economic changes made.

The FIVE GIANTS

1. SQUALOR (Housing)
2. IGNORANCE (education)
3. DISEASE (health)
4. WANT (Poverty)
5. IDLENESS (Jobs)

Socially—Homes for All

- This was Aneurin Bevan's policy.
- It was an attack on squalor
- Over 800,000 new homes were built
- BUT there was a shortage of materials and money.
- 4/5 houses built were council houses
- Prefabs were built as temporary houses as well as using disused army camps.
- New Towns Act—saw new towns such as Telford and Cwmbran built.
- Some slums were demolished
- Some success but squalor was still a big problem.
- New houses had bathrooms and hot water systems.

Society—Education

- The 1944 Education Act was passed during WW2 but it wasn't until after the war that it was properly implemented.
- It gave free education up to the age of 15
- It put in place a new three tier secondary school system (Grammar schools, Technical schools and Secondary Modern schools)
- A lack of resources meant not many Technical schools were established
- It was quite successful as there was an increase in the number of pupils staying in secondary education and moving on to colleges and universities
- It did face some opposition as some Labour M.P.'s thought a comprehensive system better where all pupils of all abilities were in the same school and not split.
- Provided meals, milk and medical services at every school.
- An examination at age 11 years (called the eleven plus) placed children in different types of schools, according to their ability.
- The education reforms were successful because many students gained a good basic education and a large number acquired the skills necessary to secure employment.

Society—NHS

- Aim was to be 'free of charge for all people'
- It was paid for by workers paying tax and National Insurance out of their pay packets.
- This is the main reason why people voted for Labour
- Many doctors were resistant because they could no longer charge high prices to patients.
- The government persuaded doctors by allowing them to see and charge private patients.
- It was welcomed by all and was massively popular.
- Costs were phenomenal, in year 1 the bill was £500 million
- Government had to introduce charges for dentists and prescriptions by 1951 as it was costing too much.
- It was very successful for poorer people who couldn't afford to pay for medical treatment.
- Patients were given free treatment for doctors, opticians, dentists, district nurses, maternity and surgery.

Society—Social Security

- James Griffiths, MP, was made Minister of National Insurance
- Quite successful as the whole population was insured for sickness benefit, retirement pensions, widow's pensions, maternity and death grants.
- Family allowance was paid to mothers for every child in a family.
- A National Assistance Board was added in 1948 to deal with additional payments for people who needed help.

Economical - What was Nationalisation?

- ◇ Labour believed that the country's main industries should be owned by the people and not by a small group of people.
- ◇ Nationalisation was taking over key industries and giving them back to the country to control.
- ◇ Labour thought Nationalisation would stop business owners from being too greedy with profits and neglecting the welfare of their workforce.
- ◇ Newly nationalised industries were run by boards appointed by the government.
- ◇ In all, Labour managed to nationalise around 20 per cent of the economy.

Nationalisation—Coal

- In some ways unsuccessful in Wales as many former coal mine owners continued to manage the mines under the government too.
- The harsh winter of 1947 showed how little prepared the government were for nationalisation as there was a shortage of coal and the bad weather caused part time working and serious disruption to the industry.
- However it was welcomed by the people of Wales and seen as a victory over the hated coal mine owners.
- Overall quite unsuccessful as Labour did not have the money needed to modernise and improve.
- Labour spent millions on compensation, millions more on investment in new technology and machinery. Between 1948 and 1952 the government invested nearly £32 million in coal mines in the south Wales region alone.

Nationalisation—Other industries

- Many people wondered why road haulage, iron and Steel needed to be nationalised as they ran effectively under private ownership.
- The Conservatives, who were opposed to Nationalisation, managed to delay nationalisation later on and they also had the support of the people.
- Nationalisation came to be associated with failing, run down industries.



Industries nationalised under Labour

- 1946 The Bank of England
- 1947 Coal, Airlines, Electricity
- 1948 Railways, Docks & Canals and Road Haulage, Gas production and distribution.
- 1949 Iron and Steel

Nationalisation—Railways

- In order to improve the railways they needed large scale investment if they were going to be modernised and made more efficient.
- Labour couldn't afford to do this.
- Overall quite unsuccessful as the railways changed little to how they had been before nationalisation.

Judgement—Economic changes

- Under Labour, the burden of taxation had increased and it remained high in 1950-1.
- Even though the war had been over for some time, there was still rationing. Inflation was beginning to rise which caused prices to go up. There was a general feeling in the country that living standards had fallen under Labour.
- Many people believed that Labour had gone too far with nationalisation and that there was too much government interference in the running of the economy.

Final Judgement— Social and Economic changes

The Labour government was one of the most radical of the twentieth century, presiding over a policy of nationalising major industries and developing and implementing the 'cradle to grave' welfare state. To this day the creation of Britain's publicly funded National Health Service, under the Health Minister Aneurin Bevan, is considered its greatest achievement.

However under Labour Britain did not recover economically and the Conservatives played on this beating Labour in the 1951 General Election.

The Beveridge Report

- In 1942 William Beveridge published the Beveridge Report. In it, he set out the kind of social reforms that he thought the government should carry out after the war.
- His report pointed out that there were five 'Giant Evils' in society that had to be tackled by the government before it could properly care for its people.
- These 'Giant Evils' were 'Want, Disease, Ignorance, Squalor and Idleness'. The Beveridge Report called for a series of radical reforms to deal with each of these.



Britain in 1945 after WW2

- At the end of the war, Britain was a severely war-damaged nation. Britain's cities and large towns had been bombed during the war and although the damage varied, the centres of some towns and cities like Swansea and Coventry were almost completely destroyed.
- Thousands of shops, factories, 20 per cent of schools and above all, houses had been damaged or destroyed; these would need rebuilding.
- But it all cost money, so the government decided to concentrate on building houses for the thousands of homeless people. In the meantime 563 army camps were opened to the public and used as temporary homes.
- In 1945 the British army, navy and air force had over five million men and women in their ranks. The vast majority had been conscripted to serve only for as long as the war lasted and they now wanted to return home.
- Demobilisation was begun within six weeks of the end of the war. Given the country's weak economic position, it was felt that reducing the size of the armed forces would save the government money.
- Britain's weak economic position meant that jobs were harder to find, and between 1947 and 1951 unemployment rose from 400,000 to 1.75 million.
- Families that had been separated for a number of years now had to learn to readjust. Divorce increased significantly.
- Rationing didn't end at the end of the war, of some foods like bread and potatoes, along with petrol, coal and clothes continued until 1955 in some cases.
- In the period from 1945 to 1951 Britain was undernourished, dirty and class-ridden. After nearly six years of war, people were exhausted.
- Queues formed outside bakers' shops early each morning and over a third of the 12 million dwellings had no bath or hot water. In 1948 the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Stafford Cripps, introduced an austerity budget including a wage freeze.

Why did Labour win the 1951 election? / Why did the Conservatives lose the 1951 election?

1. Although Winston Churchill was hugely popular, the Conservatives were not. Few could forget the depression, economic slump, unemployment and appeasement of pre-war Conservative Britain.
2. The Tory election campaign was a disaster. The party concentrated on Churchill's personality and war record. One Conservative campaign slogan said, 'Help him finish the job.' However, the British people were keen to put the war behind them.
3. Attlee knew that attitudes had changed. He was also aware that the people were hoping for a better and fairer Britain after the war. His party concentrated on a positive election campaign with the slogan 'Let us face the future together'. Labour promised jobs, fair wages, good houses, pensions for the old, free education and free medicine and health care. They also promised to rebuild the nation's economy and to return the country to prosperity. The British people were ready for this 'different Britain'.

